

Award Title

The Cultural Leadership Institute

Awards Categories

International, Multi-cultural, Cultural, Gender, LGBTQ, Spirituality, Disability and related

Executive Summary

This is a joint submission between George Mason University and Rutgers University

Cultural Leadership is a 3-credit educational experience that educates students on the intersections of culture, urban grass roots leadership, and community engagement. The experience merges the best of the curricular and co-curricular experience to create a significant learning experience focused on culture, leadership, and the urban experience. The course is offered as a student affairs program offering. It includes regular educational sessions, cultural engagement, a leadership exchange between two institutions, and community participation in and throughout the local area. Students specifically explore their cultural heritage, learn various leadership theories, explore the leadership philosophies of under-represented leaders, study critical contemporary issues, participate in campus events, and engage in meaningful dialogue with local communities.

The experience is an academic partnership between student affairs and academic affairs that has been piloted now at three institutions: Penn State University, Rutgers University, and George Mason University.

Campus Based Partnerships Between Student Affairs & Academic Affairs

- At Penn State (2005-2009), the course was a partnership between the Paul Robeson Cultural Center and the African & African American Studies Department. Credits were housed in AAAS and the course was taught by the staff of the cultural center.
- At Rutgers (2006-present), the course is a partnership between the Paul Robeson Campus Center (student union) and the Urban Education Department. Credits are housed in Urban Education and the course is taught by the staff of the student union.
- Finally, at George Mason (2009-present), the course is a partnership between New Century College (NCC) and University Life. Credits are housed in New Century College and the course is jointly taught by an NCC faculty member and a staff member of the Office of Diversity Programs.

Cross Institutional Partnerships

In addition to the campus based partnerships, the program also includes a cross institutional partnership. Initially, this partnership was between Penn State University and Rutgers University.

With the relocation of one of the co-developers of the program, the partnership is now between Rutgers University and George Mason University. Through this partnership, the two cohorts are brought together for an intense and engaging weekend forum on cultural and community leadership in Newark, NJ.

Award Description The Topic: What is Cultural Leadership?

Cultural leadership is a leadership proxy that is rooted in community, family, and cultural identity (tobyjenkins.weebly.com/cultural-leadership.html). To explore culturally influenced leadership means exploring:

- The full spectrum of a leader's familial and neighborhood experiences;
- The various forms of non-traditional knowledge that has taught a leader how to succeed and how to make a difference
- The core values, traditions, politics of survival, and inherited folkways that guide a leader's sense of purpose and that teach a leader how to navigate society.

Cultural leadership is creative leadership. It utilizes the arts and various other assessable forms of creative public scholarship and open community spaces to educate and raise awareness. Cultural leaders are rooted in the community and committed to social justice. They are raw leaders with thick skin, unflinching determination, and a love for people that allows them to take the blows that may come even from the communities that they seek to help. They are social change agents and social servants. They understand that a leader is first a servant. But more than that, they are reflective, wise, and holistic leaders who understand that the collective of their life experiences- in the classroom or on the block, in college or in church, through professional networks or through dysfunctional family trees-have made them who they are (tobyjenkins.weebly.com/cultural-leadership.html.)

Part I: Educational Sessions

Four Modules of Learning

I. Cultural Influences on Leadership

Developing a Cultural Identity as a Leader: Exploring Culture & Ethnicity

Valuing Non-Traditional Knowledge: The Family, Community, Home & Block

Identifying Life Purpose & Passion

Exploring the Cultural Arts as Community Leadership

II. Cultural Perspectives on Leadership

Understanding the Geography of Leadership: Campus, Urban, Rural, Global

Community Centered, Grass Roots, and Servant Leadership

Generational Differences in Leadership Engagement (Boomer, Gen X, Hip Hop Generation)

A Labor of Love: Leadership Proxies & Practices of Under-represented Communities

College & Social Justice: Activism, Advocacy, and Alliance

III. Cultural Leadership Engagement

The Newark Case Study: Urban Leadership

The Gullah Case Study: Rural/Southern Leadership

University Leadership Exchange (weekend cultural leadership exchange between Rutgers University & George Mason University in Newark, NJ)

IV. Social Action Research

Critically evaluate the use of social media & culture to create social change

Critically research a social issue & develop a social action project on campus or in community (personal leadership passion)

Part II: The Cultural Leadership Journeys

Domestic Cultural Community Exchange: Over the course of a 3-day weekend, Rutgers and Mason students that are taking the course join together to deeply explore Cultural & Urban Leadership in Newark New Jersey. This cross-institutional exchange has been happening for the past 4 years and is a critical part of the overall course experience. During the weekend, students examine the various ways in which a socially stressed community like Newark uses culture (in all of its manifestations) as a spiritually and personally transformative politic in order to survive, to build, and to lead. A previous agenda can be found below:

Rutgers University Newark George Mason University Community Leadership Exchange

Citizens as Agents of Change Friday, April 9th, 2010

1:30pm Lunch and Introductions Overview Purpose & Agenda

2:00pm Icebreakers

3:00pm Group Discussion with The Street Warriors (Grass Roots Community Organization)

3:30pm Walking Tour of Newark led by The Street Warriors

5:00pm Dinner at Rutgers/Debriefing

7:30pm Hip Hop Out Loud & Proud (LGBTQA Hip Hop Project) Discussion on Art in Social Action with New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Saturday, April 10th, 2010

9:00am Continental Breakfast on Your Own

10:00am Depart for Rutgers University 10:30am Energizers! Wake up!!

11:00am Walk to All-Stars Project Offices for Street Outreach Training

11:30am All-Stars Project--Street Recruiting (Youth Outreach Organization) 2:30pm Debrief at Rutgers- Newark (LUNCH)

4:00pm Archie Bunkers Neighborhood

6:00pm Community Leadership Panel (Local community leaders in Newark will discuss their work)

7:00pm Dinner & Break out Discussion with Community Leaders

9:00pm Game Night & Work on Skits

Sunday, April 11th, 2010 9:00am Continental Breakfast on Your Own

10:30am Depart for Rutgers

11:00am Icebreakers/Prep time

12:00pm Student Skits/Presentations

2:00pm Weekend Reflections & Lunch

3:00pm George Mason Students Depart

International Cultural Community Exchange: An additional summer component was added to the partnership in 2008, bringing both leadership classes/institutions together to travel abroad studying Culture, Leadership, & Society from a global perspective. In Dakar, Senegal students engaged in an intense learning that included discussions with leaders and politicians, visits to nonprofit organizations and heritage sites, participation in various cultural events, and visits to higher education institutions. The agenda is listed below:

Dakar Senegal: Culture, Society & Leadership June 1-15th 2008

Day One Group Orientation Dinner

Day Two: Cultural Life Visited markets (Marché Kermel-Sandaga-des maures-HLM) Attended Lamb Senegal

Day Three: College Student Leadership Visit to University of Cheikh Anta Diop [Spent the day at the university engaged in various tours, student forums, discussions, and performances on campus. Students were exposed to university life in Senegal, exchanged with Senegalese students, and observed first hand the various community transformation projects that are led and developed by students]. Students intellectually wrestled with global educational disparities at the university level and the meaning/impact of educational access at home and abroad.

Day Four: Contemporary & Historic Leadership Visited the Senegalese Parliament

US EMBASSY visit: Students explored the various implications of the United States presence in Senegalese Society

GOREE ISLAND: Visited the slave house and women museum - official tour of the island - weaving and sand painting at art center

Day Five: Cultural Life in Dakar & Beyond Visited THIES (70 Km of Dakar) Monuments/manufactures of Thiès

Lunch with a Senegalese family - Sabar Dancing

Day Six: Community Life The groups engaged with various community institutions that focus on the arts and youth outreach.

Villade artisanal/ village des arts Arts Workshop (Jewelry)

Street Child School Visit [Community school for homeless children]

Village des arts Arts Workshop [Painting] Day Seven: Beyond Dakar

Visited PINK Lake and forum with women in the community

Transfer to airport

Assessment Data

Research confirms that college students (particularly college students of color) need opportunities to explore their cultural selves and to interact with culturally rich educational material (Rendon, 1993 & 2009; Cheng & Zhao, 2006; Harper, 2005; Inkelas, 2004; Chavez, A.F. & Guido-Dibrito, 1999) Within higher education, some “diversity” and “cultural” events

and programs facilitated by the institution do more to socially connect students, to occupy their time, or to celebrate a culture rather than to transform student lives. The transformative experiences that students describe are much more personal and deeply engaging (Rendon, 1993). Many institutions are doing the hard work of striving to meet this challenge. These experiences affirm the student's personal, cultural, and academic selves. Cultural education experiences validate the student as a whole person and a capable being. According to Rendon (1993) a rich cultural education experience has the following characteristics: "It is an enabling, confirming, and supportive process" (p.16). It creates an environment in which students feel that the cultural history that they bring to college is recognized and validated as important. It involves multiple communities in the validation process--family, friends, college faculty and staff. It is an ongoing process one can never get enough validation. And most importantly it is a vital aspect of student development. So, initiatives that focus on the building of cultural efficacy, that allow for students to actively integrate their experience and voice into the learning experience can serve as a critical form of student validation that contributes to self-concept both during and after college (Yosso, 2005; Chavez & Guido-Dibrito, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is the intent of the Cultural Leadership course. By coupling the deeply engaging nature of the co-curricular/student affairs (experiential learning and personal development) with the academic rigor of the curricular (research and project based learning) this course seeks to offer students a rich education around issues of culture, leadership, and social justice.

Foundational Knowledge: The foundational knowledge of the course is based on the following literature. Students interact with all of the following in full or in part: 1.Political Activism, Leadership, & Hip Hop Culture; Yvonne Bynoe 2.The Leadership Challenge, Kouzes & Posner 3.Women's Leadership, Oprah Winfrey 4.Servant Leadership, Robert Greenleaf 5.All About Love, bell hooks 6.Social Change Model of Leadership 7.Assata, Assata Shakur 8.The Big Sea, Langston Hughes 9.The Education of Little Tree, Forrest Carter 10.Che Guevara, Eric Luther 11.Mandela, Nelson Mandela 12.The Essential Ghandi, Mahatma Ghandi 13.Cesar Chavez: An Organizers Tale, Cesar Chavez 14.Filipino American Lives, Yen Le Espiritu 15.Night, Eli Wiesel 16.Street Fight (Documentary) 17.Brick City (Documentary) 18.Tupac Ressurrection (Documentary)

The outcomes of this multidimensional program have been consistently positive. At each institution, we have seen the campus participation increase. Since its inception, the course enrollment has grown by over 70 percent. During its tenure at both Penn State and Rutgers, the reputation of the course as a valuable educational experience led to the majority of cultural students organization officers voluntarily taking the course (presidents and officers of the Caribbean Student Association, Asian Pacific American Society, Latino Student Union, Black Student Union, African Student Association, Filipino Student Association, National Panhellenic Council, Multicultural Greek Council, NAACP, and Club Creole). The vast student participation and interest in the course illustrates its importance to the campus community. Additionally, formal course evaluations demonstrate a strong level of learning and satisfaction with course content. Across all institutions, the course earns a 90-95% overall rating of quality (6-7/7) The instructors are also consistently rated high (6-7/7). The dynamic and engaging pedagogical style that student affairs administrators bring to the classroom undoubtedly influences this rating. Finally, students indicate a strong change in their dedication to community leadership and their sense of cultural efficacy as a result of the course. Seventy-two percent of the students that have

taken the course indicate that their life goals and/or appreciation of their culture were enhanced as a result of participating. But the direct student voice is the greatest form of evaluation and indicator of the extent of student learning. Below we share quotes from students as well as a web link to a video created by a George Mason student that summarizes his experience with the course.

The Student Response

When it came time for everyone one to reflect about their career aspirations it was interesting to note that those of us who were so sure of what we wanted to do at the beginning of the semester really were at a lost for words. It seems as though our lessons on culture and leadership, as well as the whole experience really caused most of us to rethink some things. I actually never thought about going back to my community to offer some form of assistance, but now I am pondering the different things that I can do. Shonda Brimson, Sophomore

Listening to Bow Kemp, Ras Baraka, and Kevin Powell give their inspiring lectures on how they became leaders and what they have done to improve the quality of the community they serve made me second guess career paths. This leadership course showed me exactly how I can use my education to become a leader. I hold strong views on education, the inner city and culture. I decided that I would pursue my graduate degree in educational theory and policy in order to address these issues; hoping to one day walk the walk instead of just talking the talk. Michael Granville, Junior.

The Rutgers, Penn State community leadership exchange truly proved to be one of the most inspiring and informative leadership programs that I have encountered during my collegiate career at Penn State. The intellectual exchange of information, ideas, and personal experiences between community members, politicians, students, and educators, proved to be one of the most beneficial aspects of the entire exchange program. More specifically the opportunity to personally engage, and ask questions of prominent leaders such as Bo Kemp, Ras Baraka, and Kevin Powell, helped to both complement and enhance the overall exchange process. Lloyd Colona, Senior

Cultural leadership doesn't have to be on a Tupac or Martin Luther King scale. It doesn't have to be about poetry, music, or art of any kind. Someone who is a cultural leader simply has a passion for showing other people what they believe is important in the world, and the drive and guts to find a way to immerse people in it. The fact that I went to Newark, New Jersey on a weekend (a weekend!), spent the much of my time playing social/networking games, and regard the whole thing as a positive experience, is a testament to that more than you can imagine. I hate New Jersey, I hate social/networking games, and I despise giving up my weekends, but the passion of the people that were around me that made everything worthwhile. I think that's what cultural leadership is about – the ability to share your passions with others. Scott Savage, 25 yr old, Senior

Please visit the blog post by D'Leon Barnett (George Mason University, Student Body President) for his video reflection on the GMU/Rutgers Exchange

http://culturalleadership2010.blogspot.com/2010_05_01_archive.html (press play)

Notes

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