

TITLE Leadership Lessons: Comparing Leadership Programs across Campus

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to investigate differences across current undergraduate leadership education programs.

METHODOLOGY

Three multi-year programs were investigated at a private, four-year institution within the northern Texas region. Through multiple case studies and a cross-case analysis, built from interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and observation, the program cultures and program theories were analyzed to highlight the differences between a co-curricular program (CSCLP, student affairs department), an academic minor (AALM, psychology department), and a comprehensive hybrid program (BBLP, business department). The data were compiled to construct individual program logic models, and then compare program theory components and future program plans. Focus group participants (N = 10) from each program completed the Student Leadership Practices Inventory and a short answer survey. Interviews were conducted with each program director as well as other program personnel.

KEY FINDINGS

Findings indicated that the resources and culture varied greatly across academic and student affairs divisions. Program design and barriers such as functional silos, time, and culture were factors that inhibited collaborative efforts.

The sample sizes did not meet the threshold for statistical analysis, although the author examined the means and standard deviations of the groups by leadership practices and suggested that they offer “some insight in the differences of the programs” (p. 215-216):

AALM students had the widest variance of scores, based on standard deviation, on more measures than the other two groups. This could possibly relate to the increased flexibility and choice within the program. The SDs of Inspire a Shared Vision (Inspire) and Challenge the Process (Challenge), followed closely by Model the Way (Model), demonstrate that AALM has the widest distribution of scores for all groups for three of the five practices. Encourage the Heart (Encourage), at 4.6, also had large standard deviation when compared with the other practices and groups.

For BBLP, scores for Enable Others to Act (Enable), Challenge, and Encourage had an SD of less than 2.0, indicating that those scores for BBLP participants were closer together than the scores for Inspire and Model. The SDs also indicate less variance within the group's scores on those three factors than for the other two groups on those factors. CSCLP scores for Model, Inspire, and Enable were also more closely distributed, indicating that the variance within the group on those factors is smaller than other groups on other factors.

Considering the mean scores across the groups and practices, Encourage for AALM and CSCLP and Enable for BBLP were the highest self-reported means for each group; all averaged 25.0 or more out of a total of 30. Encourage had the largest difference between means across groups, with 17.8 for CSCLP and 25.0 for AALM. CSCLP scores displayed the most variance between mean scores on practices with 17.8 for Encourage and 25.0 for Enable. Model, as a practice, had the least variance of mean scores between groups, all falling between 22.0 and 22.8.

AALM had the most consistent scores across the practices, with the means ranging from 22.3 for model to 25.0 for Encourage. However, it also had the highest SD. There could be some relationship with the breadth of material within the program design and the flexibility in the program, but a larger sample size would be required to determine. BBLP had the highest mean of 25.3 in Enable. This could be related to the business and management context and skills that students focus on in the program. Similarly, CSCLP had a high of 25.0 in Enable. The community engagement and student empowerment components may contribute to this score.

Overall, the SLPI results provides a roadmap to future studies. These within- and between-group variances could be further explored for significance using ANOVA and effect sizes in a study comparing larger samples of the groups. However, due to sample size, statistically significant difference between any of the groups and practices cannot be determined.