Developing Virtuous Leaders and Culture in Higher Education: The Texas Tech University System's Academy for Lifelong Leaders

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Scott Parsons, Jason Weber, and Steve Sosland

Abstract

Many people observe a dearth of leaders of character in our world. The Texas Tech University System's Office of Leader and Culture Development created the Academy for Lifelong Leaders to develop faculty, staff, and students of character prepared to address the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

In this paper, we discuss how the Academy for Lifelong Leaders provides character and leader development across five universities through organizational Values Summits and six virtues-focused people development programs:

Our Values Initiative |Emerging Leaders |Student Leader Development Program |Next-Level Leaders |Leader Foundations |One Team Fellows.

Key Words

Character, Character Strengths, Virtues, Values, Leadership, Leaders, Leader Development, Values Summits, Higher Education, University System, Texas Tech,

Introduction

In recent years, institutions and systems of higher education have added character education and character development to the focus, goals, and mission statements. Most of the focus is on the 'how' for students such as the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues' Framework for Character Education in Schools[1], the Oxford Character Project and Jubilee Centre collaboration on Character Education in Universities: A Framework for Flourishing[2], and Lamb, Brant, and Brooks' Seven Strategies for Postgraduate Character Development[3]. There is also an effort to focus on faculty development, primarily helping educators introduce character and virtue into their classrooms such as Such as Arizona State's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Principled Innovation Project[4], and Notre Dame's Virtues and Vocations Integrating Virtue Together[5] program.

[1] For more information, please go to https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Framework-for-Character-Education-2.pdf.
[2] For more information, please go to https://oxfordcharacter.org/resources/character-education-in-universities-a-framework-for-flourishing.
[3] For more information, please go to https://academic.oup.com/book/43063/chapter-abstract/361496934?redirectedFrom=fulltext.
[4] For more information, please go to https://pi.education.asu.edu/.
[5] For more information, please go to https://socialconcerns.nd.edu/virtues/.

The Texas Tech University System (TTU System) has taken a novel approach to character development and character education. The approach is not just for selected faculty or a specific program within one university; Texas Tech is using a comprehensive system design. The TTU System provides character and leader development to faculty, staff, and students at all five universities in the system. The TTU System believes that it must create a culture based on shared values across the entire system to foster character and leader development.

The journey began in 2018, when Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC), one of the five universities within the TTU System, began an initiative to identify values through a collaborative effort between faculty, staff, students, and community members. TTUHSC created people development programs to operationalize the values and guiding behaviors and integrate them into daily life.

In 2021, the TTU System established the office of Office of Leader and Culture Development (L&CD) with the mission to develop a broader framework that encompasses the complexities and desires of each component institution. L&CD created the Academy for Lifelong Leaders framework. The framework, in the image of a compass, contains eight areas of leader competencies that informs how the L&CD office develops virtuous leader initiatives:

* Values
* Character
* Ethics
* Self-Development
* Management
* Decision Making
* Communication
* Organizational Acumen

In this paper, we discuss how the office of L&CD provides character and leader development across the five universities through Values Summits and development programs: *Our Values Initiative*, *Emerging Leaders*, *Student Leader Development Program*, *Next-Level Leaders*, *Leader Foundations*, and *One Team Fellows* programs.

The Texas Tech University System

Formed in 1996, and formally established by the State of Texas three years later in 1999, the TTU System has emerged as one of the top public university systems in the nation and is a dynamic force in higher education. Today, the TTU System consists of five component institutions and operates at multiple campuses and academic sites across the state and globe.[6] The mission of the TTU System is to provide leadership and support services for Texas Tech University[7], Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center[8], Angelo State University[9], Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso[10], and Midwestern State University[11] in the fulfillment of each component institution's individual mission.

The TTU System is governed, controlled, and directed by a 10-member Board of Regents[12] (including one student regent) appointed by the Governor of Texas and confirmed by the

[6] https://www.texastech.edu/about.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[7] https://www.ttu.edu/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[8] https://www.ttuhsc.edu/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[9] https://www.angelo.edu/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[10] https://elpaso.ttuhsc.edu/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[11] https://msutexas.edu/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[12] https://www.texastech.edu/board-of-regents/index.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)

Texas State Legislature. The Board of Regents is guided by the Regents' Rules and Regulations[13] and upholds the operating policies of each member institution. Chancellor Tedd L. Mitchell, M.D.[14], serves as the CEO of the TTU System, a position appointed by the Board of Regents. Dr. Mitchell works collaboratively with the Board of Regents, the TTU System Administration Executive Leadership Team[15] and university presidents[16] to enhance the TTU System's profile and support shared missions of advancing higher education, health care, research, and community engagement. Each of the five institutions has a president who is appointed by the Chancellor and Board of Regents, serves as CEO of the university and is responsible for its strategic operation.

Office of Leader and Culture Development

In 2021, the TTU System established the Office of Leader and Culture Development (L&CD) charged with developing a broader framework that encompasses the complexities and desires of each component institution. The L&CD Office offers services to the TTU System Administration and to component institutions of the TTU System related to people development and integration of culture based on the shared core values of each individual university or system entity. Our values-based culture creates an environment with a defined purpose.

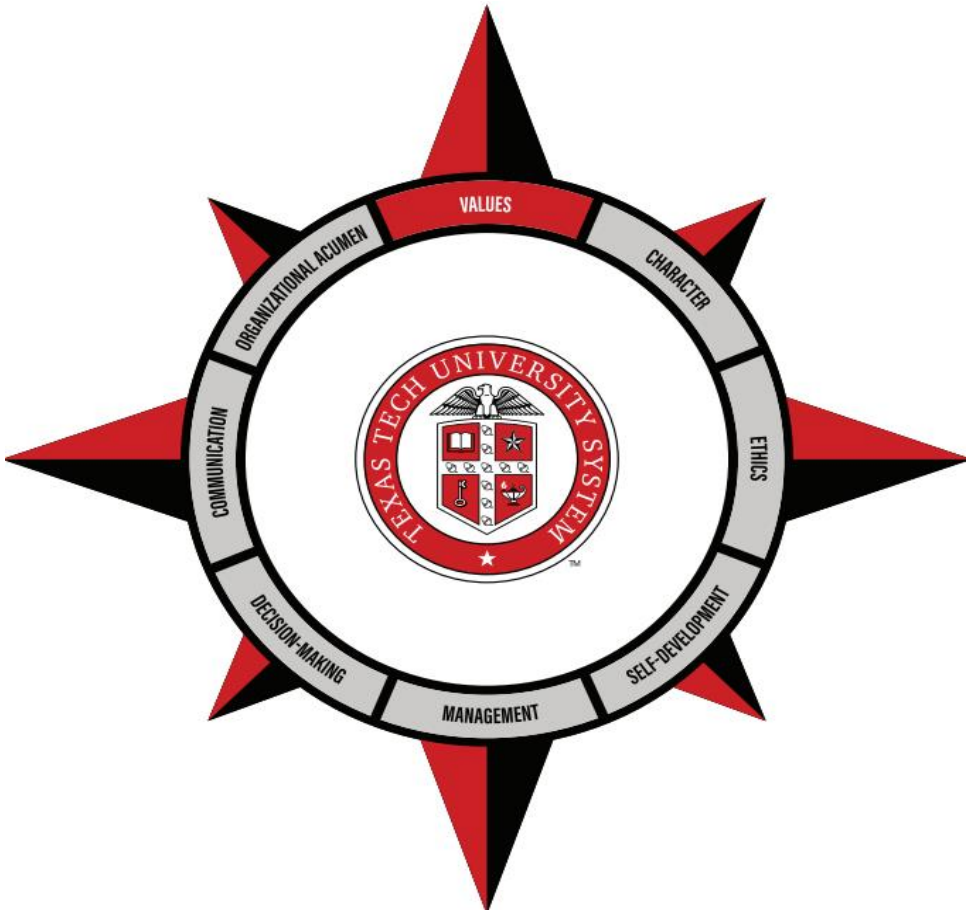
Our vision, in the office of L&CD is that by December 2025, the TTU System will be a nationally recognized institution for developing life-long leaders of character.

Our mission is to develop leaders of character in values-based organizations.

Our purpose is to grow the capacity and capability of all who use our programs.

Key terms important to our vision, mission, and purpose are Character, Values, Virtues, and Ethics. While the office of L&CD's definitions of these key terms are very similar to the way many organizations and institutions define them, are specific definitions are as follows: Values are an individual's deeply held beliefs that serve as the principles to guide one's behaviors. Character is the consistently demonstrated values that define a person. Virtues are the aspirational human character traits developed over time. Ethics is the appreciation of one's character in a challenging situation.
The L&CD office supports the values-based culture and leadership initiatives for the TTU System and its component universities through two primary means: Values Summits and the Academy of Lifelong Leaders. We use a compass as a symbol of the journey we are on to create a sustainable values-based culture and develop leaders of character.

[13] https://www.texastech.edu/board-of-regents/regents-rules.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[14] https://www.texastech.edu/chancellor/tedd-l-mitchell.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[15] https://www.texastech.edu/executive-leadership.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[16] https://www.texastech.edu/universities/index.php (Accessed: 23 November 2023)



TTU System Compass

The L&CD office created the Academy for Lifelong Leaders framework. The framework, in the image of a compass, contains eight points, or areas of leader competencies that inform how the office of L&CD develops virtuous leader initiatives:

* Values
* Character
* Ethics
* Self-Development
* Management
* Decision Making
* Communication
* Organizational Acumen

Compass Competency: Values

Each of us possesses a moral compass programmed by parents, teachers, coaches, grandparents, clergy, friends, and peers. The compass is an integral part of our being. It continues to differentiate between proper and improper behavior until the day we die.

— John Huntsman, Former Utah Governor

In her book, *Built on Values*,[17] Ann Rhoades tells us that leaders drive values by making the commitment to a values-based culture where they lead by example. Many organizations make the mistake of having a very small group of senior leaders name the values for others to live by. We believe leaders create environments that allow team members to live their personal core values that drive their behaviors. Our collective behaviors – how we choose to act – determines our organizational culture. Unhealthy cultures put people and the goals of the organization at risk. We choose to build healthy, sustainable cultures based on the values of the people in our universities and system teams.

Compass Competency: Character

"Character defined as virtue has a profound performance impact on culture, teamwork, resiliency, coaching, families, innovation, diversity and more."

—R.C. Buford, Chief Executive Officer for Spurs Sports and Entertainment.

"See what a man does. Examine in what things he rests. How can a man conceal his character?" —Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC).

David Gergen, former Presidential advisor, noted that "character without capacity usually means weakness in a leader, but capacity without character means danger".

Character is the pattern of behavior and decisions in a person's life that is influenced by the virtues they have developed. There are different types and classifications of virtues[18]:

MORAL VIRTUES – Character traits that respect the humanity of ourselves and others. Examples: *courage, compassion, honesty, justice, respect*.

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES – Character traits that develop the habit of life-long learning and thinking, enabling the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Examples: *autonomy, critical thinking, judgment, reasoning, reflection.*

CIVIC VIRTUES – Character traits that serve the common good, enabling thriving communities. Examples: *citizenship, civility, neighborliness, service, volunteering*.

PERFORMANCE VIRTUES – Character traits that make it possible for intentions to be realized, enabling excellent work and the achievement of goals. Examples: *confidence, motivation, perseverance, resilience, teamwork.*

[17] Rhodes, A. (2011) *Built on Values: Creating an Enviable Culture that Outperforms the Competition*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[18] For more information on virtues, please see the Jubilee Centre's Framework for Virtue-Based Professional Ethics at https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Framework_Virtue_Based_Prof_Ethics.pdf

PHRONESIS – the virtue that enables us to perceive, understand, and act admirably, in complex situations. This includes discerning what to do and how to do it in situations where there is no good option and our other virtues conflict with one another.

The Character competency in the TTU System Compass is designed to develop the distinctive virtues one must possess to be successful while leading others. Participants in the Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs discuss these virtues and understand the traits that will make them effective leaders within the Texas Tech System, and beyond.

Compass Competency: Ethics

Ethics is knowing the difference between knowing what we have a right to do and what is right to do.

— Potter Stewart, former Associate Supreme Court Justice

Ethics is the application of the moral principles of our character to the daily decisions we make in our lives. Michael Beer, Harvard Business School professor, and author of *Fit to Compete* says, "The road to your higher ethical ambition starts with personal reflection about your values and purpose in life. Take the time to have an honest conversation with yourself to help figure out what matters to you, and where your ethics lie."[19]

In their book, *The Power of Ethical Management*[20], authors Ken Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale, describe five traits of ethical leaders:

PURPOSE – Be driven by your purpose and use it to guide your actions.

PRIDE – Show a sense of healthy pride. Unlike false pride, which stems from a distorted sense of self-importance, healthy pride springs from a positive self-image and confidence in one's abilities.

PATIENCE – Have faith that things will work out well as long as you adhere to your values and principles.

PERSISTENCE – Stay the course and remain true to your purpose and values.

PERSPECTIVE – Keep the big picture in mind and understand what's truly important.

Marianne Jennings, a professor of applied ethics at Arizona State University and author of *Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*[21], consults with senior leaders on how to avoid unethical decisions in their organizations. She has identified seven reasons that companies and nonprofits undergo ethical collapse:

[19] Beer, M. (2021) 'How to Be a Leader Who Stays True to Their Ethics', *Harvard Business Review*, 15 September. Available at https://hbr.org/2021/09/how-to-be-a-leader-who-stays-true-to-their-ethics-2 (Accessed: 23 November 2023)
[20] Blanchard, K. and Peale, N.V. (1988) *The Power of Ethical Management*, New York: William Morrow, pp.42–79.
[21] Jennings, M.M. (2005) *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

· Pressure to maintain numbers

· Fear and silence

· Young 'uns and a larger-than-life CEO

· A weak board

· Conflicts

· Innovation like no other

· Belief that goodness in some areas atones for wrongdoing in others

Participants in the Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs participate in case-study discussions about ethical decisions they are likely to face in their organizations and at their level of responsibility in the university and beyond.

Compass Competency: Self-Development

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening my axe.

— Abraham Lincoln

In Stephen R. Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the seventh habit is Sharpen the Saw – Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.[22] He tells the story of walking upon someone in the woods feverishly trying to saw down a tree. The person inquires of the tree cutter, "You look exhausted. Why don't you take a break and sharpen your saw? I am sure the saw will cut much faster if you do." The tree cutter responds, "I don't have time to do that. I am too busy sawing the tree."

We all need time for self-renewal. Time to recharge and reinvigorate ourselves for the work to come. We need to acquire new tools and sharpen the ones we use regularly. According to Covey, there are four dimensions of self-renewal[23]: MENTAL – Gaining knowledge and visualizing how to use it. SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL – Building relationships and service to others. SPIRITUAL – Realigning with our values, personal meditation or prayer and individual study. PHYSICAL – Focusing on nutrition, exercise, and stress management.

Effective leaders build endurance for the long journey of their careers. This includes building positive habits in each of the four dimensions of self-renewal. The Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs allow participants to create personal development plans in each of the dimensions of renewal and select accountability partners to help each other progress through their plan.

[22] Covey, S.R. (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 287.
[23] Covey, S.R. (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 288.

Compass Competency: Management

Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right.[24]

— Warren Bennis, Leadership Scholar

There are two common schools of thought on the differences between management and leadership:

1) All leaders are managers, but not all managers make good leaders.

2) All managers are good leaders, but all leaders are not good managers.

Both Warren Bennis and Peter Drucker[25], two of the most prolific authors on this topic, have similar versions of the opening quote. The point they make is not about trying to label individuals as managers or leaders, but rather understanding that both leadership and management are critical functions needed for an effective organization.

We need people who can create a vision, inspire, galvanize, and get results (leading); and we need people who can plan, staff, organize, prepare, implement, control, and measure results (managing). Sometimes, and in some organizations, one person may be able to fill both roles. Often the roles are filled by separate individuals.

Leaders must ensure the functions of management are in place for the organization to run effectively. Ken Blanchard says in his seminal book, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*[26], managers need to use "different strokes (leadership styles) for different folks", depending on their competence and commitment in their present job. This compass point focuses on the functions of a manager. How do we manage ourselves? How do we manage teams? How do we manage large organizations? The scale may be different, but the challenges are similar. What processes do we put in place to ensure consistent, predictable, positive results? We scale our Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs for management challenges faced in different levels of leadership and tailor the curriculum to fit specific challenges in that university or system entity.

Compass Competency: Decision-Making

There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long-range risks of comfortable inaction. — John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the U.S.

[24] Bennis, W. (1994) *An Invented Life: Reflections on Leadership and Change*, New York: Perseus Books Group, p. 78.
[25] Drucker, D. (1966) *The Effective Executive*, New York: Harper Books, pp. ix–xi.
[26] Blanchard, K., Zigarmi, P. and Zigarmi, D. (1985) *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, New York: William Morrow, pp. 12–14.

Decision-making is a learned competence. We can learn to make good decisions from others – trusted mentors, friends, and colleagues. We can learn through our own experiences of successes and failures. We can also learn the processes of decision-making.

This compass point focuses on decision-making processes for individuals and those in a collaborative team environment. We discuss how our values inform us during difficult decisions, how to make decisions with limited resources, how to gather critical input, how to make timely decisions, and how to make decisions when leading through a crisis.

We study and understand the practice of bringing together highly believable people who are willing to engage in thoughtful disagreement to enhance the quality of decision-making and increase the chance of success.

We use case studies and historical examples to learn from others and discuss what we do when faced with similar challenges. Then applying lessons learned, we develop algorithms based on values and principles to speed the decision-making process and tailor the methodology to fit the university.

Our Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs are scaled for the decisions typically made at that leader level and tailored for unique challenges being faced by that university.

Compass Competency: Communication

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

— George Bernhard Shaw, Irish Playwright

When Stephen R. Covey was writing his most famous book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in the 1980's, most organizations' people development programs centered on individual growth and independence. His first three habits acknowledged this and focused on the principles of Personal Vision, Personal Leadership, and Personal Management.

Covey's next three habits helped lead the transformation from independence to interdependence, collaboration, and breaking through silos. These habits focused on the principles of Interpersonal Leadership, Empathetic Communication, and Creative Cooperation.

This new focus on interdependence meant that the one-way, directive communication that had been so much of our organizational development history, would no longer work effectively as we transitioned to new generations in the workplace. It became increasingly important to develop the next generation of leaders by listening to them and empowering them to learn, lead and communicate effectively.

In 2004, 15 years after writing the *Seven Habits*, Covey wrote a book focusing on an eighth habit: Find your voice and inspire others to find theirs[27]. Covey asks us to listen to understand, assume good intentions, and respond rather than react.

[27] Covey, S.R. (2004) *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Our Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs reminds participants of the values and desired behaviors to which we committed during our Values Summit.

Compass Competency: Organizational Acumen

Success flourishes when employees execute the organization's strategy and connect its success to their personal accomplishments. — Henrik Ekelund, President & CEO of BTS

Industrial-organizational Psychologist Marta Wilson explains, "People who have mastered organizational acumen exhibit an understanding of how their organizations work and how different elements influence or interact with one another. Organizational acumen includes knowledge of systems, people, structures, and processes that work together to make the enterprise healthy or unhealthy. In a leading-edge workforce, organizationally masterful individuals talk matter-of-factly about the value chain including people, processes, inputs, suppliers, outputs, customers, and outcomes."[28]

Effective individuals master their required competencies, build strong relationships, and get results in their part of the organization. For many, the pace of our daily work causes us to keep our heads down, focus on the tasks in front of us, and work closely with those in our own silos.[29]

According to Robert Kaplan and David Norton, "A mere 7% of employees today fully understand their organization's strategies and what is expected of them in order to help achieve organizational goals."[30]

Our Academy programs will introduce participants to the organizational structure of each entity within the Texas Tech University System. We will review the purpose, vision, and mission for each university and the TTU System Administration. We will review the budget process, funding sources, and the grant proposal procedures. We will get an overview of relevant State Laws, Regents Rules, System Regulations, and Operating Policies.

Participants in our Academy for Lifelong Leaders programs build relationships and work closely with others from different parts of the System in order to create synergies to enrich their work.

Values Summits

The L&CD office works across the TTU System to identify existing core values that individuals share and then codifies those values with desired behaviors, creating a framework of accountability for all stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

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[28] Wilson, M. (2015) 'Not Just Another Buzz Word: Motivational and Organizational Acumen, *Marta Wilson Blog*, 15 September. Available at https://martawilson.com/motivational-and-organizational-acumen/ (Accessed: 23 November 2023)

[29] Lencioni, P. (2012) *Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[30] Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (2000) *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

We involve a broad collection of stakeholder groups in an initial values summit where we identify and define shared values and write desired behaviors that indicate when we are living those values. Subsequent work is to develop a collaborative, cross-silo values council at each entity to integrate the values into operational processes including hiring, recognition, and promotions.

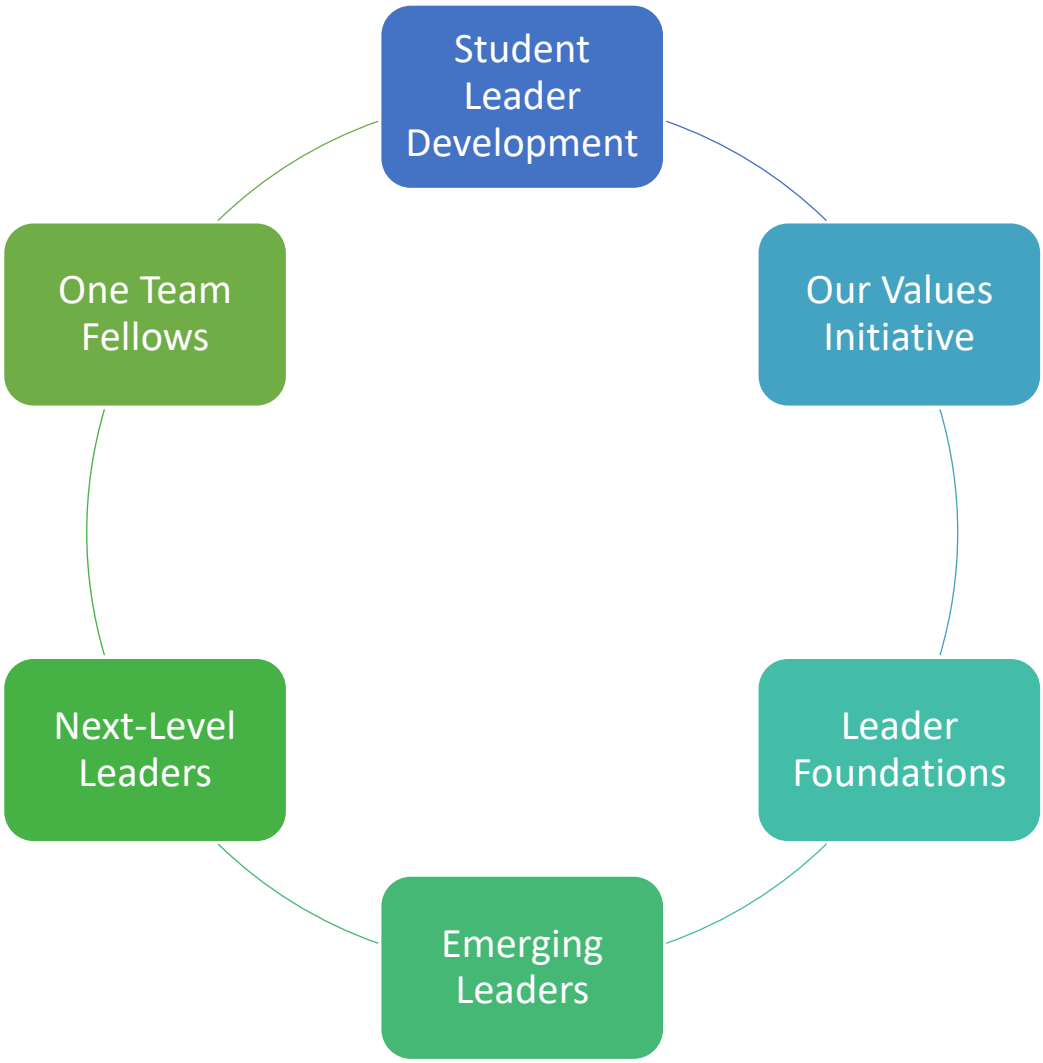
The first Values Summit took place in 2018 at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC), one of the five universities within the TTU System. TTUHSC used the Values Summit to clearly define their shared core values and desirable behaviors that will shape the culture of their team. The values came from the collective hearts and minds of all the team members. TTUHSC invited a diverse team of 104 people from all their campuses, schools, and many of their managed care locations to ensure robust discussions. No one person knew everyone in the room. At the summit, there were two ground rules. Everyone participates and no one dominates. They collaborated and they debated. By the end of the summit, they left as one team, united in their goal to bring a draft of their values and corresponding desirable behaviors to the entire TTUHSC team to review. The next step in the journey was to conduct listening tours where they held 91 townhall meetings where they presented the draft of their values and behaviors to the TTUHSC Team. They heard from over 2500 team members who gave them valuable feedback. In some cases, they validated the work of the Values Summit team. In other cases, they provided clarification or enhanced the original draft. Today, over five years after they held their Values Summit, their values-based culture is going strong.

While TTUHSC was the first organization within the system to hold a Values Summit, the office of L&CD continues to hold Values Summits and townhall meetings throughout the TTU System to include departments, colleges, and institutions across all five of the constituent universities helping them begin their values journeys with values summits. Organizations are signing up to add Values Summits to the organizational health plan.

Leader Development Programs

We designed these programs to complement each other. Each one can also serve as a stand-alone program to align with the specific needs of teams or universities.

We offer both face-to-face and virtual programs throughout each calendar year. In addition to presenting these programs, we conduct monthly webinars, team-specific training events, and a development podcast available to all members of the Texas Tech University System.



Student Leader Development Program

We designed this semester-long program to provide students foundational knowledge of what it means to be a leader. We emphasize developing self-awareness and gaining insight into how to navigate teams outside of the university setting. We pair students with an executive coach throughout this program to help them develop their skills on communication, conflict management, time management, and overall leadership skills. We conclude with a project that is aimed at enhancing their university through the student perspective.

Our Values Initiative

This six-month program at the university level focuses on each of the values for the specific university. We focus each session on developing a broader understanding of how team members can operationalize the values in their role.

Leader Foundations

This six-month program provides foundation training for those aspiring to be leaders and those who are in their first leadership role. We provide a framework for leaders to effectively lead teams and to bring the universities values to life.

Emerging Leaders

This nine-month program helps new leaders and those who seek to develop additional skills in how to effectively lead their teams. Content is focused on topics such as emotional intelligence, managing conflict, motivating your team, and leading for results.

Next-Level Leaders

This nine-month program is for seasoned leaders. Content focuses on each of the leader compass points and is delivered through Socratic methodology. Participants engage in discussion, journaling, and self-reflection with the goal of better understanding who they are as a leader.

One Team Fellows

Our flagship program, this 12-month experience is intended for senior leaders across the Texas Tech University System. Participants will engage in case study analysis, readings, group projects, and other experiential learning events to enhance their understanding of the workings within and across the Texas Tech University System.

Conclusion

While many people observe a dearth of leaders of character in our world, the TTU System and the Office of L&CD created a novel approach to leader development, character development, and character education. Our approach is a comprehensive system design that provides development opportunities to faculty, staff, and students at all five universities in the system.
We believe that we must create a culture based on shared values across the entire system to foster character and leader development so the people of the TTU System are prepared to address the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

We the authors, encourage you to engage with us on the topics discussed in our paper and encourage you to come out and see for yourself, what the TTU System and the Office of L&CD are doing in our Values Summits, townhalls, and the six leader development programs in our Academy of Lifelong Leaders.