

LEADERS ARE READERS

CHOICE-BASED BOOK CIRCLES IN AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



WHY THIS INNOVATION MATTERS



Choice builds ownership.
Adult learners engage when they have autonomy (Knowles et al., 2020).



Stories expand perspectives.
Fiction and nonfiction provide different windows into leadership (Komives et al., 2005).



Reflection builds identity.
Students connect leadership ideas to who they are becoming as leaders (Bush et al., 2023).

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

1 CHOOSE



Students select a leadership text from a curated list or propose an alternative for approval.

One student per title.

2 READ & REFLECT



Students read and identify leadership examples and lessons. They then connect the text to course content and their own leadership journey.

3 SHARE



Students prepare to be the "resident expert." They share an overview of the book, 3 key takeaways, 1 personal connection, and 1 discussion question.

4 CIRCLE UP



Participate in small-group book circles. Learn from multiple books in one session through discussion and comparison.

5 CONNECT



Synthesize common themes and contrasting perspectives across books. Leadership learning comes from many stories and approaches.

HOW IT'S GOING SO FAR



~60

STUDENTS

TWO COURSE OFFERINGS.
PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.



CHOICE

Students valued selecting a text aligned with their interests.



MOTIVATION

Choice increased motivation to complete the reading.



DISCOVERY

Students left wanting to read books their peers introduced

**FUTURE
FORMAL
ASSESSMENT
PLANNED**

COSTS AND RESOURCES

- **Minimal** costs and resources.
- Students obtain books through **personal purchase** or **libraries**.
- Faculty time is needed to **curate a reading list** and **facilitate discussions**.
- **Optional refreshments** create a welcoming book club atmosphere that encourages conversation and engagement.

STEAL THIS IDEA

Assess impact on student engagement, leadership development, and reading motivation.

Offer choice through a curated mix of fiction and nonfiction leadership texts, with flexibility for student-selected alternatives.

Design discussions for synthesis, encouraging students to compare leadership themes across texts rather than summarize individual books.

Adapt across contexts, including agricultural leadership, leadership studies, capstone, and professional development courses.

REFERENCES



ERIN GORTER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION