Leadership Skills are CRUCIAL for success

In the 21st Century, leadership is more important than ever, and the skills required for exercising effective leadership are more complex. A recent study showed that 80% of U.S. citizens feel that our society needs more effective leadership in business, politics, and local communities, to avoid a long national decline. Moreover, the top skills employers look for in college graduates are communication and teamwork skills, combined with an ability to analyze and solve problems. The combination of these skills often translates to strong leadership skills. Perhaps tellingly, these same employers report that these same skills are those in which their new hires most often lack. Our society must focus on the leadership training and education of our future leaders.

“Leadership is the most observed, yet least understood, phenomena on earth.” – James MacGregor Burns, Leadership (1978)
What is the Illinois Leadership Center?

The Illinois Leadership Center (ILC) opened its doors in September 2002 as a partnership in student leadership education between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at the University of Illinois. The campus espouses a “Philosophy of Leadership” where all students can develop leadership competence, starting from a foundation of self-awareness, ethical and inclusive behavior, and utilizing a process of mutual influence in a diverse world. The Center provides unique, integrated leadership development opportunities to Illinois students in the form of leadership courses, leadership institutes, a leadership certificate program, a resource library, student programs, and employment opportunities. Each of these services provide curriculum drawing from theory in social psychology, organizational development, philosophy, and education.

As the Center approaches the end of its first decade of work, its award-winning programs and services have benefitted thousands of Illinois students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This report details the scope and degree of impact that the ILC has had on the Illinois campus, as well as to individual Illinois students who participate in its programs. More information about the ILC can be found at www.illinoisleadership.illinois.edu.
What leadership skills does the Leadership Center teach?

How does Illinois prepare students for leadership?

The Leadership Center’s approach to leadership education intentionally incorporates opportunities to learn formal theories and models of leadership, practice leadership skills in different settings, and critique personal behavior through reflection. By combining these elements of education, experience, and reflection, Illinois ensures that students engage in holistic training. Students who participate in the Leadership Center’s services leave Illinois equipped with a working knowledge of leadership, supported with an awareness of personal skills and strengths and the familiarity of having practiced these skills in meaningful ways through organizations and groups.

On an international scale, Illinois is leading the way in providing significant leadership experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

The backbone of Illinois Leadership Center services are its “i-programs.” i-Programs are short-term training sessions focused on particular skill clusters consistent with the Illinois Leadership Philosophy (see box at left), and are offered multiple times per year. Coordinated by the Leadership Center, i-programs are facilitated by a network of Illinois faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and corporate partners. Additionally, the ILC offers a multi-semester Leadership Certificate program, as well as shorter workshops focused on personal assessments such as StrengthQuest® and DiSC®, as well as workshops presented by alumni and corporate partners.

• **Intrapersonal**: being able to understand individual strengths and weaknesses, knowing your personal values and motivations in order to set attainable goals

• **Interpersonal**: practicing positive communication skills in order to build meaningful relationships and develop high-performing, ethical teams

• **Organizational**: understanding how to build coalitions with groups, plan and lead change initiatives, and solve problems in a way that considers the needs and perspectives of all involved

• **Transitional**: building networks and learning how to support, mentor, and coach others to sustain leadership in any environment
Who participates within the Illinois Leadership Center?

Every year, thousands of Illinois students participate in workshops, i-programs, and the Leadership Certificate. ILC programs are offered at no cost and open to all Illinois students, regardless of prior training or background. Programs are diverse in terms of race, class year, and academic discipline, and representative of the overall University of Illinois student profile.

Exceptional Student Satisfaction Rates

After attending an Illinois Leadership Center program, over 90% of students rate their satisfaction with their experience as “excellent” or “good.” Programs hosted by the Leadership Center regularly contain no students who rate their experience as “poor” or even “below average.”

At Illinois, Leadership Center programs regularly experience high student demand to participate, and waiting lists to enter are common. In fact, annually 21% of students who register for an i-program cannot attend due to lack of available space at the program. This translates to over 300 students, on average, being turned away every year.
After participating for up to nine hours in focused leadership skill-building i-programs, students report that the time they spent had a significant impact on their leadership learning, both immediately after the program as well as when they are contacted months later. In addition, national research on college students corroborates that participation in quality training sessions, like our i-programs, can have lasting developmental impact on participants.

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD PROGRAM?**

Transformational learning takes place when students have the ability to combine **education**, **experience**, and **reflection** – meaning, they can combine theory with an ability to put it to practice, while taking the opportunity reflect and make personal meaning of their learning.

Source: Benjamin Bloom – “Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.”
Students complete an online survey within seven days of participating in a program. In addition to questions related to satisfaction and overall experience, students are asked to rate the effectiveness of the program in helping them develop the particular skill-set covered in the program, using the following scale of impact:

- Not at all
- Little
- Moderate
- Great
- Very Great

Students are then contacted again 2-3 months later, where they can evaluate their experience from a broader perspective by assessing impact of the program on their actual behavior.

**Program Evaluation Data:**
After attending an i-program, 95% of students report that ILC programs had at least a “moderate” effect on helping them become a better leader. Moreover, 73% of students report that the program had a “great” effect or larger on their learning of leadership skills.

In follow-up surveys conducted months later, 92% state that the program had a “moderate” or larger effect on their leadership development while 81% report that the program had at least a moderate positive impact on their own behavior.
This is what our students are saying about the i-programs.

“I notice myself reflecting, often, on my behaviors and thought processes – what drives me to do what I do, and whether that corresponds with my personal values. I am more thoughtful after [attending] Insight.” - Sophomore, Asian-American female, College of Engineering

“Illinois Imprint teaches useful leadership skills in creative ways. The main topics of the program - transitioning and networking - are of great importance to anyone, especially college students. I walked away from Imprint feeling much more comfortable about tackling these challenges.” – Senior, Caucasian female, College of Business

“The Illinois Ignite Program was an amazing event. I met some exemplary people with the same desire as me to lead with integrity. The curriculum has improved my ability to find solutions to real-world problems and to inspire others to achieve more with their lives.” – Junior, Caucasian male, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

“I am more aware of my strengths and weaknesses and I am more confident. Before attending Insight, I was unaware of how certain parts of my identity play a huge role in my day-to-day life. With just that knowledge I am able to live better.” – Freshman, African-American male, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

“The Leadership Certificate Program has been vital to my development as a successful student and leader. Every program, class, and exercise taught me something useful to be applied in varying situations. In general it allowed me to get to know myself, understand my true values and goals, and gave me the tools and confidence to unite others on campus and in my community to work towards values or goals that we shared.” – Senior, Caucasian female, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences
Leadership Certificate Program

Students enrolled in the Center’s multi-semester Illinois Leadership Certificate program consistently identify significant individual growth in their leadership skills, particularly in the areas of **self-awareness** and **communication skills**.

Moreover, students who gain a Leadership Certificate from Illinois score higher on assessments of leadership skill, leadership efficacy (one’s comfort with being in a position of leadership), cognitive complexity, and skill at **creating positive change** than students who have not participated.

Hundreds of students are enrolled in academic leadership courses, participate in ILC training sessions, and engage with the campus and community in team-based organizations.

In addition, certificate participants identify the following areas as unique strengths of the Certificate program, above and beyond the ability to deepen their understanding of leadership:

- The Certificate program teaches a **process of structured reflection** that allows for deeper self-awareness and is easily broadened to other areas of personal and professional development.
- The program allows for students to **engage one-on-one with faculty, staff, alumni, or community members** through their experience with a leadership coach, who guides them through the program and helps them make meaning of their experiences.

“**I have found that it is simple to learn about leadership, but to be able to improve one’s own leadership abilities is a hard task and I am surprised at how well the Leadership Certificate Program has allowed me to learn how to advance my own leadership abilities. I have learned that I lead best by encouraging creativity, promoting open communication, and empowering group members. I have also learned how to better listen, contribute, and communicate as a group member through my experiences.”**

– Junior, Caucasian female, College of Media

“**The Leadership Certificate was a fantastic experience! It gave me focus and structure to pursue improvements in several different areas of leadership. As a graduate student in science, it would have been very hard to work on such areas without being enrolled in the Leadership Certificate Program. My main focus was on communication and team development skills.”**

– Graduate student, Latino male, College of Liberal Arts and Science

**METHODOLOGY**

- The Certificate Program was assessed through three methods:
  - An online survey
  - Focus groups with certificate participants, instructors of leadership courses, and leadership coaches who work one-on-one with program participants
  - Content analysis of completion documents submitted by student participants

Data was analyzed by assessment professionals within the Division of Student Affairs at Illinois, as well as selected faculty and staff.
The Leadership Center teaches more than leadership

Illinois Leadership programs teach more than just leadership skills. They bring diverse students together to connect on topics of lasting importance and relevance. Research shows that the single most important contributor to a student’s personal leadership development in college is the chance to engage in authentic conversation and collaboration with diverse people. Illinois students, alumni participants, and community volunteers all point to the benefit of Leadership Center programs by crossing boundaries among student groups in unique ways not found elsewhere.

Research conducted on Illinois Leadership Center undergraduate participants compared to a random sample of Illinois undergraduate students shows that Center participants display greater gains in cognitive complexity and the ability to connect with diverse others.

“the single most important contributor to a student’s personal leadership development in college is the chance to engage in authentic conversation and collaboration with diverse people”
### Access to Mentors

In addition to the contribution to a student’s formal education, participation in Illinois Leadership programs provides students access to a network of faculty, staff, community members, and alumni who are passionate about helping students develop their leadership skills. Tellingly, 63% of i-program participants report having developed a lasting mentoring relationship with an Illinois faculty or staff person (compared to only 45% of students who do not participate).

### METHODOLOGY

A random sample of Illinois undergraduates (n=724) were compared to students who participate in Illinois Leadership Center programs (n=232). Students responded to psychometrically sound measures of cognitive complexity and social perspective-taking, or the ability to take another person’s point of view and infer their thoughts and feelings.
According to Illinois Alumni…

Studies were conducted in 2007 and 2008 with University of Illinois alumni who participated in ILC programs, seeking to determine the perceived impact of ILC programs felt after graduation. There was common consensus that the **four competency areas covered by the Leadership Center** (*self awareness, interpersonal skills, organizational competency, and transitional skills*) are even more important in the professional world than is often communicated to students.

In addition to the development of their leadership skills, these alumni identified the **ability to connect with diverse peers** as a significant benefit – stating that they would have likely never interacted with many participants in other campus settings. ILC programs bring students from diverse majors, class standings, and backgrounds together to work on and discuss leadership development in small groups with trained volunteer facilitators.

“The best part for me about Leadership Center programs was the ability to meet people I would never have otherwise. There were always diverse students there.” – Caucasian female, ’07, College of Business

“Meeting new people and learning skills from leaders who come from all walks of life was very impactful for me.” – Caucasian male, ’08, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Facility Research on Student Participants:

Faculty at the University of Illinois conducted a long-term study on ILC i-program participants from 2008-2010 using a rigorous survey of leadership practices, the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS). They found that students who attend i-programs score higher in leadership skill after attending the program, and more importantly, that students continue to possess these skills months later.

Faculty Research on Student Participants:

Students who attend ILC programs are more likely to engage in the types of experiences that research shows undergraduates need to lead successful careers. Compared to a random sample of Illinois students, ILC participants are more likely to:

- Engage in voluntary community service (70% compared with 48%)
- Study abroad (28% to 17%)
- Serve in an executive position within a student organization (59% to 27%)
- Engage in undergraduate research with an Illinois faculty member (35% to 21%)
- Identify and develop a relationship with a mentor on or off campus (63% to 45%)

Source: University of Illinois campus participation data, Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, 2010

INTERESTING FACT

Geico Insurance Company is famous in their industry for their ability to achieve a 97% “customer satisfaction rate” — the percentage of its customers who have an average or better experience using its services. Using the same methodology, the Illinois Leadership Center annually achieves a 99% customer satisfaction rate.

“These programs are AWESOME! I learned so much and had the opportunity to actually apply what we learned.” — Sophomore, Asian-American female, College of Business

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet new friends from all over campus and network. Events like these allow individuals to be extremely friendly and open to developing new relationships. I enjoyed the deep discussions; discussions that people don’t usually talk about. It was great.” — Junior, Caucasian female, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
What makes an Illinois Leadership® education unique?

Collaboration across campus
The Illinois Leadership Center has strong partnerships across campus, including collaboration in both academic affairs and student affairs units, to advance leadership education for all students regardless of academic major, professional goals, prior training, or group membership. No peer institution collaborates as broadly.

Representative involvement from all students
All Center programs and initiatives are offered free of charge to students, whereas most peer institutions put positional restrictions on their services. Open access to Illinois Leadership Center programs provides all students the opportunity to learn leadership with diverse participants and facilitators that brings students together from several distinct areas, thus increasing the scope of leadership education on a campus-wide level.

WHO ARE OUR PEER INSTITUTIONS?
A total of 21 institutions were included in a benchmarking study conducted in 2009. All Big Ten institutions were included as well as other University of Illinois branches. In addition, universities were chosen that offer strong campus-wide leadership programs: Claremont McKenna College, Florida State University, George Mason University, Kansas State University, University of Arizona, University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, University of Maryland – College Park, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, University of Richmond, and University of Texas – Austin.
Meeting student demand
Illinois is the only institution in its peer group that offers its various programs multiple times per year to ensure accessibility for all students, outdistancing its peers in providing specific skill-based leadership training. This high level of student engagement increases the overall leadership experience for students at Illinois.

Commitment to excellence
The Center’s comprehensive assessment and evaluation measures help to show how students learn and practice leadership skills at Illinois and then apply them as alumni in their professional and community organizations.
