



Interview with the Pros

EMILY LOMBARDO is Program Coordinator with Amherst LEADS, a leadership development program housed within Amherst College Athletics. Emily received her Masters in Education from the University of Washington with a focus in Intercollegiate Athletic Leadership. Emily was drawn to Amherst and Amherst LEADS because it combined her interests in higher education and her values, particularly around the focus of development for student athletes.

How has Amherst LEADS developed?

The Amherst LEADS program developed around seven years ago as a way to support captains for success in their roles, specifically helping captains gain skills to lead from the top-down. Since then, it has grown quite a bit. We still have a program for our captains, but we also have a program for our first-year students that is required, and a combined program for sophomores and juniors that is optional. About 60-65% of our first year students continue on to our sophomore and junior year program.

What has been your biggest surprise working with LEADS?

That is tough. I guess one of the things we talk about here is it is impossible to please all 400 students that we work with. You think you plan these awesome programs and it does not always hit the mark with everyone. That is something keeps us on our toes – trying to always be innovative and creative and get better from year to year.

How does LEADS prepare student-athletes for life after college?

I guess there are a lot of things I could talk about. A specific example is all of our first-years do a DiSC behavioral assessment and get a personalized report. It is really good learning opportunity for them because many of them have not been exposed to something like this before. There is a self-awareness piece, but there is also a relationship management piece because they talk to each of their teammates about the report and what it looks like for team dynamics. It sets them up to take these pieces and see how they apply to everywhere in their life and especially when they get out of college. Another thing that really sets them up post-graduation is when we bring in alumni speakers to talk to

the captains about what their path looked like after graduation. It is a great networking opportunity and allows students to see what other Amherst captains have done with their experience. Other than that, the workshops and other events can all be connected to life after college. Whether it is workshops on values identification or communication, we definitely try to focus our learning outcomes on what is going to help them now and later as well.

Where do you see your relationship with student affairs?

I think that is ever-evolving. It is a little bit different here at Amherst because Amherst LEADS is ahead of the game in terms of leadership development. Student Affairs is really trying to figure out what that leadership development piece looks like on campus and how they can give access to students who do not necessarily have access to LEADS. I think that relationship could be a little bit of an asset, but we do not want to step on anyone's toes. Our model might not be the right model for everywhere on campus. I think we have a relationship, but we are not using each other in the way we could to bolster each program. We brought in staff from other areas of student affairs, like the Career Center, to do workshops. We have also done an event with the Queer Resource Center and Pride Alliance on campus as well.

What is the future of the LEADS program, in your opinion?

The program has looked the same for about three years now. I do not know what it will look like in another few years. With conversations on campus happening about opening up more opportunities on campus for formal leadership development, I wonder if that will have an effect on what we are doing here. I do not know how much more we can grow with the number of students we are working with. One of the things we have been talking about is do we offer something for our club athletes? We have a couple of club athletes in our captain's program this year. Another group that we talk about is the seniors who are not captains. They have played for four years, but do not have the title of captain, so what do we do as Amherst LEADS to still provide them with opportunities? As we grow we have to take into consideration concerns about logistical limitations on campus in terms of space and staff.

-----Bryce Webster

Bryce Webster-Jacobsen is a second-year student in the College Student Affairs Administration M.Ed. Program at the University of Georgia. Prior to UGA, he earned a degree from Southern Illinois University.

