

# 2018 MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

## RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

In February and March 2018, 3,071 undergraduate and 171 pharmacy professional students completed the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) survey. Survey invitations were sent in February 2018 to 13,555 students; 4,224 students started the survey (32%) and 3,242 students completed the survey (24%). The MSL is a survey study designed “to examine student leadership values at institutional and national levels with specific attention to campus experience factors that influence leadership development in college students”. As a nationally administered study, MSL results allow for a comparison of UW–Madison students with those attending peer groups of institutions.

The MSL Task Force with representatives from multiple School & Colleges and Leadership Centers on campus, worked closely with survey specialists to systematically review data focused on student demographics, student experiences during college, and leadership-related outcomes. Over several months, the Task Force analyzed data to uncover potential key takeaways while considering their ramifications. During this process, important themes emerged that are captured in the findings below.

### KEY FINDINGS



**Key Finding 1: UW–Madison students scored as high or higher on leadership outcomes as students at other institutions.**

Compared to students at peer institutions and the MSL National Sample, UW–Madison students scored about the same or higher on the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) and its six subscales. This finding also applied to the Resiliency, Leadership Efficacy, Complex Cognitive Skills, Social Perspective Taking, Social Generativity and Hope scales.



**Key Finding 2: Leadership outcome scores for UW–Madison students have been stable over time.**

None of the leadership outcomes—SRLS and subscales, Resiliency, Leadership Efficacy, Complex Cognitive Skills, Social Perspective-Taking, Social Generativity, Hope—changed substantially between 2015 and 2018.



**Key Finding 3: UW–Madison School/College differences in leadership outcome scores were infrequent.**

The few exceptions were that Wisconsin School of Business students scored higher on Leadership Efficacy, School of Education and School Nursing students scored higher on Citizenship, and School of Pharmacy students scored higher on Complex Cognitive Skills.



**Key Finding 4: Leadership outcome scores were not consistently associated with demographics except for international status and GPA.**

International students consistently scored lower than domestic students on nearly every leadership outcome, while students with higher GPAs scored higher on most leadership outcomes.

Other differences by demographics were modest and infrequent. Men scored somewhat lower than women on the SRLS and subscales, but higher on Resilience. LGBTQ students scored lower on several measures, including the SRLS and subscales, Leadership Efficacy, Resilience, and Hope. There were no consistent differences by race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status.



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**Key Finding 5: Some experiences—such as Socio-Cultural Discussions, Social Change Behaviors, Student Groups, Community Service, Mentoring and Organizations—were strongly associated with leadership outcome scores.**

Students that more frequently participated in Socio-Cultural Discussions, Social Change Behaviors, Organizations and Mentoring consistently scored higher on leadership outcomes. The same was true for students who participated in Community Service, especially as part of a student organization, community organization, or on their own. Participation in Student Groups was also associated with higher scores for leadership outcomes, particularly for Advocacy, Service or Student Governance groups.



**Key Finding 6: Participation in those experiences strongly associated with leadership outcome scores (Key Finding 5) was not consistently associated with student demographics.**

The few exceptions were that transfer students were less likely to participate in Mentoring, Organizations or Student Groups and high GPA students were more likely to participate in Community Service, Organizations and Student Groups.



**Key Finding 7: Participation in some leadership training activities was only modestly associated with leadership outcomes.**

Students who completed any leadership training activities scored higher on the Omnibus SRLS, Citizenship, Congruence, Consciousness of Self, Leadership Efficacy, Complex Cognitive Skills, Social Generativity, Resilience, Hope, Search for Meaning and Leadership Motivation. The leadership training activities having the most consistent associations were participation in Leadership Certificate and Leadership Capstone Programs. Frequency of participation in Leadership Conferences, Retreats, Lectures/Workshops, Positional Training, Courses and Short-Term Service Immersion Programs were positively associated with some leadership outcomes.



**Key Finding 8: Working for pay, either on or off campus, and most high-impact learning experiences were not strongly associated with leadership outcomes.**

Most high-impact learning experiences were only weakly associated with leadership outcomes, with participation in a practical experience (Practicum, Internship, Field Experience, Co-Op or Clinical Experience) being the most strongly associated with leadership outcomes. Participation in study abroad, learning communities, living-learning programs, research, first-year experience and capstone experience were rarely associated with leadership outcomes. Working for pay, either on or off campus, was not associated with leadership outcomes.



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## GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the key findings from this iteration of the MSL crystalized, the MSL Task Force considered goals and recommendations that aligned with the data and best practices in leadership development.



### **Recommendation 1: Identify aspirational institutional benchmarks for student leadership outcomes.**

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate, graduate and professional students at UW–Madison are encouraged to engage in their own personal Wisconsin Experience. This experience is intended to develop intellectual and personal growth in areas of empathy and humility, relentless curiosity, intellectual confidence, and purposeful action. These areas of developmental focus set UW–Madison students apart from their peers at other institutions, while also preparing them for life and career after graduation. Establishing leadership outcome benchmarks relative to peer institutions and determining sources of support and ownership of leadership education, both curricular and co-curricular, at UW–Madison will ensure on-going institutional success.



### **Recommendation 2: Ensure curricular and co-curricular leadership education programs are grounded in theoretical and conceptual leadership models.**

**BACKGROUND:** Within the last generation, researchers and theorists have developed conceptual leadership models to support leadership education. Many of these models have had a specific focus on college students. Several years ago, a diverse group of leadership education practitioners developed a research and theory-based leadership model that takes into consideration the unique context of UW–Madison. The UW–Madison Leadership Framework has served to support leadership education and is being integrated into curricular and co-curricular leadership education programs across campus in a variety of contexts. This resource can further support academic schools and colleges that face increased pressure to demonstrate leadership outcomes tied to their accreditation while providing the added benefit of connecting students' experiences through common language.



### **Recommendation 3: Develop and/or connect complementary curricular and co-curricular leadership education programs.**

**BACKGROUND:** Providing a breadth of curricular and co-curricular leadership programming focused on emerging leaders, positional leadership, and other tailored leadership development topics is consistent with the growing commitment to leadership education across higher education. The opportunity to connect these programs through a common, research-based, leadership model, like the UW–Madison Leadership Framework, enables students to synthesize learning across multiple contexts.



### **Recommendation 4: Incorporate experiences that are strongly associated with attainment of leadership outcomes into high impact learning experiences and leadership programs.**

**BACKGROUND:** High impact learning experiences such as study abroad, practical experiences, learning communities, living-learning programs, undergraduate research, first-year experiences and capstone experiences are known to help students attain UW–Madison's Essential Learning Outcomes. However, MSL results show that they are not consistently associated with attainment of leadership outcomes. This reveals an opportunity to offer these high-impact learning experiences with engagement in socio-cultural conversations outside the classroom, community service, student organizations, and mentoring. Although there are numerous leadership training opportunities available on campus, few are coupled with high impact learning experiences in a curricular setting and most are contained in the co-curricular environment.



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### **Recommendation 5: Establish infrastructure that supports educators in effectively integrating evidence-based leadership education interventions.**

**BACKGROUND:** Leadership, like other academic disciplines, is taught and researched extensively in a variety of contexts. Unlike other academic disciplines, however, many staff and faculty across campus are tasked with generating student outcomes in the discipline of leadership, in which they have limited or no academic background. By providing targeted support through consultative services offered by leadership education specialists, staff and faculty will have access to resources that advance student leadership learning.



### **Recommendation 6: Engage in on-going leadership research and assessment.**

**BACKGROUND:** Educational programs, including those focused on leadership development, require systematic assessment to ensure students are attaining learning outcomes and that programs are undergoing continuous improvement. UW–Madison's engagement with the MSL has been largely driven by this need. The data obtained from the MSL are complementary but not duplicative of data obtained from other surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). While NSSE and MSL measure comparable input and environment variables, they measure different outcome variables. NSSE emphasizes variables focused on broad educational outcomes such as communication skills, analytical skills, and professional skills while MSL emphasizes variables focused on leadership development. The MSL and NSSE surveys are important self-assessment tools that indirectly measure the success of education programs. Complementary direct assessment methods such as 3rd party reviews of student work are also important and need to be developed if they do not exist or enhanced if they do exist.



### **Recommendation 7: Further assess and evaluate international students' concept of leadership, its value, and incentives and barriers to participation and outcome attainment.**

**BACKGROUND:** Lower scores for the international students should not be considered as a deficit for these students. The interpretation and value of 'leadership' can vary greatly—depending on many factors, including national origin and cultural context. While the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership data indicated consistently lower scores by international students than domestic students on many leadership outcome scales, it is unclear what generated those results. By analyzing available data, engaging in on-going conversations with international students, and reviewing existing research, the University can meet its commitment to supporting the growing international student population by providing educational leadership programs that are responsive to their needs.

## NEXT STEPS

The MSL Survey data will be shared with a wide variety of audiences throughout UW's campus in order to create partnerships in developing and strengthening educational practices that yield leadership outcome attainment. To become involved in these intentional educational efforts or the next iteration of the MSL Survey, please visit: [leadership.wisc.edu/research](https://leadership.wisc.edu/research) or contact Mark Kueppers, [mark.kueppers@wisc.edu](mailto:mark.kueppers@wisc.edu).

