
THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE research

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TITLE	Are Planning Students Becoming Transformational Leaders?
RESEARCHER	Beth Nagy College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services University of Cincinnati Unpublished doctoral dissertation: May 2012
OBJECTIVE	The purpose of the study was is to gain insight about transformational leadership behaviors of Planning students and to find out if there is a relationship between leadership and community engagement experiences.

METHODOLOGY

The sample used were upper-level Planning students in one four-year public research intensive university in an urban metropolitan area in the Midwest. The population of interest in this study (Planning students in one specific program) was the construct and the sample (Planning students in their fourth and fifth years of the program) was its operationalization. The total number of possible responses was 101, of which 28 usable surveys were returned. Respondents completed the Student LPI, an author created community engagement measure, and provided demographic information. The average age of respondents was 23 years. Seventeen were in their fifth year of the program, all but one was Caucasian, and there were 17 men and 11 women in the sample. Cronbach's alpha scores for each leadership practice in this study were .66 for modeling, .74 for inspiring, .63 for challenging, .72 for enabling, and .80 for encouraging.

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequently leadership practice was Enabling, following by Challenge and Inspire; although the absolute scores for all five leadership practices were generally in the normative "low" level of frequency. The author concludes that "Planning students display a low level of leadership" (p. 82). The correlations between each leadership practice and the extent to which respondents participated in community engagement activities ranged between .42 and .64. The correlation was .57 when all five leadership practices were combined.

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The author suggests that: "Students learn the values, actions and practices of Planning from their curriculum. The findings from this research lead us to believe community engagement plays a role in the development of leadership behavior. Students who participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular community-based activities show higher transformational leadership. This would also lead us to believe more exposure to community engagement would lead to more transformational leaders. The next assumption, then, would be if we had more Transformational Planners, we would have more sustainable communities" (p. 85).