

Developing Women Global Leaders in a College of Agriculture

University of Florida

Jera Niewoehner
310 Rolfs Hall
P.O. Box 110540
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 273-2614
jniewoehner@ufl.edu

Caitlin Bletscher
406 Rolfs Hall
P.O. Box 110540
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 273-2093
cbletscher@ufl.edu

Dr. Nicole Stedman
217B Rolfs Hall
PO Box 110540
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 273-2585
nstedman@ufl.edu

Introduction

Although cross-cultural interactions are not new events, globalization necessitates leaders that have global perspectives and intercultural competence (Irving, 2010). Global leadership has been defined as “being capable of operating effectively in a global environment while being respectful of cultural diversity” (Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2004, p.25). The theory of global leadership has also been related more to the interaction of people and ideas among cultures instead of solely an extension of domestic leadership (Adler, 1997). The issues facing agriculture and natural resources are global, and students in colleges of agriculture will be participating in research, outreach and education in this realm. Even within the United States, leaders in agriculture must be able to navigate different norms related to gender, race, class, nationality, and religion. Story (2011) argues that in order for individuals to grow into a global leader they must develop a global mindset, a self authored identity, and a cultural adaptation worldview.

The discourse on global leadership illustrates the intersection of intercultural sensitivity, self-awareness, and leadership capacity of which women may have an advantage. Women bring to leadership different points of view, values, and experiences, which diversify the way in which they approach the tasks and responsibilities of leadership and can create a positive impact on organizations and policy (Klenke, 2012; Hausmann, Zahidi, Tyson, Hausmann, Schwab, & Tyson, 2009). Although studies on gender and leadership may not be generalizable to all situations, findings have indicated that women adopt democratic, participative leadership and transformational leadership styles and were more effective in roles that required considerable interpersonal ability (Northouse, 2013; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Tsegay, 2013). Although women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment higher education graduates (Goeker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali & Theller, 2014) a disproportionate number of women in leadership are found in both higher education and agriculture (Kleihauer, Stephens, Hart & Stripling, 2003). In order to cultivate the next generation of women leaders in agriculture and natural resources, leadership educators must provide opportunities to nurture the development of skills and provide a space to tackle difficult conversations. Leadership and intercultural communication courses offer opportunities for female undergraduate students to explore theory and practice; however, a mentoring group can offer a more intimate setting to provide opportunities for critical depth of thought, self reflection, and application of concepts to further their development.

Program Phases

Jera Niewoehner and Caitlin Bletscher, PhD students in the field of Agricultural Leadership and Development at the University of Florida developed the mentoring program after female students from a college-wide oral communications course taught by the PhD students displayed interest in learning more about leadership, and intercultural communication. By providing a structured mentoring setting, female undergraduates will achieve the following objectives: (1) develop intercultural communication competency (2) understand and develop authentic leadership capacity (3) identify and demonstrate characteristics of servant leadership (4) understand and implement strategies for addressing leadership for social change and (5) explore sources of gender roles and stereotypes. The overarching goal is to guide students in becoming global leaders by addressing aspects of intercultural communication and leadership.

The program is structured to collectively explore program objectives through rich conversations, constructive dialogue, theoretical frameworks, guest lectures, and opportunities for community engagement. 15-20 students meet with mentors every two weeks for one and a half hours. Specific activities that connect to the mentoring group objectives are facilitated in order for students to explore leadership and intercultural communication through the experiential learning cycle. The following are activities aligned with the program objectives: (1) *intercultural communication*: identify the cultural components of oneself; learn the cycle of socialization; explore stereotypes, prejudice, and ethnocentrism and how they present barriers to intercultural communication; learn about global perspectives from guest speakers (2) *authentic leadership*: facilitate personal values sort; learn conflict management strategies; self-assessment (3) *servant leadership*: discuss elements of servant leadership; learn about servant leadership in practice from guest speaker; develop mini-leadership conference for young females in the community (4) *leadership for social change*: examine social change model; analyze a case study; identify social change issue related to student's field of study (5) *gender stereotypes*: explore sources of gender stereotypes; examine personal experiences of stereotyping; define how aspects of stereotypes impact leadership; plan, develop, and implement women's leadership conference for undergraduate students.

Results to Date

Participant growth from the first iteration of the program, which did not include the community outreach or women's conference components, was measured using questionnaires and open-ended responses. In order to examine change of authentic leadership capacity among participants, authors conducted a pre-/post-test of the Authentic Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire (ALSQ) (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), which measures your authentic leadership by assessing four components of the process: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Percent increases from pre to post were: self-awareness (18.18%), internalized moral perspective (11.83%), balanced processing (25.6%), and authentic leadership (7.25%).

To explore the impact of intercultural sensitivity among participants, authors used grounded theory, Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986), to thematically code participant's pre-/post- reflections of the course. Using the Intercultural Sensitivity Questionnaire to guide discussion revealed participants fell in the *Acceptance* range of cultural sensitivity spectrum. This stage represents a move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism wherein cultural difference is both acknowledged and respected (Bennett, 1986).

Future Plans and Advice

Now in the second iteration of the program, group participants will complete the leadership in action components of the program, which include the mini-conference for local female youth and women's leadership conference for university undergraduates. For both program components partnering with the agricultural education department's leadership faculty, college of agriculture dean's office, university staff, and local agencies were necessary for realization. In addition, inviting a diverse set of graduate students and faculty outside the department to work with participants throughout the program has provided opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

Costs/Resources Needed

Mentors and guest speakers work with the participants voluntarily and space is provided within the agricultural education department's building. The program was budgeted \$500 for t-shirts, food, and materials for the academic year through the department. There are also costs associated with the community outreach and conference portions that include food, office supplies, printing costs, and program branding items such as t-shirts, conference bags, and marketing. The total conference budget was \$2,300 and was supported by the University of Florida Diversity Affairs office, Agricultural Education and Communication Department, Undergraduate Affairs office and College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean's Office.

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