

Discussion Thread

As the text adequately describes leadership as the combination of “..innate and developed knowledge” (Cashwell & Minton, 2012), the culture of leadership then has to be introduced, fostered and cultivated for maximum rewards. This concept also aligns with personal reference to a documentary presented in The Bahamas featuring a Member of Parliament (Government Official), when asked about how he and his wife chose to raise their family; he noted that they travelled to as many places as possible, because some things in life are taught, but some things in life are caught. This serves as a reminder that students need to be constantly immersed in leadership interactions as much as possible to observe, learn and practice the skills. Oftentimes, we understand the head knowledge but lack the skill development and execution. Students need to feel the “squeeze” and anxiety of leadership so that when they are out working on their own as professionals, they don't shy away from necessary opportunities to improve situations for themselves and others.

Several ideas come to mind with executing this task: 1. In a program, it can be beneficial to introduce the idea of leadership early, the admission process can be a great place to have students initially begin exploring their thoughts about leadership. An essay could be a viable option to gain insight into what their beliefs are about leadership. As an incentive, the leadership essay could be tied to a small discount in tuition if completed at the start of each academic year, 2. The Department could also design projects that several students are mandated and assigned to and they work on throughout their degree program – if this idea is properly conceptualized and developed well, it can be the spark to light the fire; for example – a first year student may just be a shadow or reader in the group, then as a second year student they are assigned a more active role, by the third year or fourth year they are leaders within that cohort; this idea incorporates the short-term actions of each year participating and long-term actions of measured exposure to leadership on all levels throughout the degree program.

Problems can include: students who strongly feel as though they are not leaders, so they drop out of the program – which becomes a financial issue for the department; effective programs are organized and run by effective people – the task simply becomes too difficult to organize, and maintain aside from all of the other work that faculty has to do.

Overall, leadership is a necessary quality for counselors to possess for efficacy throughout all parts of their career. While students will vary in capacity and development of this crucial skill, any improvement throughout their degree program will serve as an asset to advocacy for the profession and the clients we serve.

References

Chang, C.Y., Minton, C.A.B., Dixon, A.L., Myers, J.E., Sweeney, T.J. (2012). *Professional counseling excellence through leadership and advocacy*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, New York, NY.