

Forging Future Leaders: The Diamond Model of Agricultural Leadership

Carly Leavitt-Hullana, Undergraduate Student
Agricultural Education & Communication
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
1 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
leavith@calpoly.edu

Erin Gorter, Assistant Professor
Agricultural Education & Communication
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
1 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
ekthomps@calpoly.edu

Hannah Parker, Lecturer
Agricultural Education & Communication
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
1 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
hparke07@calpoly.edu

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

In 2021, Lattore devised the Diamond Model for Agricultural Leadership (Diamond Model) for the development of leaders within the agriculture industry in California. The model was developed under the assumption that those in agricultural careers must focus on their capacity to lead themselves to effectively lead others. The use of the word “diamond” derives from the idea that diamonds are multi-faceted, are formed under pressure, and have flaws, among other characteristics similarly aligned with what it is like to be human (Lattore, 2021).

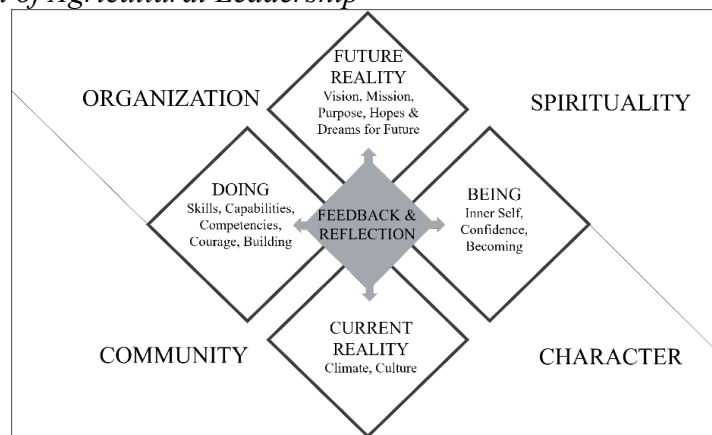
While this model is currently used to frame leadership programming for a prestigious state adult agricultural leadership program and has been for over 50 years (California Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF) (Lattore, 2021; (CALF), 2025), it has not explicitly been used to explore leadership development in students enrolled in colleges of agriculture. Experts have called for academic leadership educators to engage in meaningful conversations surrounding the assessment and effectiveness of leadership development curriculum (Goertzen, 2009), and students' perceptions of leadership are often tied to leadership positions, particularly among those students entering the college classroom (Shehane et al., 2012), thus this innovative idea poses the use of the Diamond Model to scaffold agricultural leadership programming for college students. This innovation attempts to add to the discourse surrounding effective frames for guiding and assessing leadership development in agriculture students in higher education.

How it works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

To implement the Diamond Model, one must first have an idea of how the model is presented. The model shifts the attention from a person's title or position to their entire being, including their current reality, vision for the future, skillsets, and leadership capacities, while including the individual contexts of character, community, organization, and spirituality. The Diamond Model's core is where movement and action take place, where trust and love are housed, and provides space for individuals to work on overcoming fear with courage through the double loop of learning interaction between self-knowing (right) and practicing (left). This is guided by feedback and reflection. Figure 1 provides a visual of the Diamond Model. A full depiction of the model and definitions for its facets will be included with the final poster.

Figure 1

The Diamond Model of Agricultural Leadership



Note. The Diamond Model of Agricultural Leadership. Adapted from “How We Grow Leaders,” by P. A. Lattore, 2021. Copyright 2021 by P. A. Lattore.

Results to Date/Implications

The Agricultural Education & Communication (AEC) Department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo has been using the Diamond Model to scaffold its leadership development curriculum for the past two years. In an introductory agriculture leadership course, students are exposed to the model implicitly via personal storytelling from members of the agricultural industry. Guest speakers, as alumni of the CALF leadership program share their leadership stories, which are organized using the Diamond Model. In an intermediate leadership class, the model is explicitly shared with the students and is referred to multiple times throughout the course. As the intermediate class focuses on the development of leadership skills, linkages are made as to how the development of the doing and being pieces of the model help individuals move from their current to future reality. As a summative assessment in this intermediate course, students are asked to create their own Diamond Model and identify the components of the model they see in their own life, as well as identify the contexts in which they exist (e.g., community, organization, spirituality, and character). In a capstone leadership course, the center of the Diamond Model is the focus. Students participate in an intensive self-reflection, including participating in the Student Leadership Practices Inventory® 360 (Student LPI® 360, 2025), which seeks feedback from mentors, educators, and peers.

The use of the Diamond Model to organize curriculum incorporates cognitive patterning (via repetition), mentoring (via vicarious experiences), and coaching (via reflection) necessary in leadership education (Doh, 2003). Character formation is also a vital implication of this model, which centralizes students' leadership journeys, small group work, class presentations, drafting autobiographical stories, reading leadership texts, and repetitive reflection. Observably, there is an evolution of students as they complete course sequences and recognize that it is their growth and development that strengthens their positioning as leaders in agriculture.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Moving forward, the AEC Department plans to continue to evolve how the Diamond Model is used within their agricultural leadership programming. Additionally, empirical analysis of the effectiveness of the Diamond Model as a curriculum framework is of interest as a line of scholarly inquiry. This includes exploring the impact of the model as an assessment tool and how students perceive the model as influential in their leadership development. Note there is also room to study the model in the broader adult agricultural leadership development space.

Effective positive agriculture leadership requires teacher effectiveness, curriculum depth, and leadership pedagogical content knowledge (Lattore, 2021). Ultimately, the use of the Diamond Model in college classes needs to be created with a strong focus on the question of what leadership is at its core and that personal leadership is central to all other dimensions of leadership as we lead most effectively out of who we are and how we lead others. Introducing and centralizing agricultural leadership education in colleges of agriculture around the Lattore (2021) Diamond Model of Leadership has the potential to effectively formulate and develop positive effective leaders through the diverse, multimodal curriculum approach.

Costs/Resources Needed

There are no costs directly associated with the implementation of this model. Concerning resources, hiring individuals with knowledge and understanding of core leadership and development as well as experience or at least comprehension of the inner workings of the Lattore (2021) Diamond Model of Leadership is pertinent.

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