

## **Executive Summary**

Since its inception in 2007, the Leadership and Civic Engagement (LCE) minor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has quickly evolved from a pilot class into a robust eight classes totaling 24-academic credits. This minor is housed in the College of Education with all of the instruction being provided by Student Affairs Staff. LCE was a concept born in 2001 at UNLV when a small group of Student Affairs Professionals examined existing programs, assessed the leadership development of students through the administration of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Tyree, 1998) and conducted a benchmarking study. This initial exploration remained an idea until new staff members and UNLV's 2006 participation in the Multi-institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) combined to breathe new life into the concept which has become the LCE Minor. The chief finding of the MSL found that the strongest leadership development outcomes for our students occurred when leadership, diversity and community service were all present in the student experience.

Our Student Affairs faculty cohort serves as the in classroom educators for LCE though the minor is housed in the College of Education. This affords that Student Affairs Faculty the opportunity to formally instruct the UNLV students they would only otherwise have known from a co-curricular setting. Uniquely in addition to being the instructors, those same Student Affairs Professionals are the intellectual property holders of the LCE curriculum and all eight of its syllabi. To that end, this dynamic minor is the only such course work approved for the entire Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). This ensures that should other NSHE institutions seek to offer this dynamic curriculum, our faculty cohort's extensive work and growing in-class knowledge base will be tapped to further the development of countless students in the state of Nevada.

This meteoric rise of an academic minor can be summed up with no higher praise than that which was offered by a student in the initial (Fall 07) pilot class; "As an involved student it helped me focus my passion and I believe that other students will get the same out of (this class) so I would highly recommend it." In another in-class assessment (Spring 08), just prior to the Fall 08 launch of the minor a student offered the following which supports our findings from the MSL data; "Our service project provided me with a powerful vehicle for developing leadership skills in a collaborative environment. Community Services or volunteer work benefits many individuals, but overall, it is the volunteer who gains the most benefits from his/her efforts".

## **Award Description**

It is with great enthusiasm we nominate the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' Leadership and Civic Engagement (LCE) minor for the NASPA Excellence Award in the category of Student Union, Student Activities, Greek Life, Leadership, and related Enrollment Management, Orientation, Parents, First Year, Other Year, and related.

Since its inception in 2007, the LCE minor has quickly evolved from a pilot class into a robust eight classes totaling 24-academic credits. While the minor is housed in the College of Education the instruction of all of the courses has been provided by Student Affairs Staff. The dynamic configuration of these instructors afford student affairs practitioners the unique opportunity to be

viewed as educators in the classroom with students they are familiar with in the co-curricular setting. As a faculty cohort, we strive to maintain meaningful connections with students inside and outside of the classroom to seamlessly and holistically promote student learning. Collaboration with academic affairs and college of education faculty are essential to our success. However, the most impactful collaboration exists between the leadership/service area and diversity office as the co-directors for the LCE minor work in these areas and collaboratively oversee all aspects of the minor. In fact, all professional staff leadership, service, and diversity have included teaching in the minor in their job descriptions. In accordance with the aforementioned, we are supported by the indispensable campus colleagues and higher education master's students volunteering their time as faculty. Our diverse faculty from Orientation and Parent Programs, Campus Housing, Student Organizations, Activities, and Greek Life bring the LCE minor to life in the classroom.

The LCE minor contributes to UNLV's mission and maintains a positive impact on student learning, transition and retention in through its research-supported curriculum design. Its educational collaboration and partnerships reach far and wide between academic departments, colleges and student affairs offices. UNLV is the sole institution in Nevada providing leadership courses, let alone a minor. The staff members in Student Affairs who developed the 8 syllabi and the curriculum chair from the College of Education stood before and were approved for this minor by the Nevada System of Higher Education faculty senate for the entire state. Uniquely, the syllabi are the intellectual property of the staff members who developed them, not the faculty in the College of Education. Through faculty cohort interactions, we have developed a strong commitment to innovation and a multidisciplinary approach to leadership and civic engagement education. Addressing student needs and/or critical campus issues is a forte of the program, as the LCE minor is an interdisciplinary, student-driven experience that directly ties individual student interests with needs. The LCE minor acts as a conduit for program participation and involvement; some pilot class members have become Resident Assistants and LeaderShape participants. These types of ongoing relationships and connections for students contribute to institutional goals, academic persistence and retention thereby directly supporting the University's mission. The minor's course arc has generated a "cohort feel" to the participating students, creating a strong sense of community and camaraderie on a 96% commuter campus. The LCE minor incorporates innovative practical use of research and/or assessment and linking to learning outcomes by providing an experimental course for the year prior to launching the minor, and utilizing that course's assessment to create the syllabi. UNLV's Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) data analysis supports the minor electives (leadership, service, diversity discussions, and faculty interactions) and has utilized a living-learning approach for the Campus Housing Leadership Project House with the required introductory course. In addition, though unpaid, faculty are required to apply for a teaching position, participate in retreats, and utilizing diverse teaching approaches. The courses within the minor include: Introduction to Leadership, the Leadership Experience, Global Leadership, Leadership as Social Change, Leadership and the Role of Conflict, Structured Group Workshops in Organizations, Leadership Capstone Experience and Internship/Independent Study. These courses are deeply rooted in the Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership. Most courses utilize an inventory including True Colors, MBTI, Kolb, Killman, StrengthsQuest, and the Inter-Cultural Development Inventory. The introductory course provides an avenue for self discovery and a basic understanding of leadership theory. The Leadership Experience examines self awareness through an intermediate

theoretical leadership lens. Additionally, the SCM is introduced with exploration of the impact self has on immediate groups and society as a whole. Again, our elective courses are deeply rooted in assessment. Students consistently score lowest in controversy with civility on Tyree's Socially Responsibility Leadership Scale (SRLS). Therefore, we developed a syllabus grounded in SCM with an emphasis on the role of conflict, mediation, and effective group communication and leadership. Diversity discussions profoundly impact our student population. Therefore, the development of a Global Leadership course challenging students to remain conscious of global/international perspectives and becoming proponents of social justice was essential. Leadership as Social Change is a course dedicated to principles of servant leadership, advocacy, and activism. Students enrolled in this course will dedicate a weekend to a service project and fully experience service learning. The Structured Group Workshops in Organizations is designed as a train-the-trainer course for student leaders. Students enrolled in this course will develop their facilitation and organizational skills by coordinating experiential activities, retreats, and trainings, with learning outcomes and assessment pieces. The internship course is a truly tailored experience. This is our only online course which requires internship pre-approval to enroll. Students must complete 100 hours of non-paid internship time, complete online reflective assignments and present their internship final project to the instructor and internship supervisor. Finally, our Leadership Capstone Experience is the cumulative course which challenges our students to critically think and self reflect on an advanced level. Originality and creativity are hallmarks of the Leadership & Civic Engagement minor. The students in the LCE minor are a part of a cohort setting as they complete courses and participate in experiential excursions to gain "real life experiences". They are encouraged to make meaning of their collegiate experiences through reflection, self exploration, awareness of their influence as leaders, and challenging academic course work. The LCE minor has taken advantage of several mediums to be technologically innovative. Most of our courses utilize Web Campus (blackboard) to post readings, for online assignments, and to support university initiatives for a sustainable campus. The online internship course components include blogging, online assignments, posting journal reflections, and ongoing electronic communication with the instructor. Other technological endeavors we employ include advertising on and overseeing an interactive Facebook group, outreach via listservs/campus-wide e-mail announcements, and an online course catalog. We have worked closely with the College of Education's Advising Center and all UNLV academic advisors to heighten awareness of the new minor. In fact, our student newspaper wrote a full-page feature praising our faculty for leading by example, teaching for free, and supporting students in/outside of the classroom.

The Leadership & Civic Engagement minor has received a very positive reception from the UNLV community and continues to incur interest from administrators and faculty who wish to teach courses. After many years and prior attempts to develop and implement a minor, we have arrived with a 24-credit minor with eight phenomenal course selections. Growing enrollment and retention, the creation of a first-year experience for residential students, responsible tracking of participants throughout their time completing the minor and assessment to ensure student needs are met have contributed to the sustainability of the program. In essence, UNLV's Leadership and Civic Engagement interdisciplinary minor is a unique, purposeful and student-learning centered effort to creatively cultivate civically engaged graduates and citizens.

## **Assessment Data**

Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership Executive Summary University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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## **Purpose**

Researchers at the University of Maryland implemented the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) in an effort to determine the influence of multiple factors on leadership development. Fifty-five diverse schools took part in this study. The total sample size is estimated to be 165,000 cases. The study examines environmental factors such as engaging in diversity conversations, faculty/peer relationships, co-curricular involvement, and educational interventions were paid special attention to. The theoretical framework utilized is the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, which was adapted by the Division of Student Life at UNLV in 1996 as the official definition of leadership development. Conjointly, the conceptual framework is based on Astin's College Impact Model. The results yielded will allow the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) to improve future programs and services.

## **UNLV Leadership and Service Programs**

Leadership Programs serves the UNLV community by offering a wide range of leadership education, development, and training opportunities designed to compliment the student's academic experiences. Opportunities include but are not limited towards a peer mentoring team dedicated to provide leadership programs for the campus community, leadership scholarships, LeaderShape, a themed leadership floor in a residence hall, a leadership library and resource center, in addition to a newly created academically focused leadership certificate program.

Service Programs offers exceptional opportunities for students to engage in the UNLV and surrounding communities through developing leadership skills. We coordinate multiple service projects and educationally-based service activities throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities exist by participating in community service projects as well as coordinating projects. Additionally, we have experiential excursions to work with Las Vegas' homeless, interactive community organization projects, alternative breaks, service weeks/fairs, and three service-based peer mentoring councils to be a part of.

Due to the overlap and theoretical framework of both leadership and service programs, currently the offices are in the process of operating under a model of civic engagement

## **Instrument**

The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) is a 103-item instrument which measures leadership development across eight constructs. These constructs relate directly to the Social Change Model of Leadership Development and include: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Citizenship, and Change. Participants self-report using a Likert Scale of one to five, five indicating the highest level of achievement. The instrument yields high levels of validity and reliability.

## **Methodology**

The SRLS data was collected via email surveys and compiled by the Survey Sciences Group during the 2005-2006 academic years. For our study purposes, we utilized UNLV-specific data only except for select references to national data findings. In addition to the main survey instrument there were four items specific to the UNLV samples. Random Sample: A random selection of undergraduate students from UNLV (N=596) which is representative of the greater student population. Comparative Sample: A second sample (N=81) of students actively involved with the Student Involvement and Activities (SIA) offices to serve as a comparison against the random sample. These participants were representative of the SIA student population.

Standard data cleaning techniques were employed for data analysis. Findings were generated using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. A total of 366 analyses not including frequencies, descriptives and means tables were run from May 23, 2007-August 3, 2007.

## **Cluster Regression Models**

All clusters include three environmental variables in addition to the demographic (Gender, race, living situation and class ranking) control variables. The cluster regressions highlight possible program combinations and their predicted effects and were developed through Joshua Kelley, summer graduate assistant for Student Involvement and Activities, and Scott Blevins, Program Coordinator for Leadership Development work during the summer of 2007.

The components of the cluster regression models include participating in diversity dialogue/discussions, engaging in short-term leadership experiences, engaging in moderate-term leadership experiences, partaking in community service/service learning, and having a faculty or staff mentor. These clusters were derived by exploring variables with high significance in addition to working towards a model of civic engagement. For all intensive purposes and bearing in mind our student population at UNLV, we define leadership experiences as follows: Short-term leadership experiences consist of a weekend or less. Moderate-term leadership experiences consist of a semester or less. Long-term leadership experiences consist of a year or longer. In our findings, long-term leadership experiences did not yield a statistically significant score. However, the four clusters developed through multiple regressions include:

? Cluster 1 = Diversity discussions, many short-term leadership experiences and community service. ? Cluster 2 = Diversity discussions, many moderate-term leadership experiences and community service. ? Cluster 3 = Diversity discussions, many moderate-term leadership experiences and several faculty mentor meetings. ? Cluster 4 = Community service, many short-term leadership experiences and many student affairs mentor meetings.

Therefore, the areas that look the most promising we can actually manipulate based on the four clusters and UNLV SRLS questions are:

- Increasing short-term leadership experience opportunities.
- Advocating students' use of faculty/staff and peer mentors.

- Increasing marketing to drum up more interest in leadership programs. (References UNLV-specific questions regarding interest in leadership yielding significant positive correlations on all constructs).
- With the significant positive correlation shown with cluster regressions, continue to move in the direction towards working with a model of civic engagement, including leadership, service, and diversity.

Students who take part in leadership opportunities offered by Student Involvement and Activities score higher on five of eight measures in comparison to the greater UNLV student population. Additionally, they score higher on six of eight measures in comparison to the national student population.

The four program clusters are effective ways of improving student leadership skills across all eight constructs. However, attempting to combine more than three of the environmental factors adds only a marginal benefit or no benefit at all. Three program clusters are the optimal balance. If a student cannot complete a full program cluster there is still a noticeable benefit to completing one or two programs. Consequently, if only one program can be completed, diversity discussions and short- or moderate-term leadership experiences yields the greatest benefits.