

CONNECT

THE MENTORING, NETWORKING, AND TECHNOLOGY EDITION

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

“One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.”

- Elbert Hubbard, *American Author and Philosopher*

This edition of Connect is dedicated to Mentoring, Networking, and Technology. We live in a very exciting time where people aren’t isolated by their geographical location and are free to look for guidance from all over the world. New and developing technologies facilitate the mentoring process, making it easier than ever to share knowledge.

This is especially evident in the articles printed in this edition. Mentoring program facilitators are thinking outside of the box to better their programs and further assist their mentees. Our world isn’t as large as it once was, and what had previously been unattainable is now well within our grasp. We must come together as mentoring professionals and create a global community of shared interests to further explore the possibilities of mentoring through technologies.

It’s easy to forget that accessibility to technology is recent, and not every generation is comfortable with implementing it into their programs. Those who aren’t comfortable utilizing technology should consider it as an opportunity for co-learning. Technology natives can assist the previous generations with implementation, and the previous generations can share knowledge and wisdom to the technology natives. The book review on page 6 introduces an older publication that explores this topic in depth.

In keeping with the technology theme, the IMA is pleased to announce that we will now be offering monthly webinars hosted by professionals in the field. This month’s webinar, lead by Ann Rolfe, will focus on evaluating mentoring programs. The webinar in April, lead by Doug Lawrence, will introduce participants to mentoring tomorrow’s leaders. Previous webinars have been well attended by people representing countries from across the globe, and they fill up fast so be sure to secure your place early. The live webinar will be made available to anyone interested in attending, however the recording will be saved for IMA members only.

The IMA’s yearly conference is right around the corner. If you have not yet done so and wish to attend, please register right away. Be aware that hotel rooms are filling up quickly. If you have already registered, we look forward to meeting you!

Nora Dominguez

President

International Mentoring Association





EQUIPPING AND ENABLING NEXT GENERATION LEADERS FOR THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

RACHEL CLEVELAND AND BILLY JOHNSON

Introduction

In a study on college graduates recently released from Gallup- Purdue University, researchers found “that the type of schools these college graduates attended hardly matters at all to their workplace engagement and current well-being” (Ray & Kafka, 2014, p. 2). Rather than having a degree from a certain type of college, they discovered there was a strong correlation between a college graduate being engaged in the workplace and them having a strong, positive college experience that allowed them to be ‘more employable’. The data suggests that where work engagement and well-being are concerned, “the answers may lie in what students are doing in college and how they are experiencing it” (Ray & Kafka, 2014, p. 2). This study strongly supports the need for programs like the Professional Leadership Program, as an integral part of preparing our future workforce and world leaders.

Program Background

The Professional Leadership Program (PLP) at the University of North Texas (UNT) began in 1994 by the Dean for the College of Business at the time. He had a vision to shift the paradigm from a classroom-only learning experience for business students, to one that was experiential based and included essential developing skills and competencies for the marketplace. Over the course of the past twenty-one years, PLP has evolved from a leadership program focused on a select group of business students with around 20 participants receiving limited exposure to business and not for profit leaders, to what is now a diverse program with over 115 participants representing 8 of the 11 colleges on campus. This past year PLP had 80 student participants, broken down into 70% business majors and 30% non-business. Of this population, 35% were from various continents around the world, and spoke a variety of languages and dialects

with English as a second language. Now with more than one thousand alumni in the profit and not for profit sectors across the DFW marketplace, PLP students are representing every industry and field of study.

Through PLP, students are presented with opportunities to network, prepare for internships and full-time employment, and engage with experts in their related industries through mentoring relationships. Each student is assigned a mentor from their respective field of academic or career interest for the one year they are involved with the program. The mentor/mentee matches meet in person or via conference call or video, every four to six weeks. While strong employment opportunities are a goal of the program, the driving principles are to help students gain skills, knowledge, and a servant leadership mentality, thus equipping them to enter into their career with the ability to lead and succeed. This is done through weekly expert content delivery, building mentoring relationships with program mentors, and developing lifelong friendship with other program members. These unique

qualities and balance of in-classroom curriculum with outside mentors is what makes PLP distinctive across the higher education program offerings.

Program Structure

Our leadership team is comprised of two full time university staff members, eight student leaders with many being PLP scholarship recipients, and of course our mentors. Each student applies to participate in the program, interviews and is selected on an individual basis from PLP stakeholders to be granted membership. Once selected, every student is then assigned a mentor for one academic year. Typically matches are based on their future career aspirations or their declared field of study. These mentors come from the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) area, and are highly successful professionals in their respective industries.

In order to be considered for the PLP students must submit an online application of basic information, be a junior, senior or graduate student at UNT, have a minimum GPA of 3.25, and be recommended by two UNT faculty/staff/ or campus student leader. Students must apply in the spring to participate in the academic year-long program which begins every fall semester. Once the online application closes, applicants are assigned an interview conducted by two PLP stakeholders. Students are recruited for their current display of leadership capabilities, their standard of excellence, potential for growth and coachable mentality.

Other program functions include strategic planning and an advisory board function. As a leadership team we establish developmental goals for the academic year, based upon each entering PLP class and all members of the staff and student leaders help to accomplish those goals. The overall purpose of these goals is to provide a compliment of experiential learnings through class lectures from topic experts, panels, and

group exercises that expose the students to best practices. The program also benefits from an advisory board to help with mentor recruitment, curriculum development, and other program needs that may occur throughout the year.

The program delivery model requires the students to attend classes every Wednesday from 4- 6 pm for the entire academic calendar year, select on-campus presentations, participate in planned off-campus business networking, and experientially based field trips throughout the year. The class time each week is split between a business case study project and content delivery. The students engage for the first hour on a real-world case developed for our program from an outside consulting firm. Each week student teams work to solve one step of a critical thinking process, in order to eventually present to the “CEO” of the company with their conclusions. This exercise is meant to promote team leadership, engage them in diverse communications with other students not in their major, to develop presentation skills, along with providing them opportunities to practice critical thinking in a safe environment. Following this hour, the week’s topic is then presented by subject matter experts.

Facilitators and Content Delivery

The goal of equipping and enabling our next generation leaders is twofold. A large portion of how this is accomplished starts with high quality content and innovative curriculum delivered by best in class facilitators. Our facilitators are “subject matter experts” from a variety of industries and not-for-profit sectors across the DFW marketplace. Our professionals have businesses that are national and international in scope, while our not-for-profit professionals come from high impact organizations, with sustainable models and a proven record of investing in the broader North Texas Community. Exposure to both provides our students with an opportunity to learn not only the theoretical side of management and leadership but also the experiential.

During the course of the academic year these facilitators present content on a wide array of topics addressing professional development and life skills. The subject matter ranges from ethics, global awareness, emotional intelligence, and negotiating skills to servant leadership, social entrepreneurialism, and organizational culture. In the normal course of the year we offer 30 classes, through a combination of presentations, panels, and group exercises. Each topic presented has specific learning objectives and learning methodology, along with an online evaluation of the facilitator and reflection component. These classes and experiences are offered as part of the program structure, not a “for credit” course. The PLP student then has embraced the value proposition from the program of experience, exposure, and collaboration. This delivery model, our ability to be intellectually adaptive, and continue to be innovative in our class experiences, is a key to our relevance and sustainability as a program. A balance of these learning and development approaches provides our next generation leaders with the necessary tools and competencies to be effective as individual contributors, subject matter experts, and inevitably leaders of our global workforce.

Mentoring Experience

Mentors for PLP are volunteers recruited from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors across the DFW marketplace, which is the 4th largest financial sector in the world. This exposure to a diverse group of companies and industries provides our students with a wide range of experiences and expertise. The mentor/mentee assignment is a one-year relationship that correlates with the student participant requirements as laid out previously. We assign our mentors using the following filters: academic majors of the mentee, current and past professional experience of the mentor, academic background of the mentors, personality and personal preferences.

In a study of mentoring research conducted by Sipe and Public/Private Ventures, it was found that mentoring has many advantages for the mentor as well as the student or what is often referred to as reverse mentoring. Youth participating in a mentor relationship “experienced fewer unexcused absences from school, demonstrated more positive attitudes toward school, and were more likely to pursue higher education” than those who did not have mentors involved in their lives (Sipe, 1996). One mentor for PLP, Sharon Senna with Fidelity Investments, describes her experience as extremely rewarding. “To

invest in a student’s success through sharing your insights and experiences is an honor. As with most things in life, the success of a mentoring relationship is a result of both parties approaching the experience with passion, commitment, honesty, and remembering to have fun along the journey” (Senna, Personal Interview). Mentoring is not a one-sided experience. It is mutually beneficial to all parties involved and is what makes our program even more valuable to both mentors and students in equipping them for life experiences.

Closing Remarks

While there is research available for the benefits of mentoring, the theories of leadership, and the impact it can have on young adults, there is very limited data on college-aged student mentoring specifically for career preparation. We are thankful to have a program dedicated to the development of our future leaders, but we also understand the responsibility to share our structure, program curriculum, and outcomes with others in order to reach the next generation. The burden of equipping and enabling them to be leaders is not something solely found in the classroom. It is found through mentoring relationships, building a servant leadership mentality, and providing them core workplace competencies.

REFERENCES ON PAGE 21

Rachel Cleveland currently serves as the Assistant Director for the Professional Leadership Program within the College of Business. Prior to joining the UNT family, Rachel served as the Director of Selection for a financial firm in the Dallas area. She spent two years recruiting and developing intern and full time candidates for careers in the financial industry. Rachel holds a Bachelors of Business Administration from Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she was involved with the music industry during and following her college years. Following her time in the industry, Rachel moved back to Dallas to further her education and better equip herself for the fulfillment of her passion: serving college students. She completed her Masters of Education in Higher Education Administration at Dallas Baptist University in 2010 and is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Education from the University of North Texas with interest in studying and understanding the affects of mentoring on college students.

Billy E. Johnson is the Executive Director of the Professional Leadership Program (PLP). Under Billy’s leadership, the vision is to grow the program by 35% annually and be able to serve more than 250 students in year 2018, from various Academic disciplines, and to become a national model for student leadership programs. Billy comes to UNT from Deloitte Services, where he served in his last assignment as National Talent Director on the Deloitte University PMO, and as a Liaison to the Global Learning & Talent Development Organization. Prior to this assignment, he served as the National Talent Director for the Audit Practice of Deloitte & Touche LLP. In this role, he was part of a Team of Talent Professionals that delivered a variety of HR services & products to Client Service Professionals in the largest professional services organization in the world. Billy is a graduate of Pepperdine University where he received his Masters Degree in Public Administration, and he completed his undergraduate studies in Political Science at California State University - Northridge. Billy serves on local and national boards and has served as a Mentor for PLP for 5 years.