Award Title

Leadership in the Workplace Seminar

Awards Categories

Student Union, Student Activities, Greek Life, Leadership and related

Executive Summary

For many years, there has been a disconnect between the skill sets that college students graduate with and those that employers want (Bases of Competence, Evers, et.al). The academic community does an excellent job of equipping graduates with the necessary technical skills sought by employers but often times neglects the emotional intelligence skills that are absolutely critical to successful implementation of those technical skills in the workplace. The development of an individual’s Emotional Intelligence (EI) is not an easy process because EI involves a variety of intra- and interpersonal factors. The philosophy of our program is derived from the foundation that EI is the ability to effectively use self-management and interpersonal skills to work successfully in a team environment or independently and to manage change positively in the workplace. The team in the Office of Student Leadership & Civic Engagement at Georgia Southern University created the Leadership in the Workplace Seminar (LWS) to address the lack of emotional intelligence education in our students’ collegiate experience and to enhance their marketability after graduation. The seminar, which begins with an assessment of each student using the Baron EQ-i (133), focuses on helping students to identify and understand their personal EI skill sets, on developing agreed upon areas of improvement using customized on-line activities and weekly meetings, and on teaching them to use EI responsibly to enhance their leadership capabilities. The seminar is taught in conjunction with a student’s internship and is a non-credit course offered as a value-added experience for students of all disciplines. Since most internships take place off campus and in a variety of geographic locations, the seminar is conducted once a week in an on-line format using Skype video chat. Each on-line session builds on the weekly assigned activities that are created and distributed using Google Docs. Since the program is coordinated through the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Georgia Southern University, the initiative is open to all students regardless of major and further promotes our belief that the concept of leadership is applicable to all disciplines.

Award Description

We are likely all familiar with someone with whom we work, go to school, or interact socially who we perceive lacks certain interpersonal skills. Typically, what we are sensing is that person’s lack of emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence, as described in our program, is the ability to effectively use self-management and interpersonal skills to work successfully in a team environment or independently and to manage change positively in the workplace. While people lacking emotional intelligence may occasionally rise to positions of leadership, they typically are not afforded the opportunity to realize their leadership potential. In fact, a quick glance at the description for any job highlights the case that numerous skills "required" for employment are directly related to emotional intelligence. While such scenarios are anecdotal, they are nonetheless significant and demonstrate that strong EI skills are highly valued in the
private, non-profit, and government sectors of our economy. Numerous studies have demonstrated that an individual’s EI can be developed through a structured curriculum implemented in a university setting and long term sustained development occurs in EI for students who participate in such courses (Primal Leadership, Goleman, et.al). We believe our program is novel in its approach to developing leadership capabilities in students by the combination of working with students from all disciplines, its on-line format, the individualized curriculum of activities, and the incorporation of structured self-directed learning practices (The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace, Cherniss, et.al) in conjunction with a student’s internship experience. By requiring each student to participate in an internship experience while enrolled in the seminar, we create an experiential learning environment that allows the student to practice the skills and concepts that s/he is learning. In turn, this practical implementation accelerates a student’s learning while reinforcing the concepts and highlighting their importance in a work environment.

Our use of on-line, synchronous communication among the instructor and students allows us to simultaneously deliver content to students in several geographic locations while facilitating the personal interactions that are so essential to the development of emotional intelligence. In our seminar, we utilize technology solutions from private sector companies (Skype and Google), which provides easy access and flexibility for a variety of situational implementations. Establishing learning outcomes for the seminar was a collaborative effort among the program coordinators, faculty internship advisors, and employers of our student interns. All of these parties were instrumental in creating appropriate student learning outcomes, and each played a significant role in the development of curriculum for the Leadership in the Workplace seminar. The learning outcomes are as follows: Upon completion of the Leadership in the Workplace seminar, the students will:

1. Be able to articulate an understanding of emotional intelligence, its importance, and applicability in the workplace.

2. Be able to explain the importance of EI skills, as expressed by the “Four Bases of Competence” (Managing Self, Communicating, Managing People and Tasks, and Mobilizing Innovation and Change – as articulated by Evers, et.al), in the workplace.

3. Reflect on the leadership infrastructure of an organization through observation and interaction at their internship worksite and on emotionally intelligent behavior exhibited by leaders.

4. Develop and/or enhance their emotional intelligence skills through assigned readings and reflections and through everyday practice and application of these skills at their internship worksite.

These learning outcomes reflect the needs of employers and students and are supported by our faculty and career development partners.

Recruitment of students for the LWS relies heavily on employer feedback from on-campus interviews and from faculty members who know the capabilities and potential of individual students. The only requirement for acceptance into the seminar is that a student must be
participating in an internship experience that takes place during the same semester as the LWS in which they are enrolled. Funding for the development and continuation of the program is derived primarily from student activity fees, but is supplemented by grants from corporate partners. As we cultivate our corporate partners, we have intentionally identified companies who appreciate our approach to student development and who recognize the value of emotional intelligence in the development of leadership potential. At the heart of this effort is the collaborative thought process that bridges the gap between student needs, employer needs, academic needs, and sustainability of the program.

One of the defining characteristics of Georgia Southern is exemplified in the university’s slogan, “Georgia's Large Scale, Small Feel Research University.” Georgia Southern University seeks to create a campus culture that is student-centered with an equal focus on teaching, research, and service. The Leadership in the Workplace seminar embodies that mission in that our focus is to enable the success of individual students in an innovative seminar format built on cutting edge research data and employing student-focused delivery methods.

**Assessment Data**

Using the results of the Baron EQ-i (133), we are able to customize the learning experience for each student. The complete assessment process takes approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete and consists of an on-line self-reporting assessment completed by the student followed by a one-on-one feedback session with the program coordinator. The feedback session, which comprises the bulk of the assessment time, is a critical part of each student’s experience as it helps the student understand his/her scores and identifies areas of EI that need development. The final part of the feedback session is a discussion between the facilitator and student where they agree upon which areas of EI the student is most comfortable working to develop.

There are 5 components and 15 subscale items that are scored in the Baron EQ-i (133) and include a variety of interpersonal relationship skills as well as emotionally-dependent problem solving skills. Following the feedback session, a student enrolls in the semester-long seminar class, which meets weekly via Skype Video Chat. The technology employed allows up to 9 students and 1 instructor to see each other and converse simultaneously on-line. The typical (and preferred) internship, which is also a semester-long (15 weeks) experience, takes place for the duration of the seminar (15 weeks) and provides students the essential opportunities to practice what they are learning in both the on-line seminar and through the individually customized activities. The individualized curriculum provided by the program is drawn from a library of activities that we have created or adapted. Each of the activities focuses on development of one of the 15 subscales.

A link to the seminar syllabus as well as assessment data and a sample on-line activity can be found at the following link: [http://students.georgiasouthern.edu/leadership/about/hidden](http://students.georgiasouthern.edu/leadership/about/hidden).

Based on end of course surveys, we have found that 100% of students who participated in the Summer 2011 Seminar course responded that they felt their internship experience had been enhanced by the Seminar, that they could explain the concept of EI to others and its importance
in the workplace, and would recommend that fellow interns participate in the Seminar. Select quotes from the exit evaluation, grouped by learning outcome, are given below.

1. Be able to articulate an understanding of emotional intelligence, its importance, and applicability in the workplace.

“Emotional Intelligence in general is important because most of us will be working with others in our careers and we need to be productive and efficient through our interactions with our coworkers. Personally I think this class has helped me by making me realize how to present myself to others in a work environment.”

2. Be able to explain the importance of EI skills, as expressed by the “Four Bases of Competence” (Managing Self, Communicating, Managing People and Tasks, and Mobilizing Innovation and Change – as articulated by Evers, et.al), in the workplace.

“Emotional Intelligence is truly what defines how far we go in life. EI is an essential component that shows in everyday interactions with others. It is comprised of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and relationship management. It is about understanding yourself as well as others by looking into the actions and reasons behind them.”

3. Reflect on the leadership infrastructure of an organization through observation and interaction at their internship worksite and on emotionally intelligent behavior exhibited by leaders.

“EI is something I have always strived for and something I have placed more emphasis on than IQ even before I knew about it. Interactions with others and networking will help me not only build lasting friendships but also relationships that will help my career progress through knowing other people of importance. This class has really helped me look into my areas that needed improvement: impulse control and independence. I have been able to meet and talk with VPs and PMs and have meaningful conversations.”

4. Develop and/or enhance Emotional Intelligence skills through assigned readings and reflections and through everyday practice and application of these skills at their internship worksite.

“My internship experience has definitely been positively affected by the Leadership in the Workplace Seminar. Seeing others who are like me and striving to better their lives and willing to work during the summer has given me new motivation to try harder and achieve more. Having Phillip and Daniel assess my actions throughout the course of the summer has been great for my development. I truly like that I have been fast tracked in my development as a professional not only because of the internship but this course as well for teaching me how to grow.”