leadershape

to lead, live.

THE LEADERSHAPE INSTITUTE

DEVELOPMENTAL GAINS IN STUDENT LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

2013–2014

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THE LEADERSHAPE INSTITUTE:

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2013—2014

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OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

The results from a year long national study of the LeaderShape Institute that included 21 universities and 1,333 students suggest that students who participate in the six-day residential program experience lasting gains in their leadership capacity. Students reported the largest gains in their transformational and ethical leadership skills, as well as their confidence in leading their peers. The increase in their leadership capacity in these areas lasted months after the conclusion of the Institute.

While incoming leadership skill differences exist across subgroups of students, after participating and months later, these gaps in skill decrease or disappear in many areas. Women enter with lower degrees of self-reported leadership skill and confidence compared to men, but make larger gains. Months later, the gender gap in both areas had disappeared. Students who entered the Institute with little to no prior leadership experience reported larger gains in skill and confidence than their peers, while the gaps in leadership capacity between themselves and others was significantly reduced. In addition, freshman and seniors, compared to sophomores and juniors, displayed larger gains in their confidence in leading.

Students also made lasting gains in their reported commitment to advocate for issues of social justice and responsibility. While students from underrepresented backgrounds entered with elevated levels of commitment compared to majority students, these differences disappeared at the conclusion of the Institute, and in some cases had reversed months later.

WHO IS LEADERSHAPE?

LeaderShape (www.leadershape.org) is an independent not-for-profit corporation whose vision is to create a just, caring, and thriving world where all lead with integrity and a healthy disregard for the impossible. LeaderShape develops and administers leadership development curriculum along this regard, both for programs it manages itself, and by partnering with over 100 universities and organizations affiliated with higher education. Most programs take place in the United States, while LeaderShape has partnered with institutions in Canada, Mexico, Qatar, and South Africa.

WHAT IS THE INSTITUTE?

The Institute—previously known as The LeaderShape Institute—was originally developed in 1986 by Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity. Designed as an "immersion" experience, the Institute encompasses six days of interconnected curriculum focused on teaching the skills of leadership with a sense of personal values and integrity. Typically, the number of student participants range from 30 to 70. In the Institute, participants engage within a larger "learning community" consisting of all members participating during the six days and in smaller groups, called "family clusters," for deeper interaction. Institutes are facilitated by staff trained by LeaderShape and if they take place within a university setting, with partners from that campus. Since 1986, LeaderShape has hosted over 55,000 students in completing the Institute.

PAST RESEARCH ON THE INSTITUTE

Prior research within graduate students' unpublished Masters theses and PhD dissertations (Dial, 2002; Pugh, 1998; Stoker, 2010) has indicated the positive effects of the Institute on the students who participate within it. Their results show that students report the Institute as helpful to their leadership development and beneficial to their ability to lead with integrity. Stoker's study focused on alumni perceptions of the impact of the Institute years after participating, for example, and revealed that more than 9 in 10 survey respondents felt the Institute was important to their development as an emerging leader. A study coordinated by LeaderShape staff ("Research and Evaluation," http://leadershape.org/Institute#results-research) indicated that six months after participating, 95% of Institute completers in 2009 felt that their experience was valuable for developing their capacity to lead.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

While this past research has been helpful in understanding the general association between student leadership development and participation in the Institute, this study was created to engage in a rigorous, longitudinal, and psychometrically sound national study of Institute sessions. Part of a larger and recent emphasis on understanding the process of student leadership development (Dugan & Komives, 2010), this study sought to understand the broad-based effects on the leadership development of students who participate in a well-known leadership program focused on college students. This included how participation is associated with changes in students' leadership skill and confidence and motivation to engage in leadership behaviors.

A FRAMEWORK OF COMPREHENSIVE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Most colleges and universities today utilize a model of leadership development that would be conceptualized as "post-industrial" in nature. In such a model, leadership is taught as values-based, collaborative, and authentic in developing relationships with others to create common good and sustainable change. To be successful in an environment where leaders display these attributes, students should focus on developing a broad-based capacity to lead that encompasses leadership skill, motivation to engage in leadership behaviors, and a sense of self-confidence in leading peers. Each area – skill, motivation, and confidence – reinforce the development of the others, creating momentum for long-lasting leadership capacity development. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Leadership Skill

Today's leaders are often called to advance organizational agendas while they develop collaborative and values-based relationships with their peers. Therefore, we measured "transformational" leadership skills: a student's capacity to build authentic relationships, inspire peers, adhere to broad ethical standards, and create sustainable change. We also assessed "transactional" leadership: the capacity to create a motivating system of work within a team to achieve goals. Lastly, given the Institute's heavy emphasis on character building, we also assessed ethical leadership skill: a student's capacity to act in ways that adhere to societal and organizational standards and "do the right thing."

Motivation to Lead

To act as a leader, students often are first motivated to do so. Therefore, we were interested in assessing students' incoming and outgoing motivation to engage in leadership behaviors. Motivation to lead stems from three distinct areas: 1) "Affective-identity" motivation to lead results from an inner vision of oneself as a leader. "I choose to lead because I am a leader." 2) "Non-calculative" motivation to lead results from the absence of a self-centered cost-benefit analysis of engaging in leadership. "I choose to lead even if I don't personally benefit from the privileges of leading." 3) "Social normative" motivation to lead stems from one's sense of responsibility to lead felt from within one's group. "I lead because I feel my group expects me to." Each area can reinforce the others to further increase one's motivation to lead.

The Institute is heavily focused on issues important to society, including social justice and social entrepreneurship topics. Therefore, we were also interested in assessing students' growth in motivation to advocate for social issues that are important to them, specifically related to issues of social justice and responsibility.

Leadership Confidence

Students will more often act as a leader when they have confidence in leading, or leadership "self-efficacy." Armed with a sense that their actions are likely to be successful, they will often carry themselves differently, and likely volunteer to lead their peers more often and with more energy and effort.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Bowling Green State University
Central Michigan University
College of Charleston
Colorado State University
Denison University
Dominican University of California
   (Bay Area Consortium)
East Tennessee State University
Eastern Michigan University
Elmhurst College
Florida State University

Indiana University
Lehigh University
Ohio State University
Penn State University
Tulane University
UNC-Chapel Hill
University of Alabama
University of Georgia
University of Michigan
University of Tennessee-Chattanooga
University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse

LeaderShape also hosted four "National Sessions" in 2014, where individual students from a variety of universities participate. This population of students was also included within the study.

OUR RESEARCH DESIGN

Our data collection procedures focused on a pre-test/post-test/follow-up test design, where students completed: 1) A pre-test to establish baseline characteristics prior to participating in the Institute, often a week or two prior to the session, 2) A post-test immediately following the Institute, often before leaving the retreat site, and 3) A follow-up test administered 3-4 months after Institute participation (depending on the particular campus's academic calendar). This longitudinal design allowed us to examine the extent of both immediately-felt gains in capacity as well as lasting gains, assessed in the context of each student's more typical life outside of the retreat setting of the Institute.
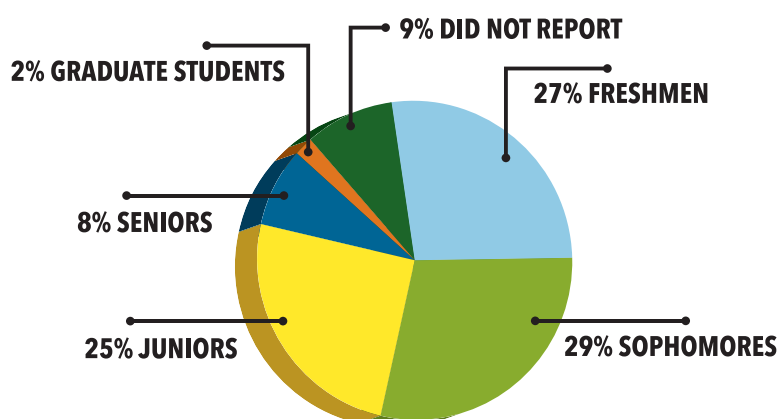
We measured transformational and transactional leadership using the Leader Behavior Scale (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990) and ethical leadership using the Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). To assess leadership confidence we utilized the Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale (Murphy, 1992). To measure the three aspects of motivation to lead we used the Motivation to Lead Scale (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Lastly, to assess students' commitment to social issues and advocacy, we utilized an adapted version of the Social Issues Advocacy Scale (Nilsson, Marszalek, Linnemeyer, Bahner, & Misialek, 2011).

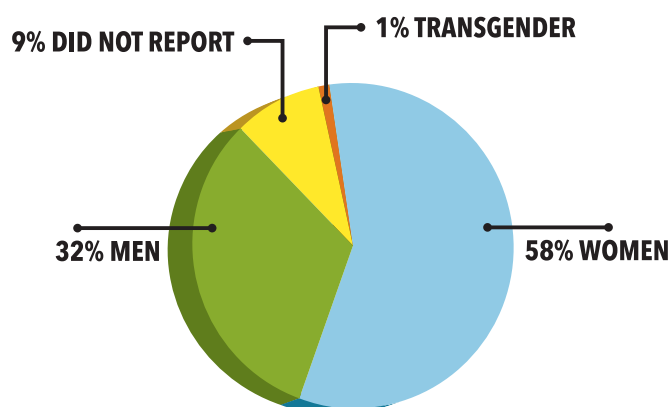**Pre-test** → **Post-test** → **Follow up test** 3-4 months later

THE STUDENT POPULATION

Program Coordinators (PCs) on every campus that hosts the Institute make every effort to recruit a diverse group of student participants each year. Among our 21 participating institutions, most students contributed to at least two of the three waves of data collection. A total of **1,333 students participated** in the first wave; 1,279 (96% of the initial group) in the second wave; and 343 (26%) in the follow-up wave 3-4 months later. This population of students possessed diverse characteristics with regard to class year, gender, race, citizenship, sexual orientation, and prior experience with leadership activities and developmental opportunities. The group of students who completed the follow-up wave, while smaller in number, displayed no differences from those who did not complete this wave of data collection with regard to their pre-test and post-test leadership scores, nor their social identity characteristics. For the following demographic variables, the numbers reported are those students who completed at least the pre-test survey.
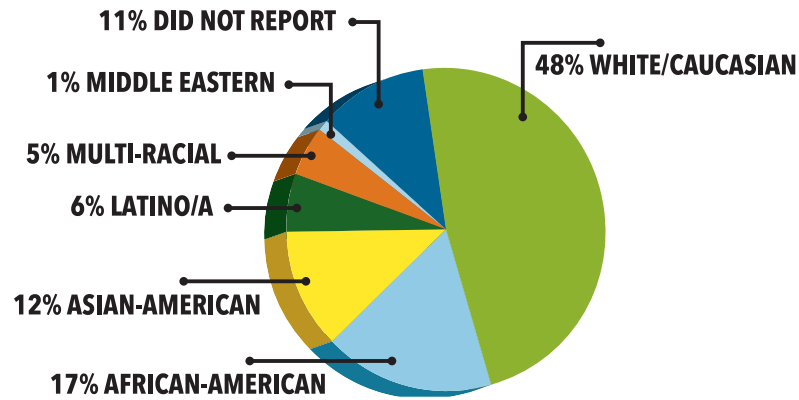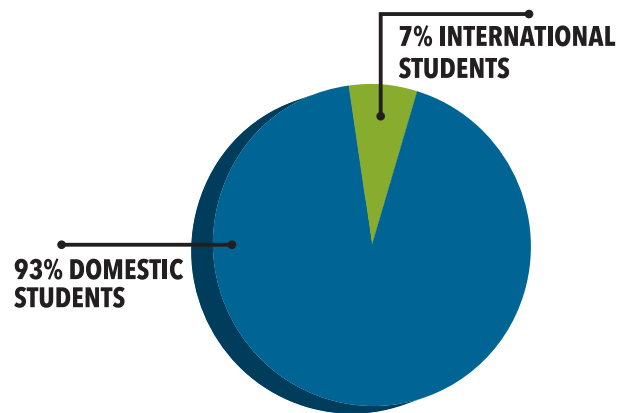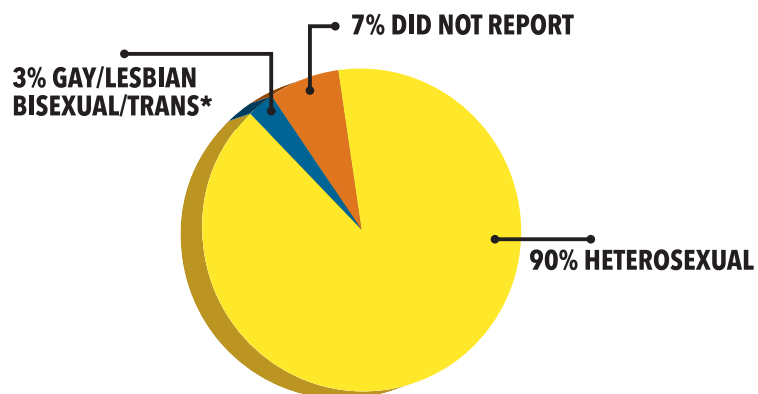
Class Year

2% GRADUATE STUDENTS

9% DID NOT REPORT

27% FRESHMEN

8% SENIORS

25% JUNIORS

29% SOPHOMORES

Gender

9% DID NOT REPORT

1% TRANSGENDER

32% MEN

58% WOMEN

Race

- 11% DID NOT REPORT
- 1% MIDDLE EASTERN
- 5% MULTI-RACIAL
- 6% LATINO/A
- 12% ASIAN-AMERICAN
- 17% AFRICAN-AMERICAN
- 48% WHITE/CAUCASIAN

International Status

- 7% INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- 93% DOMESTIC STUDENTS

Sexual Orientation

- 7% DID NOT REPORT
- 3% GAY/LESBIAN BISEXUAL/TRANS*
- 90% HETEROSEXUAL
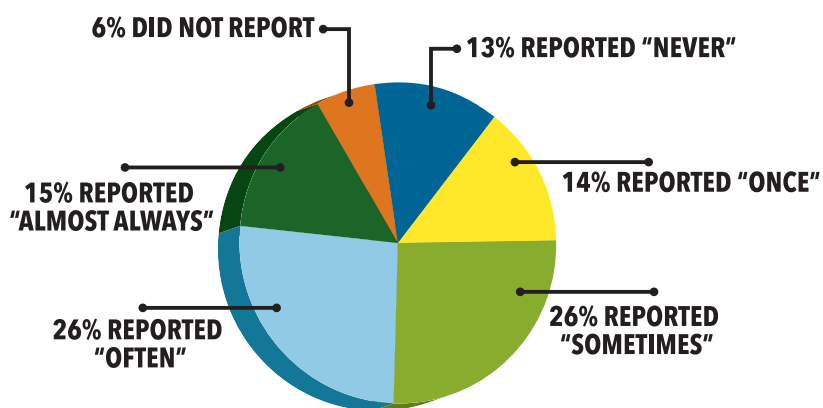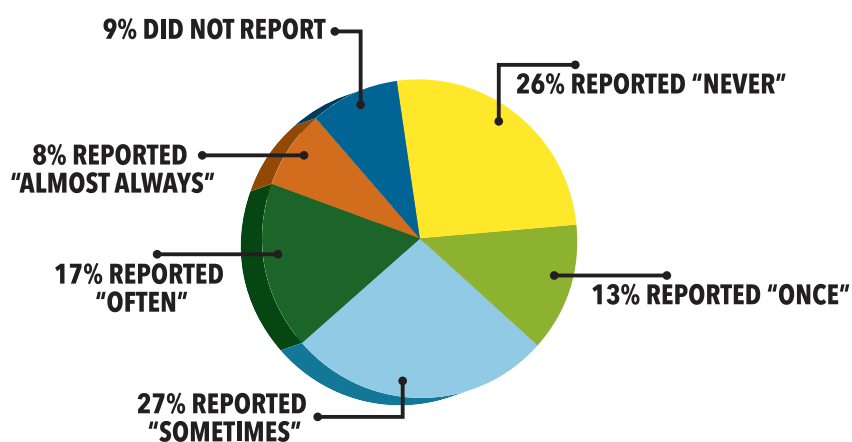
PRIOR LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

We measured prior leadership experience in two ways, how often students have occupied a leadership position in a group or team, and how often they have received leadership development training.

Leadership Positions

6% DID NOT REPORT

13% REPORTED "NEVER"

14% REPORTED "ONCE"

15% REPORTED "ALMOST ALWAYS"

26% REPORTED "SOMETIMES"

26% REPORTED "OFTEN"

Leadership Training

9% DID NOT REPORT

26% REPORTED "NEVER"

8% REPORTED "ALMOST ALWAYS"

17% REPORTED "OFTEN"

13% REPORTED "ONCE"

27% REPORTED "SOMETIMES"

RESULTS

AGGREGATED RESULTS

Skill

We measured three distinct types of leadership skills: transformational skill, transactional skill, and ethical leadership skill. Students made durable gains in each of these three areas. Students' transformational leadership skill – their capacity to build authentic relationships, inspire peers, adhere to broad ethical standards, and create sustainable change – increased both immediately after the Institute (t=21.48; p<.001) and stayed elevated 3-4 months later (t=6.14; p<.001). Students' transactional leadership skill also increased a measurable extent, immediately following the Institute (t=9.34; p<.001) and remained elevated 3-4 months later (t=2.25; p=.025). Students report a higher degree of transactional skill prior to participating in the Institute compared to their transformational leadership capacity. However, while they continue to report higher levels of transactional skill afterward, the gap between the two skill sets narrows after participating, which persists months later.

Students also reported gains in their ethical leadership capacity, both after the Institute (t=14.86; p<.001) and 3-4 months later (t=8.69; p<.001).

Confidence

Students reported durable gains in their leadership self-efficacy, both at the conclusion of the program (t=20.14; p<.001) and several months later (t=4.10; p<.001).
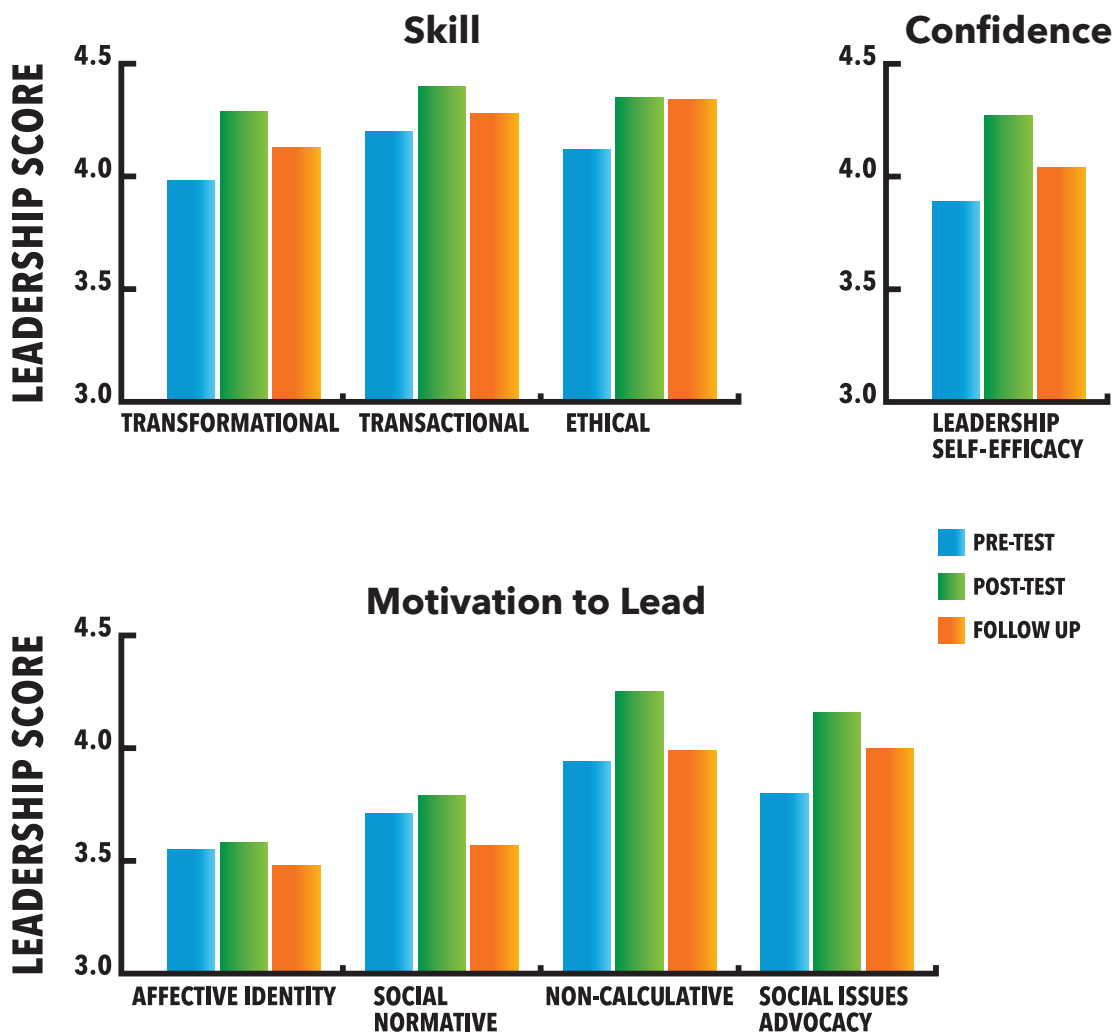
Motivation

Prior to participating in the Institute, students reported higher levels of non-calculative motivation to lead than social normative or affective-identity motivation to lead. Students reported gains in their non-calculative (t=14.42; p<.001) and social normative (t=4.21; p<.001) motivation to lead at the conclusion of the Institute. However, these gains decreased to non-significant differences when assessed months later. Students' affective identity motivation scores did not change after participating.

Students' commitment and motivation to advocate for issues of social justice and social responsibility increased after participating in the Institute (t=17.82; p<.001). Moreover, these gains persisted months after participating (t=6.16; p<.001).

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?

Our results suggest that after participating in the Institute, students make comprehensive gains in their leadership skills – gains that last long after the program has concluded. They report an increased ability to lead in ethical ways; develop productive collaborative relationships with others; create sustainable and responsible group goals; and reward the effective behaviors of others. Moreover, they leave their Institute experience more confident in leading others, and this increased confidence lasts even after many students have had the opportunity to put their new leadership skills into practice. Lastly, many students come to recognize an increased significance to public advocacy for important social issues, especially those relating to social justice. Like gains seen in their skill and confidence, these motivational gains last months beyond their Institute experience.

Skill — bar chart, LEADERSHIP SCORE (3.0–4.5) for TRANSFORMATIONAL, TRANSACTIONAL, ETHICAL

Confidence — bar chart, LEADERSHIP SCORE (3.0–4.5) for LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY

Motivation to Lead — bar chart, LEADERSHIP SCORE (3.0–4.5) for AFFECTIVE IDENTITY, SOCIAL NORMATIVE, NON-CALCULATIVE, SOCIAL ISSUES ADVOCACY

Legend: PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, FOLLOW UP

DISAGGREGATED RESULTS: FOCUS ON SOCIAL IDENTITY

While the results of this national study of the Institute show positive outcomes in the aggregate, differential gains emerge when examining particular sub-populations of students, including across class years, by gender, with regard to diverse racial groups, and when focused on prior experiences in leadership development. A note of caution, however: due to the relatively small numbers of certain groups of students included within the lagged post-test wave of data collection – for example, fewer than 50 students identifying as Latino/a, Asian-American, or as seniors – these results should be seen as exploratory in nature.
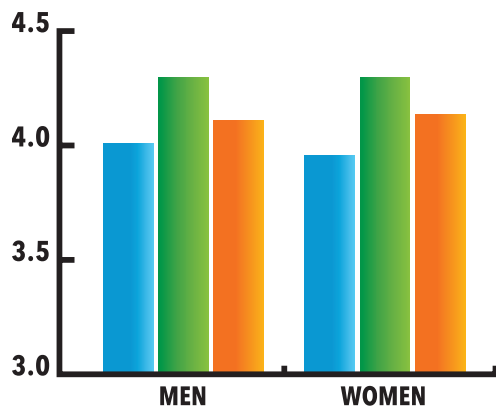
Race Factors Associated With Gains In Motivation To Advocate For Social Issues

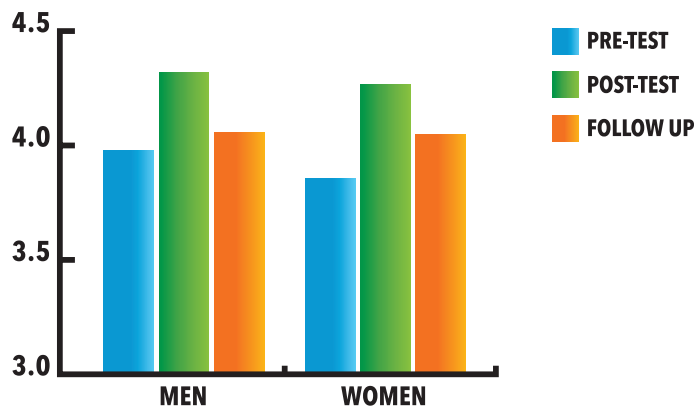**Social Issues Advocacy Motivation**
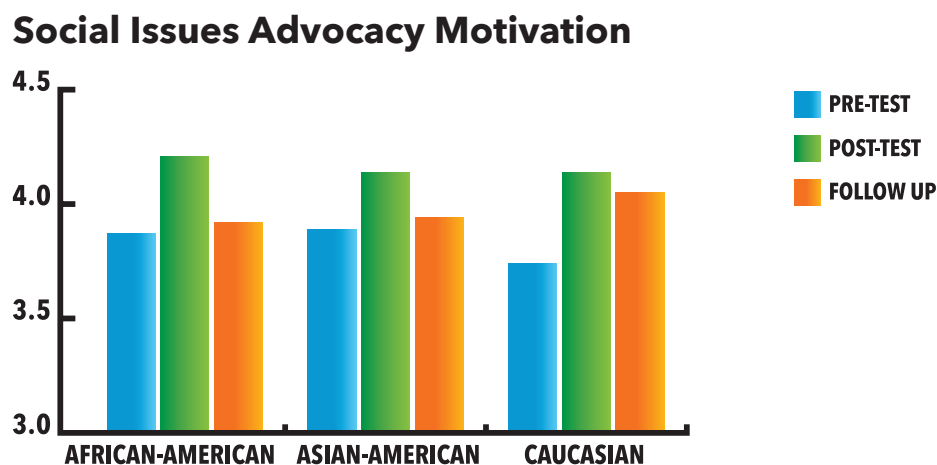
Prior to participating in the Institute, students reported significant differences by race in their motivation to advocate for issues of social responsibility and justice. African-American (t=2.43; p<.01) and Asian-American students (t=2.85; p<.001) reported slightly higher levels of motivation compared to Caucasian students. These gaps mostly disappeared at the conclusion of the Institute. However, students identifying as Caucasian were the only racial group to report significantly elevated levels of social issues advocacy motivation months later, suggesting that the formal and informal interactions that take place within the Institute may provide Caucasian students with increased motivation to act on issues of social justice.

Gender And Class Year Factors Associated With Gains

Transformational Skill

Legend: PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, FOLLOW UP. Categories: MEN, WOMEN

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Legend: PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, FOLLOW UP. Categories: MEN, WOMEN

Prior to participating in the Institute, women reported lower degrees of transformational leadership skill and confidence compared to men (t=4.21; p<.001). By the conclusion of the Institute, while both women and men reported significant gains (women: t=16.84; p<001; men: t=10.85; p<.001), women displayed even higher gains than men (t=2.68, p<.01). Several months later, both groups' scores remain elevated, while the disparity in scores disappeared, suggesting that an Institute experience may provide women with low degrees of incoming skill and confidence as a way to close these gaps with their peers.

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Legend: PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, FOLLOW UP. Categories: FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES, JUNIORS, SENIORS
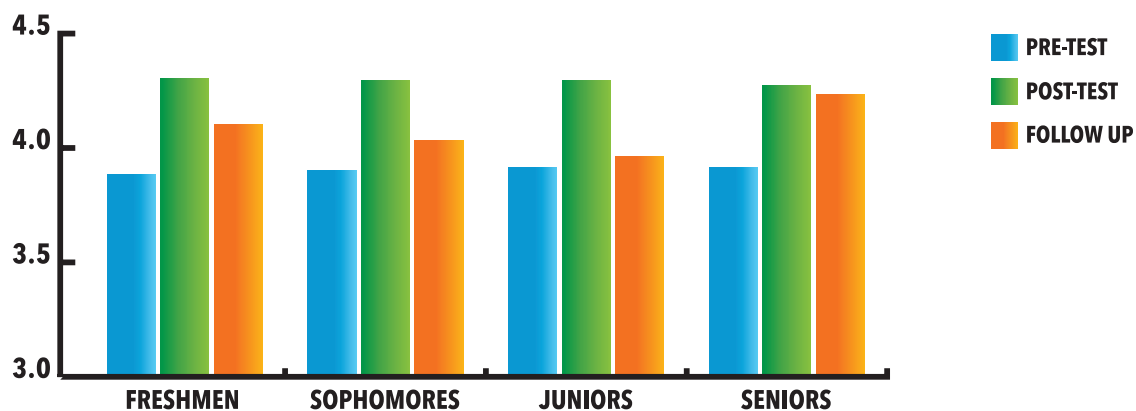
No differences existed in students' confidence in leading peers when compared by class year prior to participating in the Institute. While all class years reported significant gains immediately after the program, only freshmen and seniors' gains persisted after several months (freshmen: t=3.23; p<.01; seniors: t=2.98; p<.01). Moreover, when compared to other class years, freshmen were the only class that reported durable gains (seen several months later) in non-calculative motivation to lead (t=2.35; p<.05) and transactional leadership skill (t=2.31; p<.05), suggesting that students relatively new to higher education might gain more lasting benefit from their Institute experience.

Effects Associated With Prior Leadership Experience

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Transformational Skill
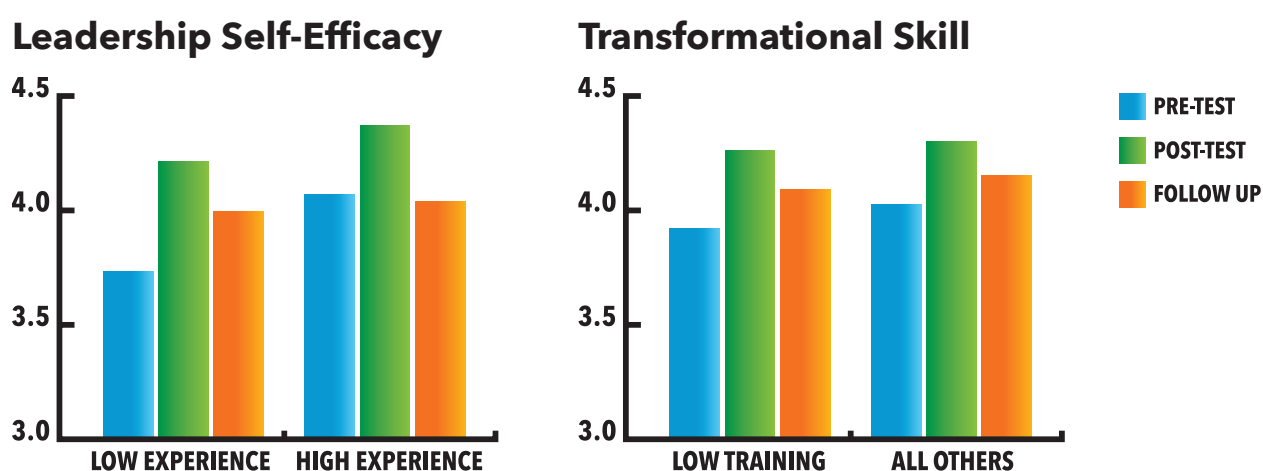
While all students, regardless of their prior leadership experience, reported significant gains in the confidence in leading others upon conclusion of the Institute, these gains were sustainable only for students who reported low degrees of leadership experience prior to participating (t=4.22; p<001). Similarly, while many students gain transformational skill after participating, students who report a low degree of prior experience in leadership training events or courses report larger gains than those with more experience 3-4 months later (t=4.55, p<.001 vs t=2.21, p<.05).

Even in areas where, in the aggregate, students did not make significant gains (such as in their affective identity motivation to lead, for example), the gap between students who entered with a high degree of prior leadership experience and those reporting an initial low degree of experience disappeared 3-4 months after their Institute experience. These results suggest that students who come to the Institute without much prior experience or training in leadership not only make gains in their leadership capacity, but that they might outstrip that of their peers.

POTENTIAL TRENDS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE INSTITUTE TO BUILD VALUES AND SKILL?

One of the strongest results of this national study was the degree to which the Institute served as a model to durably build ethical and transformational leadership skill in the students who participated. These gains were seen across all social identity domains and student backgrounds. The Institute is a time-intensive, immersive leadership development initiative designed to build a strong and inclusive learning community among students, while asking them to stretch themselves and their perspectives. What happens within the Institute that leads students to report such durable gains in their skill level? Are there attributes of the Institute that might be more broadly applied to other programs on campus?

GAINS IN MOTIVATION TO ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AMONG MAJORITY STUDENTS

After participating in the Institute, gaps in motivation to advocate for social justice disappeared between Caucasian students and their peer students of color – and reversed months after involvement in the Institute. These results suggest that the Institute might serve as an effective way for students from majority backgrounds to increase their motivation to advocate for issues that may not have realized affected them personally prior to their participation. What occurs in the Institute to provide Caucasian students the lasting motivation to advocate for issues of social justice? Given that Caucasian students' scores remain elevated while other students' scores do not, what can leadership educators do to help underrepresented students in increasing their motivation to advocate for social issues?

COMBINING THE INSTITUTE EXPERIENCE WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

A group of students who experienced some of the largest gains through their Institute experience was freshmen, reporting increased levels of leadership skill, motivation, and confidence long after their Institute had concluded. What may lead to the differences for these students and their mostly older peers? The Institute curriculum focuses, in part, on helping students learn how to create a vision for the future and take steps to achieve it. What support might more experienced students need to accelerate their leadership development beyond the Institute experience?

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ASSESS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTAL GAINS?

We observed elevated scores in the post-test on nearly all measures. But in a few measures the scores returned to pre-test levels when assessed 3-4 months later. One of the most popular forms of student learning assessments is a pre- and post-test design. What might be lost in not examining student learning more longitudinally?

HOW SHOULD I GET INVOLVED?

LeaderShape hosts several national sessions of the Institute each year, and partners with many colleges and universities to host campus-based sessions of the Institute as well as a variety of other programs. If you are interested in getting involved, contact the LeaderShape offices or visit their website, www.leadershape.org. In addition, if you are a researcher interested in using the collected dataset for your own research, please contact Dr. David Rosch (dmrosch@illinois.edu) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In addition, the research team is making plans to make the dataset publicly and freely available for future investigations.

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