

# 2021 MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

## RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

The survey focused on UW–Madison undergraduate students as well as all Doctor of Pharmacy students in the School of Pharmacy. Survey invitations were sent in February 2021 to 31,825 students; 6,276 students started the survey, and 4,997 students completed the survey, providing a 16% survey completion rate. The MSL is part of on-going assessment efforts to develop data-based and intentional interventions to improve leadership education for all students. 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 Coalition, with representatives from multiple School & Colleges and student service units 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 Coalition 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 on leadership outcomes as students at other institutions.**

UW–Madison students scored about the same on the SRLS and Leadership Efficacy Scale as students in the MSL National Sample, the Big Ten Coalition, and Carnegie Peers. However, UW–Madison students scored significantly higher than students in the Big Ten Coalition on the Resilience Scale.



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

Compared to the 2018 survey, there were no significant changes in scores for the SRLS or Leadership Efficacy scales, though scores on the Resilience Scale declined.



**Key Finding 3: Consistent differences in leadership outcome scores were not observed by school/college.**

Students from eight schools/colleges at UW–Madison participated in the 2021 MSL survey. Leadership outcome scores were similar regardless of student school/college.



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

While there were some differences in leadership outcomes by student characteristics—gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, political views, and disability status—they tended to be scattered or inconsistent. Students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher regularly scored higher on leadership outcomes than their counterparts, while international students regularly scored lower.



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**Key Finding 5: Some college environments—such as community service, organizations, student groups, mentoring, and leadership training—were strongly associated with higher leadership outcome scores.**

Students that participated in community service, organizations, student groups, mentoring, or leadership training consistently scored higher on leadership outcomes than students that did not. Working for pay, participating in high-impact learning experiences, and participation in identity-based groups were rarely or inconsistently associated with leadership outcomes.



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

There were no differences in participating in community service, organizations, student groups, mentoring, or leadership training by sexual orientation, political views, disability status, veteran status, Pell Grant eligibility, or first-generation college status. The differences by gender, nationality or race/ethnicity, religious views, or age tended to be scattered.



**Key Finding 7: High Impact Learning Experiences and Work for Pay were not strongly associated with leadership outcome scores.**

While participation in high impact learning experiences and working for pay have been shown elsewhere to positively contribute to student learning, they were not consistently associated with leadership outcome scores.



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### GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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



#### **Recommendation 1: Identify peer-based and time-based aspirational institutional benchmarks for student leadership outcomes.**

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: Establish infrastructure that supports application of best practices for attainment of student leadership outcomes.**

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 and development specialists, staff and faculty will have access to resources that advance student leadership outcome attainment.



#### **Recommendation 3: Expand engagement in on-going leadership research and assessment.**

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 self-assessment surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). 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. High priority should be placed on understanding differences observed between international and domestic students.



#### **Recommendation 4: Develop and/or connect complementary curricular and co-curricular leadership programs.**

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 and development across higher education. The opportunity to connect these programs through a common research-based leadership model, like the now-validated UW–Madison Leadership Framework, enables students to synthesize learning across multiple contexts.



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### **Recommendation 5: Encourage curricular and co-curricular leadership programs to be grounded in theoretical and conceptual leadership models.**

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 the UW–Madison Leadership Framework, a research and theory based leadership model that takes into consideration the unique context of UW–Madison. More recently, the Framework underwent a rigorous third-party validation process. The culturally responsive Framework can support leadership education and be integrated into curricular and co-curricular leadership 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 6: Incorporate experiences that are strongly associated with attainment of leadership outcomes into high impact learning experiences and work experiences.**

High impact learning experiences such as study abroad, internships, 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. Similar opportunities are available for students employed on campus or in campus-affiliated co-op and internship programs.

## 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).

