LEADING AND FOLLOWING AT A 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY:
IDENTIFYING DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR
A STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

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April 26, 2004
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A

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
Of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2004
Abstract

Leadership has been discussed, debated, practiced, and researched for millennia. In the 20th century alone, no less than ten types of leadership were defined and empirically studied. In the higher education context, student leadership development is addressed from a wide variety of theoretical and programmatic approaches and co-curricular leadership programs have been one of the fastest growing areas in higher education in the past decade.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Leadership Program was initially structured as adaptations of other models. Critical to the future success of the program is the reformation of elements to fit UAF’s unique context and an adequate outcomes assessment plan to determine that elements are functioning as intended. In order to develop an understanding of leading and following at UAF, program stakeholders participated in focus group interviews, individual interviews, and a written assessment. Participant observation was also used to gather rich data about the institutional culture of leadership at UAF. Data was thematically analyzed as well as categorized using national standards. One final result is a model of desired student leadership competencies for the UAF Leadership Program.
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Acknowledgements

For the brave and tenacious visionaries who conceived and created what is now the UAF Leadership Program.

To the UAF community, for being a home away from home, and a vibrant place to work and play. And, specifically to the Wood Center and Career Services staffs who have supported my passion for leadership and my graduate school endeavors.

To Dr. Pamela McWherter who has charmed my life in immeasurable ways. May our “hat” collection continue to grow.

To Dr. Jin Brown who let me interrupt him in class to ask questions, and provided the opportunity to ponder and discuss a full continuum of ideas.

To Dr. Bob Arundale for providing opportunities to gain invaluable professional and interpersonal skills and experience, and for sharing the same.

For Mysti, Cristina, Sarah C., Sarah H., Amy, Beth, Karine, and Cindy: “If I had a camera showing all the light we give & how that light extends, I’d give it to my friends.”

And especially to Evelyn Trabant, Dennis Trabant, Patrick McKenna, and Oscar who always insist that I am already “enough.”
Chapter One: Introduction

A Short History of the UAF Leadership Program & Researcher Involvement

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Leadership Program (LP) began in earnest in 1999 when a small group of Student Services staff worked outside their formal job descriptions to plan and implement a Student Leadership Conference. Ambitiously, that one-day event was called the “1st Annual.” As one of those volunteers, I remember our unwillingness to wait until the “2nd Annual” Conference to continue our discussions about leadership at UAF.

By the opening of spring semester 2000, we had formed a UAF Leadership Development Steering Committee and completed a full day strategic planning session. The vision, values, mission, and goals developed during that session propelled us into four years of volunteerism and grassroots advocacy in order to provide student leadership development opportunities, and create a sustainable leadership program on our campus. At that time, I was working in a newly created Student Employment Coordinator position, and sought ways to share in student career development, as well as be more involved in campus endeavors. The LP became an important part of my outreach on campus. And, as an active member of the Leadership Development Steering Committee, the vision and mission we developed served not only as a guide for the program, but as a personal commitment I made to UAF.

Between 2000 and 2003, we created and/or expanded our flagship Conference, a workshop series called UAF LEADS, a spring Leaders for Alaska
Institute to complement the fall Conference, a summer Emerging Leaders Institute for high school students statewide, partnerships with on and off campus entities on a variety of projects, and a series of student leadership recognition efforts. In-kind funding and various financial gifts were cobbled together for each event. In order to build appropriately, we researched and replicated similar programs at other universities. Fundamentally, volunteers and their passion for students and leadership fueled the entire endeavor. The LP volunteers grew to include not only Student Services staff, but faculty, community members, students, and alumni as well.

My volunteer time was primarily centered about our fall Student Leadership Conference, which I chaired from 2000 through 2003. My passion for this event has involved countless hours in both “big picture” visioning and planning, and details such as thank you notes and poster hanging. During this time I changed jobs within the Department of Career Services and began serving as Senior Career Counselor, as well as beginning work toward a Master’s degree in Professional Communication. In addition, I chaired the Nanook Honors Celebration one year, participated in training with other members of the Leadership Development Steering Committee, served on several award committees, and provided training via the UAF LEADS workshop series. Many volunteers helped create and maintain the LP, and it is likely that any history of the program would note my involvement.

We were not the only ones on campus involved in leadership “talk.” In 1996, student senators of the Associated Students of UAF (ASUAF) formulated a Graduation with Leadership Honors award, which, though it has changed in form, is
still in place. In 2000, the Provost created a year-long Academic Leadership Institute for faculty and staff who want to develop their own leadership potential within higher education. In late 2002, the Dean of the Graduate School began a rousing recruitment of volunteers to explore possibilities for a leadership PhD and a leadership center. In addition, he began a Leadership in Action Seminar series that is open to the campus and Fairbanks communities. And, in 2003, faculty in Northern Studies and Political Science joined forces to create an undergraduate Leadership and Civic Engagement Minor.

Most of the efforts were conceptualized and implemented on the basis of volunteer passion, time, and effort. For many, volunteer fatigue was an increasing factor, and the multiple efforts were simultaneously exciting and confusing; potential for overlap or conflict seemed imminent. Most importantly, throughout all these efforts, a clear understanding of what we, the UAF community, mean when we say “leadership” has never been clear. In fact, all these diverging yet related efforts attest to the amorphous nature of the leadership topic itself.

In late 2003, one of the major goals of the grass roots effort was realized; a full time staff member, with the title Leadership Development Coordinator (LDC), was funded on a sustainable basis. The creation of this position marks a significant institutional commitment to student leadership development. The LDC will lead the next phase of the LP, to include the transition into an institutionalized program, implementation of student leadership development opportunities, and program planning and assessment.
Currently, I serve in this newly created position. As alluded to, the creation of this position was a goal and dream realized for many of us, and it represents an important milestone for me, both professionally and personally. My first contact with UAF was before my second birthday, and I have been involved with my “home town” campus in various official capacities (student, alumna, employee) for the past seven years. Coming full circle, the research contained here is both personal and professional; the LP assessment is an enduring goal of mine as I feel strongly that exploring our campus understanding of leadership is both crucial to program efficacy, and an informative act in and of itself. Personally, this thesis research fills my desire to honor my commitment to the program, while exploring my own understanding of leadership, with the appropriate, passionate contribution. Professionally, the LP will benefit greatly from the development of the empirical standard outlined here.

**Participant Observation in Qualitative Research**

Tedlock (2000) notes that, “participant observation [is] the observation of participation” (p. 471). Throughout this study, I participated in the LP on two levels; I observed study participants, ongoing programmatic events, and myself, and I was the most active individual involved in creating and maintaining the program through my role as the LDC. My knowledge and experience of the LP, and of UAF in general, are foundational elements of this study, and as such, no formal objectivity in the traditional sense is claimed; my involvement with the program is the first context of this study and I am the primary research tool.
Janesick (2000) describes the qualitative researcher as “remarkably like a choreographer at various stages in the design process, in terms of situating and recontextualizing the research project within the shared experience of the researcher and the participants in the study” (p. 380). In the case of this study, I made adjustments to questions within focus groups in order to clarify and/or “test” questions or themes that had arisen in earlier conversations or interviews. And, I described and analyzed the interview and questionnaire data throughout the process of the study, thus developing an emerging understanding of the themes. Finally, my ongoing participant observation involved grounding this assessment in both historical knowledge of the program, and in extant leadership theory. By using such an approach, this study involved the gathering of rich and contextualized empirical data. Such data, which is specific to the UAF context, is an important and equal complement to the quantitative tools already developed for measuring student leadership development at universities nationwide.

Necessity of Assessment

Leadership has been discussed, debated, practiced, and researched for millennia. During the late 20th century alone, no less than ten types of leadership have been defined and empirically studied (for reviews, see Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Bass, 1981). In the higher education context, student leadership development is approached from a wide variety of theoretical and programmatic approaches (see Carry, 2003; Wielkiewicz, 2000). And, co-curricular leadership programs have been one of the fastest growing areas in higher education in the past decade (Cress et al.,
In order for the LP to accomplish its goal of supporting leadership development for students, opportunities must be established for students to develop the skills for comparing the widely varying definitions and uses of leadership theory and practice.

To date, no empirical evidence specific to UAF exists to support the establishment of such opportunities. It is necessary to move beyond the modeling of other campus programs and address UAF’s unique environment and student population. Critical to the future success of the program will be the reformation of elements to fit this unique context and an adequate outcomes assessment to determine that elements are functioning as intended. The current study outlines a set of desirable student leader competencies, as defined by program stakeholders, as a foundation for future assessment and planning.

**Definition of Stakeholders**

For this study, “stakeholder” is defined as individuals who have participated in, supported, and/or benefited from student leadership programming at UAF. Many of these individuals are already associated with the volunteer and grass roots efforts that started the program four years ago, and are the most appropriate individuals from which to gather data in terms of institutionalizing and assessing the program. These individuals include former Leadership Development Steering Committee members, event volunteers, and alumni and students who have participated in events. In addition, stakeholders who have been involved only peripherally, such as employers of UAF students, provided important perspectives.
Review of Relevant Literature: Leading and following as collective action in 
human organization

"Leadership, like love, is difficult to define. Both mean many different things to many
different people"

Charles Barron, 1990, p. 1

Traditionally, organizational scholars and consultants have discussed the 
important role of individual leaders and individual followers as both antecedent and 
resultant of “good” leadership in organizations (Kelley, 1992; Greenleaf, 1997; Bass, 
1981). In the last several decades, a new and expanded understanding of leadership 
has emerged, due in part to the development of organizational culture theory. When 
contemporary leadership and organizational culture theories are applied 
simultaneously to human organization, one outcome is an understanding of leadership 
as a collective, shared phenomenon. In this perspective, leadership is considered one 
of many organizational roles; leaders are not necessarily the most powerful or the 
“better” organizational members, and followers are not necessarily just “passive 
sheep” (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Kelley, 1992; Schein, 1985).

In the study of organizations, definitions of leadership are rarely agreed upon; 
“leadership” appears to be slippery, emergent, and highly contextualized (Deetz, 
Tracy, & Simpson, 1992; Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Fascination with leadership 
has spawned an almost never-ending well of data, information, and literature, in both 
academic and mainstream arenas, and followers are seldom the focal point of research 
or stories. Consequently, “any attempt to summarize the literature on leadership is
bound to meet with criticism" (Bechler & Johnson, 1995, p. 78). The discussion here
c oncerns one particular evolution, and does not purport to be the only evolution of
discourse on leadership in human organization.

However, at this point, it is certainly appropriate to view leadership as a
broad, fluid piece of organizational life, both informing and informed by the various
ways that organizations are created, maintained, and managed by organizational
members. Numerous scholars and consultants provide arguments for this more
collective view of the role and the impact of leadership in human organization
(Harter, 2002; Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Schein,
1985). For many, the human experience of leading and organizing is culturally
centered, and involves ambient factors such as trust, service, frames, symbols, and
fluidity. The combination of these areas with differing worldviews helps crystallize
the experience of leadership in human organization.

**In Context: Individualistic and Collectivistic Worldviews**

An important context in the discussion of leadership and human organization is
the worldview continuum of individualism and collectivism. Leadership theories in
the individualistic, primarily western, tradition are individual centric. They focus on
individual personalities and skills sets, and tend to view followers as resultant of
leader action. In this view, the unit of study is individual or dyadic behavior, and the
organization is informed by these interactions (see, among others, Ehrhart & Klein,
2001; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000). Conversely, in the collectivistic tradition,
groups are the unit of study. When leadership is viewed as collective action, the
behavior of more than two individuals is observed and considered to be involved in the resulting organizational outcome. Researchers grounded in a collectivistic, or primarily eastern, worldview understand human organization as constituted by members’ interaction (Hall, 2002; Fisher, 2001; Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

In other words, in a purely individualistic worldview, leaders are primarily viewed as the cause, and followers as the effect of organizing. In a collectivistic worldview, organizational members are likely to be understood as co-involved in leading and following at various times. True to the intrinsic nature of continuums, complexity increases as clear and linear distinctions between opposing variables, such that leadership and followership dissolves. Researchers and consultants are embracing this complexity as they consider when, how, where, and why organizational members move along this continuum of organizational action.

In Context: Organizational Culture

Communication scholars, anthropologists, and others variously define culture. Most definitions involve a combination of language use, symbols, rituals, norms, values, and standards that are understood and used by all cultural members. In discussing the cultural construct in organizations, Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson (2000) assert that culture is “not what an organization has, rather [it is] what an organization is” (p. 9). It is also argued that culture is often implicit, and deeply imbedded in organizational reality, and therefore is both powerful and challenging to identify.

The organizational culture perspective involves an understanding of organizations as constituted in communication between members. This view serves as
an argument against the traditional understanding of organizations as a series of structure and function. Scholars using this perspective focus on the complex environments that inform and are informed by organizational members’ “talk.” The social construction of reality perspective is the foundation of this understanding. For social constructionists, “all reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed. There is no exception” (Crotty, 1998, p. 54).

Research and consulting in the organizational culture perspective involves observation of the communication behaviors that literally create and maintain organizational functioning, including leadership. For many scholars and practitioners, “leadership is assumed to be revealed not in the actions or exertions of the leader but as part of the way actors experience organizational processes” (Meindl, 1995, p. 331, see also Fisher, 2001). As Benesch (2003) argues, “the leader and the led arise out of the same context” (personal communication, February 6, 2003). Therefore, culture and leadership are intrinsically intertwined, and it can be argued that “the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture” (Schein, 1985, p.2). Finally, Pennington, Townsend, and Cummins (2003) go so far as to assert that further “leadership studies are unlikely to be of any additive value until they take into account organizational variables” (p. 2).

An Evolution of Leadership Theory: Individual Traits to Shared Phenomenon

Researchers, academics, managers, philosophers, and workers alike are actively engaged in leadership "talk," research, and training (see, among others, Bass, 1981; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Garder & Clevenger, 1998; Greenleaf,
1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Nelson & Quick, 2003). The effects, contexts, and importance of leaders and leadership are hotly debated in virtually every social situation in the United States. Leadership is “an amorphous phenomenon that has intrigued us since people began organizing” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 13). The fascination has spawned shelves of books, countless internet sites, no less than twenty-five university degree programs, and myriad research projects and articles. With mainstream trends such as Covey’s 1997 *Principled Centered Leadership* and franklincovey.com to fringe academic explorations such as Wheatley’s 1999 *Leadership and the New Science*, it is clear that the leadership discussion is alive and well in the 21st century.

In the past half century, leadership has been imagined as many things within human organization, and to date, there is no commonly agreed upon definition. At least four major trends in the dialogue are discernible. First, it was a trait that one is either born with or can develop. Next, environment and context were added to the suppositions about leadership. The third stage involved recognition of different styles and approaches and how each sparked different organizational effects. From there, an understanding of leadership as shared phenomenon emerged.

In the trait approach to understanding leader effectiveness, researchers and practitioners assume that “an individual’s physical and psychological features [are] the best indicators of leadership potential” (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 63). Leadership, then, is a matter of techniques and skills that produce a desired result. Clearly, in this understanding, the individual is paramount to the existence of
leadership. As the contemporary “starting point,” this idea of leadership is ingrained in U.S. cultural paradigms. Hill (1999) laments, “this conventional wisdom is further reinforced by biographies and media that often build arguments about the success or failure of a leader around the presence or absence of certain leadership qualities” (p. 201).

Most recently, trait leadership theory has merged with the idea of transactional leadership, which encompasses the traditional “command and control” management philosophy. Though a slight evolution from the trait-only approach, empirical studies of transactional leaders involve measuring a pre-defined set of personality traits and communication behaviors. Hackman and Johnson (2000) characterize transactional leaders as those who “exchange rewards or privileges for desirable outcomes – much the way a Marine drill sergeant would trade a weekend pass for clean barracks” (p. 90). The role of the follower in this framework is to passively listen, avoid questions, and perform given tasks. Likewise, transactional leaders themselves are “primarily passive” (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 90) because they perform as “expected,” and do not integrate new environmental information into their behavioral choices; leadership trait theories do not account for any exchange of information between organizational members, not to mention account for proactivity at any level.

Recognition that all organizational members are proactive and do exchange information, at least some of the time, gave rise to the second major trend in leadership theory, which is the situational approach. Here, leadership is understood as contextual; “effective leaders address the functional demands of any situation”
Differences in leadership success are related to task and relational structures within the organization. It is understood that followers have an impact on whether or not a leader is able to be effective. As contemporary organizations have recognized that followers can thwart a leader’s efforts, they have moved toward group leadership. In essence, this means that organizations are capitalizing on the idea that if more leaders exist, they will support each other’s leadership efforts more willingly. Hill (1999) notes, “In a pluralistic, egalitarian society that prides itself on individual achievement, [situational leadership] is very attractive as more individuals can participate . . . and our individualism and presumed objectivity [are reinforced]” (p. 202). Again, individuals and their ability to achieve are preserved as the paramount focal point. Followers are acknowledged as potential barriers to leadership, but not necessarily as independent organizational actors. Ultimately, in the situational leadership approach, followers and leaders remain dichotomously, and competitively, related.

Followers are eventually acknowledged as positively participating in leadership in a third major trend in leadership theory. The styles approach to leadership encompasses various ideas, including recent theories of transformational and charismatic leadership. Transformational leaders motivate followers through appeals which “go beyond . . . basic needs to satisfy a follower’s higher-level needs” (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 88), while charismatic leadership is “best conceptualized not as something a leader does to his or her followers, but rather as a relationship between a leader and his or her followers” (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001, p.
154). The styles approach, while still focuses primarily on the individual leader, is fundamentally characterized by attention to the followers' relationship with a leader, and the situation at hand. Additionally, it "assumes that the functional requirements for successful group work in our complex society are so diverse that one person can rarely meet the needs" (Hill, 1999, p. 202). At this stage of leadership theory, researchers have begun to adapt their former focus on individual leaders to include the larger context within which leadership occurs; through exploring the multiple needs and roles involved in the concept of leadership, individual leaders, and indeed even individual followers, become only part of the complexities of the organizational situation.

Thus, a fourth and contemporary trend can be termed "shared leadership." Here, leadership – and its complement followership – is imagined as virtually simultaneous experiences of organizational members. In other words, shared leadership is the ongoing movement of each member along a leadership-followership continuum. Most importantly, leadership is conceptualized as beyond individual influence alone; it is a group function, created and maintained by the interaction between organizational members (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Meindl, 1995; Barge, 1994). As Max De Pree (1989) states, "performance of the group is the only real proof of leadership" (p. 206).

In this approach, a distinction between the words "leader" and "leadership" is made. Leaders are the individual actors in the organizational story, while leadership is the collective action of leaders, followers, and organizational members by any other
name. Though this distinction is rarely explicitly acknowledged, much contemporary leadership literature is replete with the assumption. An example involves the work of organizational scholar Karl Weick, who originally suggested a *leader-as-medium metaphor* in his discussions of organizational culture. His work is one of the initial moves to a “beyond-the-individual” understanding of leadership in organizations. In subsequently re-presenting Weick’s conceptualization of leaders in organizations, scholars have moved away from the word leader and referred to Weick’s concept as leadership. For example, Barge (1994) explains, “Weick (1978) suggests using a leader-as-medium metaphor. In this view, leadership mediates . . . (and) is aimed at helping a company organize its collective action . . . leadership helps organizations” (p. 11). One of the strengths of Weick’s work appears to be that it acts as a bridge between concepts of “leaders as individuals” and “leadership as collective action” through using language that is accessible to both perspectives.

When leadership is understood as shared among organizational members, the full reality of organizational affairs and outcomes is acknowledged as all environments, all communication, and all interaction is included in the organizational “picture.” Importantly, this perspective increases the likelihood that sustainable change and efficiency can be readily created and maintained (Deetz, Tracy, Simpson, 2000). Evidence for this shared leadership framework has been burgeoning during the evolution of leadership theory in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Three areas of importance to this framework are servant leadership and the role of trust in human
organization, followership theories, and symbolic leadership and cultural management.

**Servant Leadership and the Role of Trust in Human Organization**

One of the first moves toward an understanding of leadership as collective action was the development of the model of servant leadership. The term was first coined by Robert Greenleaf (1977) who understood servant leaders to be "servant(s) first . . .(they) make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 27). Greenleaf was inspired by Herman Hess' (1956) book *Journey to the East*. Hess writes from a collective worldview while Greenleaf lived in a predominantly individualistic society. Embracing this inherent complexity was one of the areas that Greenleaf (1977) reveled in: "there may be real contradiction in the servant as leader . . . my perceptual world is full of contradictions . . . I believe in order, and I want creation out of chaos. My good society will have strong individualism amid community" (p. 26). The idea of complex, other-focused leaders was a surprise to many of Greenleaf's corporate contemporaries, but twenty-five years later, there is a national leadership center named after him and at least four different university programs which focus exclusively on servant leadership. The endurance of Greenleaf's idea seems to be related, in part, to his ability to "speak" the language of both corporate and non-corporate audiences, much like Weick. In addition, throughout his work he insists that no "right" answer to questions of leadership and/or organization ultimately exists, and therefore continuous dialogue is encouraged.
As the concept of servant leadership has evolved, certain elements have crystallized. In Greenleaf’s original work, followers were not explicitly discussed, but Seitz and Pepitone (1996) report that one university program helps students to develop an “understanding [of] the effectiveness of both servant leaders and servant followers,” and the program staff argues for the “important recognition that both are of equal stature” (p. 119). Individual responsibility is also emphasized in servant leadership, particularly in thinking about impact of one’s actions on others. Seitz & Pepitone (1996) describe servant leaders as “always searching, listening, and expecting to make the world a better place” (p. 116). They go on to assert that, “the process of becoming a servant leader begins within the servant, not within society” (p. 116). Ultimately, servant leadership is advocacy for individuals to move away from a self-centered approach to leadership. Thus, while Greenleaf’s original idea is still about individual organizational members, the primary focus is on how those individuals affect others.

An important and influential element of servant leadership is the trust relationship between organizational members. Greenleaf (1977) discusses trustees as organizational leaders who are accountable for the public trust in an institution (i.e. organization). He states that trustees “care for the institution, which means they care for all of the people the institution touches, and that they are determined to make their caring count” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 68). The concept of trust is married with individual responsibility so that all members of organization, internal and external, are specifically attended to in some regard. In his time, such a statement did not seem
as simple as it might today; when Greenleaf was first writing, most theorists and practitioners were dealing primarily with leadership as a set of traits and organizations as a series of structures, and the “people factor” was thought to be secondary.

In contemporary research, the role of trust in human organization is regularly identified as a critical factor in organizational functioning and culture (Seeger & Ulmer, 2002; Deetz, Tracy, Simpson, 2000; Hackman & Johnson, 2000). A basic level of trust among all organizational members – not just positional leaders – appears to increase the likelihood that individuals will develop loyalty to and passion for the organization, and will share an increased amount of their personal resources (Pennington, Townsend, & Cummins, 2003; Schrot, 2002; Thompson, 2002, Thoms, Dose, & Scott, 2002; Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000).

Trust is developed through ongoing interaction among organizational members, and often, leaders catalyze interaction. Organizational members acting in a leadership capacity help co-members develop their own understanding of what words and actions “mean” within the organization. When organizational realities are confirmed, or “make sense” in consistent ways, then the original input of the leader is reinforced. Likewise, when a leader asserts a reality that organizational members find to be false, the leader’s status is damaged, and organizational members are less likely to follow them in the future. As Deetz, Tracy, and Simpson (2000) state, “trust requires trying and testing” (p. 104). Therefore, leaders “can do much to create
organizational conditions that encourage and reduce barriers” (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000, p. 105).

The importance of the power of trust becomes clear in times of organizational crisis. Seeger and Ulmer (2002) report that trust was a major factor in the survival of two private lumber companies after catastrophic fires. Before the fires, each organization had a culture of “good working environments” and “caring for their people” (Seeger & Ulmer, 2002, p. 136). In each case, before the full amount of damage was known, the CEOs stated that workers would receive pay during rebuilding and layoffs would be avoided if possible. A few short years after their nearly devastating fires, these positional leaders once again headed organizations that were profitable and well received in their respective communities. Seeger and Ulmer (2002) found that the complete recovery of each company was clearly supported by “pre-crisis repertoires of response, such as open and positive relations” (p. 137). Because organizational members recognized that the organization was more than its burned buildings, and they trusted the words stated by the CEOs in the midst of the fires, long term sustainability and profitability were regained and maintained. Though fire is an extreme example in organizations, it can be argued that organizational crisis is a time when organizations show their “true colors” (Weick, 1988).

Clearly, the role of trust is paramount in organizational leadership, even though it may be challenging to observe or quantify. Furthermore, trust is not a linear concept developed in a hierarchical fashion. Instead, trust is developed between all
organizational members, at all levels, and at all times within the organization. Therefore, trust building is an ongoing function, which leads organizational work, and such interaction is performed by leaders and followers throughout the organization and not solely influenced by positional leaders.

**Emergence of Followership**

Most organizational theorists and practitioners understand clearly that leaders cannot, and do not, operate in an information, task, or relational vacuum; followers provide essential knowledge, insights, and production capability. It is widely recognized that "it takes at least two for leadership to occur" (Bass, 1981, p. 45; see also Kelley, 1992; Meindl, 1995). Furthermore, Kelley (1992) asserts that, for the U.S. workforce, "followership represents 70 to 90 percent of [our] working days" (p. 45). Despite all this, the vast majority of leadership literature only discusses leadership and fails to consider the organizational members who are following.

The small body of literature explicitly concerning followers and followership can be grouped into three general categories. The first centers on defining followership as a construct independent from leadership. This area involves identifying individual characteristics of followership. Second, followers are discussed as an essential element of leadership. Here, fluidity between, and co-creation of, the two constructs is emphasized. The investment in followers comprises another, third, area in the current literature. Clearly, these understandings of followership overlap, and in doing so, represent some of the tension between the independent, linear model
of understanding leadership and the emerging interdependent model of shared leadership.

The initial explorations of followership were attempts to define the phenomenon as independent-but-equal-to leadership. Herman (1999) states, "leadership and followership are equally essential functions in any organization . . . but like the two sides of a coin they are distinct and each must serve the other relevantly" (p. 106). By thus defining followership, individual organizational members remain the central focus. In this research, followers are generally directly compared to leaders, and both are seen to possess and use independent thinking, creativity, problem solving, and risk taking (Thoms, Dose, & Scott, 2002; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Kelley, 1992). What follows from this discussion is an understanding that many followers possess the ability and willingness to question a leader’s idea as well as to create their own. Accordingly, effective followers also possess and exercise the choice of who and when to follow (Hill, 1999; Haslam & Platow, 2001).

As scholars and managers work to understand the relationship of followership to leadership, it has become clear that viewing the two as monolithic dichotomy is not an accurate portrayal of what is happening in organizations. Therefore, theory and research next examine a more fluid definition involving the continuous creation of both leaders and followers. In describing this relationship, Meindl (1995) says "leadership is very much in the eyes of the beholder: followers, not the leader - and not researchers - define it" (p. 331). From this perspective, the idea that leadership
cannot and does not occur without followers is literally true. In Ehrhart and Klein’s (2001) study of follower preferences for certain types of leadership, they note that followers “may evaluate and describe the [same] leader quite differently” (p. 155). Perhaps intrinsic to the construct of followership is the follower’s ability and desire to choose or react to a leader, while maintaining independence of thought.

Kelley (1992) underscores this idea when defining "leadership and followership [as] a dialectic. Just as the word ‘right’ makes no sense without ‘left,’ they depend on each other for existence and meaning. They can never be independent" (p. 45). In practice, this interdependence manifests in a variety of ways. One such example is the common role that followers serve to support the more visible leader, who is human and therefore fallible. As Chaleff (1998) says "To leave the onus on the leader to detect, own up to, and remedy his or her blind spot is as unreasonable as asking you to scratch your back with your elbow" (p. 38).

As interdependence has become acknowledged as intrinsic to both leadership and followership, researchers began to explore how organizations invest in followers. Many studies have focused on the relationships that exist between organizational members, and how those relationships emerge within and then serve organizational goals. Brown and Thornborrow (1996) argue that “follower type(s) in any given organization will be closely related to that organization’s culture” (p. 6). Therefore, if the organization is primarily focused on communicating through its hierarchical structure, then the investment in followers is limited because their knowledge is not readily admitted (Parker, 2001). Conversely, if an organization focuses on
simultaneous communication with its members, followers are encouraged to contribute their knowledge.

In the traditional U.S. paradigm, good followers are thought to act and perform well because they long to lead. Kelley (1992) refers to this as the "leadership myth" (p. 16, see also Hill, 1999). However, this ongoing assumption of a linear progression between followers and leaders is not necessary, accurate, or even desirable. As one employee put it "I don't mind having responsibility . . . It's just that I don't like being the one that everybody looks to for a vision, or for inspiration, or for the final judgment . . . It is the doing, not the directing, that turns me on" (Kelley, 1992, p. 83).

Through the growing body of knowledge, the idea of followers as "soon-to-be leaders" is regularly challenged. In fact, the literature is replete with subtle references that leadership and followership exist concurrently in the same individual organizational members. In describing proactive employees, Campbell (2000) describes followers as “individuals [who] bring the vision with them, matching personal values to organizational values” (p. 54). Ability and willingness to carry a vision is associated most often with leadership, but research shows that followers are key partners in performing this organizational work as well (Campbell, 2000; Kelly, 1992; Thody, 2000). A leader cannot lead if no one will follow and a follower cannot follow if leadership is absent. As most organizational members recognize, roles and processes often shift, depending on the project or situations, and what is needed and/or available at the time.
Often, the same diction and the same skill sets are used to explore and explain both leaders and followers, thereby blurring any clear distinction between the two. Followers, in many scenarios, are making a conscious choice to follow, and are most satisfied and productive when following. The emerging symbiotic relationship encourages a “both/and” logic rather than “either/or” logic. And, a focus on interdependence makes the accountability of followers paramount to organizational success. Furthermore, it underscores the indirect and cyclical ways in which organizations are created and maintained; followers interact with leaders to create the systems and relationships that constitute the organization. Fisher (2001) argues for the acceptance of organizations as "living entities . . . very much dependent on the wellness of those in charge and those who follow" (p. 27). The relationships between organizational members serve to define the organization, and through this, leaders and followers define each other (Hackman & Johnson, 1999; Haslam & Platow, 2001).

**Symbolic Leadership and Cultural Management**

An important part of organizational culture studies is a focus on symbols and symbolic representations. Scholars argue that organizations can be understood as a series of symbols, such as language, stories, logos, heroes, myths, office décor, and more (Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Leaders often serve as a catalyst for members’ sense making of these symbols (Fisher, 2001; Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Mohan, 1993). For example, a leader often begins the talk about the organizational vision and mission. He or she presents a version of how these statements “should” or
may guide organizational decision-making and functioning. Members then tell and retell the story – which of course morphs in meaning, however slightly – in order to continuously understand, i.e. make sense of, the vision and mission. And, the vision and mission are either posted in written form on walls and newsletters, or they are not. All choices of how the vision and mission are communicated are part of how they “mean” and how they guide and are guided by organizational members.

Ultimately, organizational vision is the “horizon” toward which mission and goals direct the organization. Vision is the “big picture,” which allows an organization to correct for environmental shifting, such as changes in plans, goals, and mission statements. The organizational mission guides action within regular organizational affairs. And, as members “use” (or do not use) the mission, they continuously re-create the meaning of the mission itself. In doing so, they also re-story the organizational vision. Thus, this re-framing of organizational symbols is an ongoing process. Leaders and followers who are proactively engaged in the organization have a profound effect on how this process continues.

In this view, the “leader” could be the CEO, a mid-level manager, or the mail delivery foreperson; all members who talk about the vision and mission with other members perform “leadership.” The meaning that is created and maintained by the organizational members is the one that is acted upon in organizational work, and, it is not necessarily the meaning intended by management or other positional leaders. Deetz, Tracy, and Simpson (2000) note that leaders often “frame” a discussion about a particular aspect of members’ experience in organizations and assume that they
have communicated meaning, but "communication takes two – one to have a meaning and send a message, and another to hear it and decide what it means. People respond to the vision that they hear, not the one that was meant" (p. 45).

Hackman and Johnson argue that helping organizational members to make sense of visions, missions, and other organizational symbols, is the primary work of leaders. They explore leadership as "part of," instead of "in charge" of human organizing, and introduce the term "symbolic leadership." Not to be confused with figurehead-only type leaders, this understanding of leadership involves recognition that a leader's primary tool within the organization is language. Through talking about certain aspects of the organization, and not others, leaders influence and guide the organization, at the level of co-creating meaning with organizational members. Leading can include helping followers understand new concepts associated with an organizational plan, relating new ideas to established practices, helping stakeholders see possible next steps in implementation, and relating information to each member's role. In addition, symbolic leadership includes seeking out the meaning created by members, rather than simply relying on one-way talk.

Hackman and Johnson also argue that leaders need to pay attention to future goals. By directing attention to the ultimate goal of the organization, i.e., the organizational vision, leaders serve the purpose of helping the organization function and grow, without assuming they have control over how things happen. Ultimately, leaders do not have the option to fully control meaning because all organizational members create it, and therefore do not truly direct actions of followers. Leaders help
organizational members relate to ideas, and they create meaning in unison with them: “paying attention is the key activity of leaders/managers” (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 242).

Therefore, even though organizational culture is understood as created and maintained by the entirety of organizational membership, there is a “growing understanding . . . of the role of leadership in the creation of meaning” (Bradshaw, 2002, p. 472). Mohan (1993) explains that, “organizational culture change requires the ability on the part of leaders to ‘reframe’ their contexts in order to initiate the process of cognitive and symbolic transformation” (p. 80). The difference in focus between traditional views and contemporary views of the leadership function within human organization is that the first assumes the ability to control, and the second claims only the ability to offer frames of reference.

A Fluid Continuum

As discussed, the contemporary theoretical end point about leadership is arguably a multi-dimensional leadership-followership continuum. For many, “leadership and followership is a dialectic” (Kelley, 1992, p. 45). In advocating for a deeper exploration of this complex relational aspect of organizations, Fisher notes, “knowledge is the vital fuel which runs the engine of post-modern enterprise. Since [followers] have a corner on this unique fuel, it necessitates [an] understanding of the nuances in the leadership-followership continuum” (Fisher, 2001, p. 22). The compounded complexity inherent in such a continuum is ripe for exploration,
particularly at the point where clear distinction between leading and following disappears.

In organizational reality, most members lead and follow throughout their daily organizational activities (Kelley, 1992); the adage “there’s always someone above you, and always someone below you” is true in most situations. A hypothetical example might go like this: when the mail delivery person sneers at the picture of the CEO on the wall, they could be both imitating the mail delivery room supervisor (following), and providing a version of the organizational story for others to see (leading). In this way, leading and following are always options for each organizational member. When members are empowered to choose, organizations are strengthened or weakened depending on the level of investment of organizational members. Deetz, Tracy, and Simpson (2000) argue that the “combination of a communicative leadership articulating a powerful vision and an organic empowerment process enable both leadership and members to make the vision their own” (p. 102). If such steps had been taken in the organization described above, the sneer might have been a smile. But most importantly, the mail delivery person might have experienced a shared vision with the man or woman that he or she perceived in the picture.

Another example of the simultaneity of leading and following arises in daily meetings nationwide. Often, the assigned leader of the meeting is either not able or not willing to appropriately aid the discussion or group decision-making. Bechler and Johnson (1995) contend that, often, “emergent leadership should take the
responsibility for facilitating . . . if the current leadership is not accepting that role” (p. 80). Often, various organizational members take up just this kind of responsibility, and in this way, leadership is fluid. Followership is also fluid in that some days, members chose to take vision and/or direction from others. In the end, each engaged organizational member has a choice about when/if to lead, and when/if to follow. Their movement along this continuum of relating to others is both created and maintained by organizational culture and informing of the same.

**In Context: Universities and Student Leadership**

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for college student leadership development lies in each university’s stated obligation to support student life development. Carry (2003) states, “institutions that fail to see their role in developing leaders are neglecting a critical component of the college student experience” (p. 4). Each student experiences leading and following throughout their university career and their lives, in the workplace, in family life, with friends and colleagues, and in volunteer endeavors. Furthermore, universities have “played key roles in the economic and social development of the United States” (Massey, 1975, p. 191), and therefore when leadership is viewed as a fundamental part of human organizational life, it simply cannot be overlooked by universities (Carry, 2003; Greenleaf, 1997). Students need and deserve, as part of their university experience, to have experiences that equip them with the knowledge and skills to effectively understand and operate within ever-complex organizational environments.
Leadership "talk" on college and university campuses tends to primarily converge on two main levels: intra-organizational functioning and student leadership development. The intra-organizational focus involves training and/or dialogue concerning faculty, administration, and staff relations, power dynamics, supervisory skill, organizational change efforts, and employee retention work. Student leadership development is rarely explicitly related to these intra-organizational efforts, nor are staff, faculty, and administration leadership experiences linked to student leadership. In the extant literature, students are characterized as involved in a continuum of leadership experiences, from implicit, situational leadership experiences, such as classroom discussions, to explicit training such as Student Leadership Conferences. However, the relationship between the in-class experience of faculty and the in-class experience of students, or the out-of-class involvement of administrators, and the out-of-class involvement of students is virtually unexplored.

The general lack of connection between leadership efforts on university campuses is an important context, especially when change and growth are desired outcomes. Though universities tend to react slowly to trends, leadership has proven to be an enduring interest in human organization; the vast majority of organizations in corporate and non-profit sectors have been actively engaged in leadership training and research for at least a decade, and therefore, leadership has moved into the academic "ivory tower," and is generally viewed as "a major goal of higher education" (Chambers, 1992, p. 339, see also Carry, 2003; Liberty & Prewitt, 1999; Chambers, 1992). However, lasting modifications in large "change adverse"
organizations such as universities should involve a multi-constituency campus group, including “people from different parts of the institution” (American Council on Education, 1999, p. 4). And, these efforts should “engage stakeholders in campus-wide discussions [and] develop a shared language” (American Council on Education, 1999, p. 4).

The inclusion of multiple constituencies provided the UAF LP with just such a campus-wide foundation; program stakeholders are volunteers whose job titles range from student affairs coordinators & directors, deans, tenured faculty, students, ROTC officers, to non-university community volunteers and alumni. In this study, student campus life is the primary focus; however, even though UAF is a large, complex human organization like most universities, student leadership development is never fully separated from “other” leadership on campus.

More specifically, a crucial part of the UAF context is the co-development of leadership activities for students, staff and faculty, and the community. Campus-wide engagement at UAF constitutes recognition that leadership is not “just” for anyone, but is ultimately for every member of the institution. Furthermore, at the time of the creation of the Leadership Development Coordinator (LDC) position, UAF had experienced severe budget cuts that are projected to last for several years, yet, with the broad base of support, and significant momentum, the LP was a high priority for the Dean of Student Affairs and the Chancellor, and funding was made available. Therefore, though this study focuses on student leadership development, it is certainly informed by and informing of other leadership actions on campus.
The Role of Boundaries in University Student Leadership Programs

Unfortunately, “in spite of a high level of interest . . . leadership education has not been readily available from accredited universities” (Liberty & Prewitt, 1999, p. 155). Lack of leadership development opportunities likely results from competing institutional priorities as “developing leadership . . . is often a secondary rather than a primary function of colleges and universities” (Cress, et al, 2001). In part this may be due to the competition between internal resources, which is an ongoing reality for universities. However, prioritization of outcomes can help ease the way (McCauley, Moxley, & Van Velsor, 1998).

Another reason for the lack of appropriate and successful leadership programs may be the fear of failure to produce leaders. Townsend (2002) notes, “although leadership is an important topic, and successful leaders are emerging, questions continue to surround [the] concept” (p. 1). Leadership is a highly variable and hotly debated phenomenon, and therefore, the risk of a program’s failing to address the full complexity of the concept, or not “producing” leaders that match stakeholder expectations, is high. Clear intentions and boundaries help mediate the amorphous nature of leadership, and are necessary in order to achieve and measure genuine student leadership development (Townsend, 2002; Seitz & Pepitone, 1996; Chambers, 1992; Posner & Brodsky, 1992). To reach the point of assessment, universities need to understand what they are trying to achieve, and whether or not they are reaching those goals (Van Velsor, 1998).
The majority of university student leadership experiences are “conceptually based on studies and models . . . developed with managers in business and public sector organizations” (Posner & Brodsky, 1992, p. 231). In order to develop programs that are beneficial to and appropriate for college students, relevant empirical evidence and pragmatic approaches must be infused into program boundaries and planning. Additionally, an important distinction between leadership awareness and leadership behavior must be recognized. Much leadership research on campuses firmly argues that students learn a great deal about leadership from programs, events, and courses on the topic (Townsend, 2002; Liberty & Prewitt, 1999; Chambers, 1992). However, fewer studies indicate that student leadership behavior actually changes as a result of participation in leadership education or programming (for an example, see Seitz & Pepitone, 1996). By developing a list of leadership competencies or outcomes, LP staff and stakeholders can move toward assessing program impact in an appropriately contextualized and empirical manner.

Problematic: How Does Leadership “mean” for the UAF Leadership Program?

Throughout the development of the LP, a nagging question has remained for many program stakeholders: What do we mean when we say “leadership,” “student leaders,” or “student leadership development?” How do we recognize the actions and results of leadership when they happen? More specifically, what is the relationship between volunteer action and leadership, or between leadership and academic standards such as GPA (personal communication with stakeholder, HJ, November 18,
The lack of clarity is most clear in the group process of awarding Graduation with Leadership Honors each semester. The award committee, “re-decides every time what we think leadership is” (personal communication with stakeholder, HK, November 17, 2003). Another telling example: the 2003 Student Leadership Conference Committee declined to focus on a particular area of leadership, and instead chose the theme “Leadership: What does it mean to you?”

Without a clear understanding of the concept of leadership, the LP mission and goals are similarly ambiguous in that outcomes are challenging to identify, much less measure. Values were originally included in the plan of the Leadership Development Steering Committee, but these did not appear to offset confusion and disagreement about what constitutes leadership at UAF. When the leadership in human organization is understood as a co-construction among members, then confusion and continual disagreement can be catalysts for a variety of negative outcomes. In the case of the LP, this might include stakeholder disengagement from the entirety of leadership “talk” (personal communication with stakeholder, MP, July 22, 2003; personal communication with stakeholder, PS, October 15, 2003).

Confusion about leadership is certainly not unique to the UAF context. Evidenced by any quick internet search or a visit to the local bookstore, leadership fascinates and frustrates organizational members throughout the U.S. As leadership scholar Hill (1999) observes, perhaps “we have overextended the concept to cover the
enormous complexity of our current social system, thereby rendering the idea of leadership useless” (p. 204). An absence of appropriate grounding can diminish the usefulness of both the theory and research. Furthermore, since leadership is, at the very least, widely understood as a part of human organization that requires more than one organizational member, then co-constructed meaning is the very cornerstone of understanding leadership. Therefore, this study was undertaken, in part, to clarify and solidify program goals and outcomes, specifically through the empirical observation of stakeholder dialogue about leadership.

Research is both a process and a product. Here, it is assumed that stakeholders benefited from exploring leadership and its definition(s) at UAF. That is, the act of talking about what leadership means to each of them, and the knowledge that this study was being conducted, contributed to an increased perception of stability about the program. Additionally, the study was undertaken on the premise that anyone and everyone can develop both the knowledge and skills of leadership. The guiding research questions include:

- What is the constellation of meanings associated with “leadership” at UAF? What do we intend when we say “leadership?”
- How do the UAF Leadership Program stakeholders understand and explore the theories, research, and skills of leadership?
- What leadership competencies do the stakeholders expect student leaders to develop as a result of involvement with this program?
• What are the programmatic expectations of stakeholders for this new stage of the ongoing program?
Chapter Two - Methodological Perspective

“If you are charged with responsibility for evaluating the impact of leadership development strategies, it is important first to understand the goals that stakeholders in your organization hold for those strategies. What leadership capacities do they consider desirable? Are these capacities that can be learned and developed from experience? What kinds of behavior change are desired?”


Overview

Leadership is a broad and widely defined phenomenon. Nationwide, a variety of established outcome measurements exist for assessing student leadership development on university campuses. The majority of these outcome measures are theoretically derived, and if data was used to develop them, the data is most likely quantitative (Cress et. al, 2001). In order to ascertain what is unique to the UAF context, and to provide a “rich description of actual program content” (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999, p. 54), this study utilizes mixed methodology to approach leadership at UAF from diverse angles and perspectives.

My primary methodology is qualitative research, which I explicitly designed as a complement to the extant outcome measures that are almost exclusively derived from quantitative data. Furthermore, the qualitative data gathered in this study, and the established student leadership program outcome measures, are conceived as equal counterparts. In other words, the qualitative methods, including interviews and participant observation, serve, in part, to ground established student leadership
program outcomes, such as the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), in the UAF context. Therefore, this study involves review and exploration of the existing, national standards for university student leadership programs, and the gathering of rich, empirical, qualitative data from the research site.

The framework for this study is the epistemology of constructionism, and particularly the social construction of reality perspective, which Littlejohn (2002) defines as “the approach which holds that we come to know the world and attribute meaning through interpretive experience, primarily communication” (p. 165). Social constructionists understand individuals as having unique experiences throughout their lives, and thus, “different worlds constitute . . . diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings, separate realities” (Crotty, 1998, p. 64). When we understand human reality in this way, communicative action is seen as literally what creates and maintains social reality, and therefore acts of leading and following can be understood as socially created constructions. Therefore, exploring the “talk” about leadership is at the heart of understanding the various ways leadership “means” to the LP stakeholders at UAF.

Multiple methods were used to gather data, including participant observation, focus groups, individual interviews, and a short written questionnaire. By triangulating the data through these methods, multiple voices were “heard” in the assessment, and themes about a common understanding of leadership and student leadership development crystallized. Most studies of university leadership development efforts focus on students only, or faculty and administrators only (see
Cress et al., 2001; Liberty & Prewitt, 1999; Seitz & Pepitone, 1996). This study uniquely focused on triangulated data and embraces the positionality of multiple campus constituencies. Furthermore, this study partially answers the challenge put forth by Cress et al. (2001), that “additional qualitative studies should further examine the components of successful leadership programs” (p. 23).

**Research Questions**

The primary purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of the leadership competencies that stakeholders wish for students to develop through participation in the UAF Leadership Program (LP). Throughout the four-year history of the LP, a clear agreement on such competencies has not been consistently documented or understood (personal communication with stakeholder, MP, February 20, 2003; personal communication with stakeholder, MM, December 14, 2004). These competencies constitute desired outcomes of the program, and the lack of them represents an inability to assess the LP in appropriate and consistent ways. Therefore, this study serves to provide the primary groundwork for ongoing assessment of the LP, specifically because “all change starts with serious assessment” (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000, p. 200).

The research questions emerged from the gathering of relevant information, in both theoretical and applied forms. The review of relevant literature, the examination of other university student leadership programs, and prior research I had conducted provided important theoretical grounding. And, my ongoing involvement with coordinating programs, my discussions with various stakeholders and students, and
my review of organizational documents provided information about the application of leadership at UAF. This information gathering crystallized a two-fold understanding. First, and not surprisingly, a definition of leadership is elusive at best, but program stakeholders eagerly seek an understanding of it. Second, the LP is currently severely hampered by a consistent lack of clarity. Specifically, without attention to the development of an understanding of student leadership development at UAF, program staff and stakeholders are unable to easily pick themes for events, determine how to recognize student leadership efforts, and/or understand or explain what the program does. Major areas of discussion began and were centered around these questions:

RQ1: What does “leadership” mean to you?

- How do you define leadership and/or followership?
- What actions and/or information demonstrate that someone is leading?
- How do you identify actions of leadership when they’re happening?

RQ2: What are reasons that student leadership development is important or unimportant at UAF?

- Is anything about leadership in Alaska or UAF different than leadership in other places or other universities?

RQ3: What leadership competencies do the stakeholders expect student leaders to develop as a result of involvement with the LP?

- What skills are necessary for leadership development?
- What knowledge is necessary for leadership development?
• What do we want students to gain from participating in the Leadership Program?

RQ4: What kinds of activities, events, programs, etc. are important for the Leadership Program to be most effective?

**Stakeholder Definition and Participant Selection**

For this study, the research population is defined as program “stakeholders,” who are individuals who have been involved with or benefit from the UAF Leadership Program (LP). In the cases of faculty, staff, and alumni, this generally means they have volunteered to coordinate events, served on various committees, and/or provided training resources. For students, this means they have attended an LP event and therefore are listed in the database of program contacts, or they have not yet attended an event but have expressed an interest in being informed about leadership development opportunities on campus. For employers, the LP represents one of the co-curricular ways in which students become prepared for the world of work, and therefore employers were viewed as recipients of program outcomes, i.e., students with leadership knowledge and skill. Employer stakeholders were defined based on previous involvement with the LP. My Thesis chair, who also served as the focus group observer, and myself are both members of this defined population.

In general, participants were solicited on a voluntary, first to respond basis, using regular program contacts and information from the LP database. Other than fitting the stakeholder definition, the only requirements for participation were an interest in leadership and leadership programming and/or student development at
UAF, and a willingness to participate. For focus groups, I recruited participants via mass email invitations, individualized email messages, and verbal invitations. As many of the stakeholders know each other, it is likely that the snowball sampling technique supported focus group attendance as stakeholders talked to each other about the program assessment. In addition, three participants stated that they participated in the study due to their relationship with me. Ensuring participant attendance is an important aspect of focus group research, and therefore many follow-up contacts, as well as efficient response to questions concerning the assessment, were made after initial participant confirmation.

Group interviews have the advantage of diminishing power differences between participants (Gibbs, 1997); however, in this study, certain stakeholders participated through individual interviews because it was determined that the strong influence of university hierarchy would inappropriately skew focus group interactions if certain administrators were involved. In addition, logistical concerns are higher for stakeholders with complex schedules, and participation was more likely with increased scheduling flexibility. Stakeholders in this situation included the University Chancellor, Provost, and Dean of Students. Each of these administrators had pivotal influence on the establishment of the Leadership Development Coordinator position, and their involvement in the assessment was deemed necessary due to their professional positions and personal investment.
Participant Observation and Pilot Data

Yin (1998) explains participant observation as “a special mode of research investigation in which the research investigator actively participates in the social situations he or she is simultaneously observing” (p. 247). My involvement with the LP began with the first Student Leadership Conference, and my most significant official role has been as Chair of this annual Conference. Every year for the past three years, I coordinated a group of staff, faculty, and student volunteers in designing and implementing a full day, professional event. I was also active with a number of other leadership committees and events. During most of this time, I was employed as UAF’s Senior Career Counselor, and worked directly with students to identify the skills they needed for post graduation employment. Often, leadership development and/or leadership experience were part of our dialogue. During this four and a half year tenure, I have had countless conversations with many LP stakeholders, including discussions about the program in general, about funding, about events, about our fatigue as volunteers, and about the importance of leadership development for UAF students.

In addition to direct involvement with the LP, I wrote two other formal research papers, one of which was accepted at a national conference, and various short-term projects, focusing on aspects of leadership theory and followership emergence during my graduate work. In particular, prior to the beginning of this research, I conducted a case study of a non-profit service agency around the topics of
followership and leadership and presented that research at a regional conference during the course of the study.

When my professional life changed in the summer of 2003, my commitment to the LP remained. Just before our 4th Annual Student Leadership Conference, I applied for the newly created Leadership Development Coordinator (LDC) position. In accepting the position, I realized a wide variety of goals, both personal and professional. Any definition of LP stakeholders would likely include me, and my ongoing participant observation is the first and most important context of this study.

However, though I have a great deal of experience with the LP, the intention of this research was to move beyond the existing dialogue to reveal stakeholders’ deeper assumptions and desires about leadership at UAF, primarily student leadership development. To do this, I “focused on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making predictions about that setting” (Janesick, 1994, p. 290). Therefore, in moving the LP from a grassroots effort to an institutionalized program, it was necessary to move toward understanding answers to the question, “what are we trying to do here?”

Prior to the study, the lack of just such an understanding frustrated many LP stakeholders, including myself (e.g. personal communication with stakeholder ND, October 15, 2003). I framed questions such that existing questions would be explored, and I made ample room for new perspectives and new questions to emerge. For example, I knew before beginning the study that there were questions about the relationship between academic achievement, specifically GPA, and student leadership
recognition, so I included this query in the interviews. Likewise, I did not know before the study that “action” is intrinsically related to leadership at UAF.

Kvale (1996) states that the qualitative researcher’s “recognized biases and subjective perspectives . . . expertise, and empathy” (pp. 286-287) will enhance interaction among participants. In this way, I am one of the research tools in this study, and no formal, traditional “objectivity” is claimed. Likewise, it is my review and interpretation of the “found” data such as event evaluations, planning documents, and funding proposals that were incorporated into the originally identified themes. Indeed, my passion for leadership and the LP sparked this study in the first place.

Throughout the duration of this study, continuous programmatic planning, implementation, and participation continued. Outside the bounds of the focus groups and interviews, I had conversations and email exchanges with numerous stakeholders about program assessment, and about the program’s transition. In any one day, I was as likely to be transcribing interview data as I was to be meeting with a committee of stakeholders to develop the theme for our spring Leaders for Alaska Institute. For example, in opening a workshop for Resident Assistants, I asked the question, “what do you think leadership is?” The answers ranged from “service,” to being “in charge,” to transforming self. These experiences combine to continuously inform me of the campus climate of leadership, and in turn informed my facilitation and interaction within the formal methods of data collection.
Focus groups

"Focus groups are particularly useful . . . when the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest, and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic" (Gibbs, 1997, p. 2)

Focus group interviews have become "established procedure . . . to obtain qualitative information from a range of stakeholders" (Gowdy, 1996, p. 185). In higher education research, the use of focus groups, particularly to ascertain student experiences and opinions, is on the rise (Nicklin, 1996). Typically, focus group interviews involve five to twelve individuals participating in guided discussion framed by research questions. For assessment of this LP, focus group interviews are an appropriate and important method of data collection due to the socially constructed nature of leadership, the large population of stakeholders, and the necessity of assessing a program during ongoing implementation.

Foremost for this study, focus groups allowed observation of the communicative actions that create and maintain understandings of leadership in the UAF context. When leading and following are understood as shared human acts within groups (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Meindl, 1995), group interviews are an important setting in which to both observe and discuss leadership, precisely because “respondents react to and build upon the responses of other group members” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998, p. 509). Also, as leadership is an amorphous topic, a consistent and clear understanding of it is challenging to maintain. However, focus groups provided “opportunities for clarification and probing of responses as well as
follow-up questions” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998, p. 508), which increased the clarity, both within the group conversation and for theme development.

LP stakeholders include various campus constituents, from traditional freshmen to tenured faculty, and from graduating seniors to Student Affairs Coordinators. Inclusion of this multiplicity of perspectives is an important part of this study in that revealing a shared understanding of leadership was the primary research objective. Focus groups allow data collection from large groups of participants more quickly and at less cost than individual interviews (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998; Gibbs, 1997), and therefore are a credible and efficient way to “hear” the multiple voices that are necessary for a common understanding of leadership to emerge.

Thirdly, focus groups were an appropriate method because “participants and researchers learn from the process” (Field, 2000, p. 328). As the LP is an ongoing program, it was beneficial to infuse leadership development opportunities into the research process. Focus groups often have a transformative quality in that, “peoples’ views and understandings are shared, debated, challenged, and changed” (Field, 2000, p. 324). Student involvement in focus groups provided an additional avenue for students to explore and clarify their own understandings and experience of leadership. Non-student stakeholders benefited from identifying and clarifying their own experiences of leadership as well. I assumed that many stakeholders benefited from the experience of being integrally involved in the growth and transition of a University program, and in fact, several individuals from each focus group thanked me for providing the opportunity for the discussion.
Individual Interviews

Each high-level administrator within the research population participated in a semi-structured individual interview, which allowed for targeted inquiry and in-depth follow-up and clarification of statements. These conversations covered the same general topic areas as the focus groups; the same question guide was used for both kinds of interviews. I explicitly asked each of them to discuss their personal and professional understandings of leadership and what that might mean for students and the program, rather than responding based on what already exists for students at UAF, or as they thought they “should.”

Often, individual interviews are characterized as “interaction and relation” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 647) because the conversation between the interviewer/researcher and interviewee represents a set of socially constructed meanings between the two. For this study, the individual interviews were a more formalized level of my participant observation, particularly because none of the interviews were my first or final discussion about leadership, or about the LP, with these individuals. As identified stakeholders for the LP, these administrators often receive updates and information about the LP from others and myself. However, during the interview, I played a “neutral role, never interjecting [my] opinion of a respondent’s answer” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 650). By using this approach, I was able to observe both explicit and implicit understandings of leadership.
Modified Twenty Statements Test (TST)/Leadership Program Assessment

In order to triangulate the interview data, and to provide an opportunity for additional participants, a modified Twenty Statements Test (TST) was used. As described by Locatelli and West (1996), the TST is a written method to access participants' perspectives on organizational symbols. In the social construction of reality perspective, symbols are continuously created and maintained by the "talk" of organizational members, whether written or oral. When participants complete the same statement in multiple ways, beliefs become explicit, and hidden assumptions and desires emerge through the act of writing (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Locatelli & West, 1996). The modified Twenty Statements Test (TST) for this study involved three statements: "Leadership is ...," "The UAF Leadership Program is ...," and "The UAF Leadership Program could be ..."

In preparing for interview participation, the modified TST served to stimulate participants' thinking about leadership development at UAF, and provided a starting place to "infer basic values and assumptions" (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000, p. 37). Also, stakeholders who did not or could not participate in an interview, but wanted to be involved in the assessment, completed the modified TST, which allowed additional perspectives to be included.

Data Description and Analysis

Maxwell (1998) states that data "analysis [is] part of design . . . [and] every qualitative study requires decisions about how the analysis will be done, and these decisions should influence, and be influenced by, the rest of the design" (p. 89). My
informal analysis of stakeholder conversations about leadership, and LP program goals, began simultaneously with my volunteer efforts four years ago; certainly, my understandings of stakeholder intentions about and goals for student leadership development, including my own, are part of the design of this study.

Qualitative research is most often characterized as a simultaneous process wherein stages of data collection, description, and analysis are continuously informed and informing of each other; they are specifically not related in linear ways (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Maxwell, 1998). Indeed, qualitative study in its contemporary form serves both as “a commitment to some version of the naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter and an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of postpositivism” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). A qualitative perspective requires the researcher to acknowledge that variables and/or themes are not predetermined, and to embrace an appropriate level of ambiguity about the exact research process. In practice, this means that the researcher should “progressively focus . . . interviews and observations, and to decide how to test . . . emerging conclusions” (Maxwell, 2000, p. 89). Throughout the study, I tested new ways of expressing program outcomes, as well as understandings of leadership, in my various conversations. And, each focus group and individual interview informed the next such that connections that seemed to be emerging were tested with the next set of participants.

The formal part of my data description and analysis began with my facilitation of the focus groups and individual interviews. After each session, I recorded my reactions and thoughts, on both content and process of the interviews, in my field
notes. And, I talked with the focus group observer about reactions and emerging themes. In particular, I noted nonverbal communication behaviors that appeared as important context to the verbal interactions. I also transcribed the three individual interviews and the thirteen TST assessments. A professional transcriptionist, who had no other involvement with the project or the LP, transcribed audiotapes of the focus group interviews. I systematically reviewed the notes taken by the focus group observer, as well as my various field notes from ongoing program implementation. During the course of the study I also reviewed various pieces of "found data" such as prior grant proposals, strategic planning documents, event evaluations, and program goal lists.

In addition, I continuously reviewed and researched existing student leadership program outcomes. I kept a large poster on my office wall where I compiled a variety of relevant outcomes from other sources, including, but not limited to, the University of Illinois leadership program plan, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), and the UAF strategic plan. Through drawing lines to connect common themes, talking with co-workers and students who stopped by my office, and asking about these established outcomes within focus group and individual interviews, I garnered additional reflections and reactions to leadership at UAF.

The thematic analysis of all the transcribed and recorded data began with content analysis, which Maxwell (1998) describes as, "attempts to understand the data . . . in context" (p. 90). In looking toward an understanding of what leadership
means to LP stakeholders, I viewed their comments first in the context in which they were spoken, and secondly in a literal word usage sense. If a stakeholder made a comment about what leadership is while standing in the food line versus in response to a question during an interview, those contexts were taken into account as I moved toward understanding a “coherent whole” (Maxwell, 1998, p. 90). Secondly, the data were categorized using the CAS Student Leadership Program Standards and Guidelines.

By using both content analysis and categorization, this study avoids the “risk of missing important insights” (Maxwell, 1998, p. 90). Furthermore, the dual analysis provided room for both existing leadership competencies, such as the CAS standards, to be reviewed/tested in the UAF context, and, importantly for UAF, LP stakeholders’ expectations and thoughts to emerge unencumbered by prior theory or research. A comprehensive “voice of the Leadership Program” crystallized when themes emerged from the layers of data. From these themes, a list of desirable leadership competencies was formulated. In addition to the full thesis, an executive summary of the data was provided to the stakeholders and utilized for program planning and development.

Chapter Three: Description of Data

Introduction

The majority of the data included in this study was collected over a two and a half month period. Identified stakeholders of the UAF Leadership Program (LP) participated in focus groups, individual interviews, and a written assessment. In
addition, continuous participant observation over a four and a half year period served an important role in gathering relevant data. A total of eleven students, six staff and faculty, and three administrators participated in the interviews, and thirteen written assessments were returned. Through the many hours serving as the Leadership Development Coordinator, I was in contact with many more LP stakeholders as well. Below is a full description of the collected data.

**Student Stakeholder Focus Group Interviews**

The first student focus group included one male and four female students, myself as the facilitator, and one female observer. All five student participants have been involved in at least one of the formal leadership training opportunities offered by the LP, and two of the participants are heavily involved in the program, either through employment or continuous volunteering. Their academic majors include Business Administration, Psychology, Engineering, Professional Communication, and Economics. Two participants are graduate students and the rest are pursuing Bachelor’s degrees. Several of these participants were born and raised in Alaska, while others came to Alaska to attend UAF. One of the participants was born and raised outside the United States.

The demographics of this group mirrors UAF’s demographics in many important ways, including traditional and nontraditional students, students of various races and ethnicities, representatives of student clubs and Greek Life, as well as graduate and undergraduate students. The occasion of the interview was the first time I had met two of these students while the other three knew me before the interview.
The interview was characterized by intense and focused conversation. Throughout the two-hour discussion, all participants displayed engagement through leaning forward at the table and often nodding and smiling at each other’s comments. The room was a small one with a single table that enabled participants to sit closely together and avoid visual distractions. In addition, there was a supportive atmosphere in this group, such that disagreement was spoken in respectful ways, and great interest in each other’s comments was demonstrated through both nonverbal affirmation and verbal support, such as “I agree.”

In the second student focus group, the environment was different. The room was a larger one, and the six students were sitting farther away from each other and not around a table, though they were still situated in a circle. In addition, the room has numerous displays on the walls and various brochures on the tables. Though no one explicitly appeared to be distracted by the location, the atmosphere of this focus group interview was less intense and more conversational than the first one, and disagreement and negative statements were more common. However, respect and high levels of interest still characterized the discussion.

The group included five females and one male plus the same female observer and myself as facilitator. Five of the six students have attended at least one, and often more than one, LP programs or events. One of the participants has been involved with the program continuously for three years, and one student had not been involved with the program at all before this interview. Their academic majors include Communication, English, Political Science, and Business Administration.
Again, some of the students are native to Alaska while others have relocated here for college. At least one student is a military spouse and is at UAF due to its location near the spouse’s duty station. The second group also represents a cross section of the UAF population, and included students of various races and ethnicities, representatives of student clubs and Associated Students of UAF (ASUAF), student employees, and current LP volunteers and staff. One of the participants is a UAF alumna. In addition, several of the members of this focus group have long standing relationships with one another. I had previous relationships with four of the six students; while two I met at the onset of the interview.

At the conclusion of each of the student focus groups at least one student thanked me for allowing them to participate in the research. One participant said, “I learned a lot through this meeting . . . much more than I expected.”

What is Important or Unimportant about Leadership at UAF?

To begin discussion, I asked both student focus groups, “What is important or unimportant about leadership at UAF?” Students quickly expressed that leadership development and practice are an important part of their expectations of university life. Throughout the remainder of discussion the theme of leadership experience as “part of education” was evident. For many of the participants, this experience is intrinsically linked to the skills they will take with them after graduation: “college is practice for afterward, a preview for later.” Participants discussed how leadership is part of both what employers want in college graduates and part of how the university can view students as “holistic.” One said:
I think you develop your own leadership skills . . . and style . . . and the University is saying 'what we want to do is [give] you a toolbox by the time you leave and we want to see how you use the tools you choose' . . . it's kind of like giving [students] everything.

Another participant offered:

Bachelor degrees . . . there's a lot of people with them so the notion that you're going to get a Bachelor's [and] get a good job [is] just blown out . . . so, [being] a well-rounded person, dipping in all these different aspects [is] really important.

For some participants, the opportunity for leadership development is also related to the "reputation" of the university, primarily because they perceive that the skills associated with leadership are generally also associated with college graduates. In this way, the participants believe that recruiting, retention, and alumni relations efforts are all related to opportunities for students on campus. In addition, though UAF is a medium-sized school, leadership opportunities help "make UAF more comparable to the bigger universities in the Lower 48."

Beyond just the idea of leadership as important at universities, the emphasis of leadership as "part of life" was a strong current in both discussions. Students suggested that leadership action crosses academic disciplines and economic sectors, and that skills related to leading seem necessary to be "successful in life." Specifically, a few students spoke about the value of the UAF core curriculum in educating them about the "different ways of looking" at the world.
While discussing opportunities for student leadership development, the most common word used by participants was “practice.” In both focus groups, students emphasized the necessity of providing opportunities for them to be active in leadership, for them to “do it.” Such practice includes leading their peers and interacting with students outside their own discipline. Participants perceive there is value in having these experiences in the “intensive environment” of the university.

Student stakeholders also stressed the importance of connecting student leaders with each other to form a “community.” Such an environment encourages student “involvement” and builds a “support system” for student leaders, and as one participant stated, it “allows students who have the same or similar goals to network with each other.” Furthermore, students are positive resources for each other, specifically because they can “pass on ideas [and] because [they] are learning about the next step in life.”

In conjunction with these discussions, participants in both groups explicitly explored definitions of the terms “leader” and “leadership.” For some participants, “the whole definition itself is just confusing.” And, for others, the term leadership is “way over used.” In the first focus group, participants were much more comfortable with the terms, while in the second group, several students noted that they do not attend events or activities with these words attached to them because “people have their own associations with the word and they are not going to see past that.” One suggestion that arose in the second group involved associating other words with
leadership development opportunities at UAF, such as “facilitator” or “empowerment.” One participant attempted to sum up the discussion by saying:

I think a lot of people have to separate the terms leaders and leadership just because you know a leader can be that forceful person or the quiet person. A leader doesn’t really have a definition. Leadership on the other hand is more defined, I mean personally because everyone can have a different opinion.

.. It’s just like a leader is the person and leadership is the quality.

What skills and characteristics are associated with leadership?

The discussion of the importance of leadership at UAF merged naturally into the proposal of adjectives and characteristics related to leadership. In both student focus groups, I did not explicitly pose a question about leadership skills or characteristics; participants moved into this discussion on their own and I followed up to clarify their explorations.

A significant area of emphasis in both discussions was on the interpersonal skills of leaders, particularly in group interactions. One participant stated, “a huge part of a being a leader [is] knowing how to get along with the group.” Participants spoke about how leaders need “thick skin” to be receptive to criticism and feedback, and “tolerance” for a diversity of opinions and approaches. Leaders “have to want to give” to the group and build a connection with others. In the discussions, the creation and maintenance of positive group dynamics, including trust, support, and motivation, was expressly related to the interpersonal abilities of the leader.
Participants believe that “communication is a critical part” of interpersonal interaction. The discussion of communication skills ranged from mediation, to facilitation, to problem solving skills. In particular, several participants in both groups talked about listening as important to leadership. For example, one stated “if you’re not listening to the people around you then you are not going to be a very effective leader” while another asserted that, “definitely they have to be a listener.”

Another common area of discussion in both focus groups was the idea of leaders taking action and doing “work.” One participant expressed that, “a leader [sees] that something needs to get done and initiate[s] something to get it done.” For some students, this means the leader is “organized and motivated” while for others it means that the leader is the one “making things happen.” Often, work was equated with “commitment” or “dedication” as well.

Throughout our discussion, the participants referenced leadership and vision together. For example, in talking about interpersonal skills, one participant commented that leaders “should have some vision like Martin Luther King . . . [should] provide . . . a bigger picture for the group.” Likewise, when talking about communication skills, another participant stated:

As a leader you obviously have to be an incredible learner but you have to be a great teacher as well, otherwise, you’re not going to be that good of a leader and so it is getting to teach [the group] to see bigger.

The ability to present “the big picture” was also related to leaders as “mentors” and “examples” by several students. One participant defines leaders as
facilitators, that is, that leaders help make things easier, but also do not get in the way of the people doing the work. Another participant noted, “it always takes one person to start something and then it’s up to the followers to keep it going.” In other words, the leader is “able to get people to follow . . . some sort of vision.”

In both discussions, and particularly in the first one, participants also talked about “self-improvement.” The perception among these students was that leaders need “confidence,” “talent,” and “critical thinking skills.” And, in order to build such characteristics, leaders must continually participate in self-evaluation. In particular, both groups talked about the role of humility. For example, one participant said, “I think the best leaders don’t want to be acknowledged.” Good leaders are perceived by participants as those who “empower others” as well as have the attitude that “it’s not about yourself but others.”

Both focus groups also broached the area of followers. The first group was very comfortable with the terms follower and “followership,” and they emphasized the role of following as essential to leadership. One participant emphasized, “a good leader doesn’t lead . . . they’re actually the best followers . . . that is what makes a good leader is you are such a good follower” while another stated, “you know someone’s leading when they have the ability to allow followers to succeed.”

Comments like these were not isolated in the first focus group, as these participants referred to followers throughout the discussion. In the second focus group, however, some of the participants expressed discomfort with the term follower, specifically because “if you call someone a follower . . . that’s a negative
connotation.” Only one participant in the second group referred to followers in a positive light during the two-hour discussion.

What is the relationship between community service and leadership?

In both student focus groups, the concept of community service emerged before I brought it up as a question. I referenced these instances in order to turn the discussion to an explicit exploration of connections between acts of community service and acts of leadership. Students readily expressed that a strong relationship exists between these two facets of student life. When speaking of effective leadership, one participant seemed to think she was stating the obvious when she said, “if you’re not giving something to the community I have a hard time believing that you can be successful.”

The idea of community, though not clearly operationalized, was important in both discussions; participants noted that leaders expose groups to the “big picture” of the community because “as a leader you learn, you know, that everything is connected.” Also linked to the concept of community is the role of perspective. Students note that a formal college education is a privilege not enjoyed by everyone and suggested that service keeps you “grounded and aware of others’ socio-economic status.” In addition, participants said that “giving” is an important part of both service and leadership, and particularly the giving of time and talents. In this way, an Accounting major might perform service differently than a Biology major. According to one participant:

Say I’m a tax attorney and that’s what I do, but I’ll go maybe once or twice a
year to a nonprofit to do their taxes. Nobody is going to get weepy-eyed over that versus say I work at the hospice . . . but you’re using what you have . . . to benefit other people.

Another connection stemmed from the idea of a leader’s action serving as a role model for others. As one participant stated, “you can’t sit there and be the best leader in your organization.” Both focus groups explored various ways in which acts of community service are antecedent, or resultant, of leadership. The connection was expressed by one participant as an inter-related mix of vision, service, action, and leadership:

People want to make a difference in the community and sort of affect things around them . . . community service is a great way to do that, see a vision and get people to follow you . . . and then people see things, [say] wow, this can make a difference in my community.

During one of the discussions, I asked, “so, just being a volunteer doesn’t necessarily make you a leader. Do you agree with that?” Students responded mostly negatively to this clarification, and in doing so asserted their belief that volunteers are leaders. This assertion was apparently due to their strong commitment to community service. Comments included, “you have to improve where you are . . . your little 4.0 is not going to do it on it’s own” and “my dad always told me that you pay rent where you live, but your community service is like the rent you pay to be human.”

In only one of the focus groups was the role of genuine involvement mentioned. Participants were quick to dismiss acts of community service by
individuals who seem to focus only on rewards, such as “lines on a resume” or scholarship eligibility. One suggested self-perception questions such as, “are you doing this for money or are you doing this for yourself. If there wasn’t a scholarship involved, would you be here? Do you have an ulterior motive?”

What is the relationship between academic achievement/GPA and student leadership?

Next I asked the students what they believe the relationship is between academic achievement, particularly as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA), and leadership success. In both focus groups, participants agreed that grades alone are not an accurate measure of leadership skill or knowledge. As one participant put it, “4.0 doesn’t equal a leader.” In most cases, students agreed that a 3.0 GPA was acceptable for student leaders, but disagreement occurred when a 2.5 to 3.0 GPA range was discussed. One student explained:

I had this conversation with a girlfriend last night. She is getting lower than a 3.0 and wants to apply for some awards and she won’t do it because she is getting under that 3.0 and I think she attributes that to what these programs are looking for . . . I think she fits all of [the awards].

Others agreed with another participant who said, “I think there’s a correlation but . . . I mean there are good leaders [that] have problems with studies.”

The ensuing discussions included explorations of student leaders as those with variable skill sets, including strong organizational skills, motivation, and the ability to
take responsibility. In addition, students posited that leadership is part of the educational experience, and that education is not academics alone. One reported:

I think leadership is educational. It furthers people’s skills, people’s abilities. It allows them to continue on with life after college and I don’t think academics alone does that for people.

Another participant offered:

People get higher GPA’s because they try harder in their classes . . . and turn stuff in and are more responsible so they are better at leading because they take the responsibility.

Still another added:

[It] depends . . . I think you also get the type of people I feel are in leadership, have leadership qualities . . . they are here at the University for a reason, not for themselves [but] to better maybe the community of the University . . . but those types of people to me aren’t the [ones] I think of as getting D’s.

In addition, the majority of the student participants shared their impression that leaders sometimes sacrifice their grades for other projects or people. Time is often the mediating factor, as often students who are involved with various activities must prioritize how they spend their time. One participant summed up the prioritizing process:

I think if you look [at] somebody that has maybe a B or C but that person is sacrificing part of that to help other students . . . maybe they didn’t get to study
as much because they were helping somebody that was . . . about to fail. So . . .

the student that helped and suffered the lower grade is more of a leader.

And, in each of the focus groups, students noted that the relationship between GPA and leadership is, at least at some level, cultural. The idea of “American” was not explicated, but was certainly present:

In America, I think people value self-control so especially the leader they expect if he cannot control himself, he cannot control or contribute to the group. So they are failing to keep up at least good grades . . . you think he cannot be qualified to be a true leader. This is a very cultural idea. Because in [another country] for example, in the University group there are lots of clubs . . . and some of the [students get] very low grades. And then people do not think these are the good leaders, they think ‘oh, he’s the one true leader because he does the sacred and his focus [was on] group activities.’

Here, the dominant use of the masculine pronoun is pronounced, which is indicative of an American mindset because of the patriarchal nature of the U.S. social system.

Another participant mentioned the expressly American note of leader, saying:

I think that’s ingrained too in our American ideal or picture of what a leader is . . . you know, my father saying . . . a person that gets a 4.0, or person is dedicated to their studies no matter what the situation they’re going to work hard as they can to get that grade.
Is there something unique about leadership at UAF or in Alaska?

Both groups of students expressed strong feelings about Alaska and UAF, which became evident when I asked about any potential uniqueness in leadership in Alaska or UAF. Both groups talked about how “localized” the campus and town are, and how our geographical location affects both attitudes and opportunities. In particular, a student from out of state observed that students from Alaska “haven’t traveled that much . . . haven’t seen . . . much of the world.” Another student from out of state characterized herself and other non-Alaskan students as “all running from something.” However, several participants reported that the sense of “frontier” is a unique benefit of UAF.

Participants also discussed the “isolationist” nature of Alaskans, which they explained as a separation between people that goes beyond geographical location. One participant stated that Alaskans “don’t like to depend on other people.” For the participants, this perception of Alaskans’ strong independent attitude seemed linked to widespread “student apathy on campus.” During these discussions, participants in both groups made strong statements about fellow students’ attitudes and actions. One said:

By far the most apathetic group of people I’ve ever met in my life . . . I think students really go out of their way to not be informed about issues and not be informed about what is going on on campus.

Another noted, “it’s just heartbreaking . . . these people don’t really want to help you . . . [but] they are the first ones to come in and say Fairbanks offers nothing. UAF
offers nothing.” A third participant added, “we don’t have social activists like many of the bigger campuses do. We don’t collect. We don’t recruit . . . I can’t foresee that happening at UAF.”

Another focus of discussion also revolved around UAF’s unique demographics, which were viewed as a positive aspect of the campus. This included the large number of nontraditional students, the wide variety of academic programs, the exchange programs, and the large number of international and national exchange students. For example, a participant noted that, “nontraditional students [are] very mature, and they have a lot experience outside [of the university], so they are [a kind] of leaders.”

Focus group participants generally defined UAF and Alaska by what they are not, and this often cast a negative light on the university and the state. However, students apparently did not wish to sound exclusively derogatory. The discussions also included the perception that UAF “could only get better” and that Alaska “is not contaminated compared to the other parts of the world or United States . . . [it is] a very good environment to make it better and better . . . a wonderful chance here.”

*If you could design a leadership development program for UAF students . . .*

In the first student focus group, there was an extensive discussion about possible future directions and activities for the LP, but in the second group time constraints did not allow full exploration of this question. However, a few students from the second group did provide some thoughts on programming. Specific ideas that emerged included summer activities, extended experiences such as two or three
day events, and "some type of obstacle course." Most students agreed with the
sentiment that "once a year is not enough," and that leadership development should
be an ongoing experience.

Participants believe that "student leaders [should] get to talk to each other
about problems they face." Participants further suggested a number of informal, but
facilitated, discussions on leadership among student leaders. The idea of this
community of leaders, in round table discussions, and offering "support" to one
another was attractive to most of the participants.

A few participants commented on past events and noted that "pushing
political views" is not acceptable to them during leadership events. In this discussion,
I asked whether or not they believe students learn anything about themselves as
leaders during these "offensive" events. Several students responded positively to my
question while others felt that their pre-established "moral ethical code" is already in
place. Participants went on to discuss whether or not college students can be trusted
to make up their own minds about biased information, and suggested that a full range
of views should be displayed. Although clear consensus was not reached on this
issue, no one appeared to have further commentary.

**Staff and Faculty Stakeholder Focus Group Interview**

Six staff and faculty members participated in the second focus group. All six
of these stakeholders held pivotal roles in creating, developing, and sustaining the LP
in the past four years; all of these stakeholders have given volunteer time and energy
to the program, in fact, without several of these individuals, the LP is unlikely to exist
in its current form. The female observer served two roles during this session, as she also is a program stakeholder who fits the criteria for membership in this group. And though I, as researcher, served primarily as facilitator in this discussion, I also meet the stakeholder definition for this group.

Areas represented in this focus group include Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Chancellor’s Office. The group was comprised of one male and five females, and all (appear) to be Caucasian. Their time of employment at UAF ranges from two to fourteen years. Four of the participants have worked professionally at other institutions of higher education and two were former students at UAF. All the participants have long standing relationships with each other, and each has no less than a two-year relationship with me. Most of these stakeholders have engaged in lengthy discussions about the LP in the past six months.

Our conversation was free flowing and often moved tangentially from the posed topic. The group appeared patient in hearing each other’s statements, which were often much longer than single interactions from any in the student focus groups. In general, when viewed in comparison to the student focus group discussions, there were fewer specifics and direct statements made in this group; these participants focused the majority of their contributions on an abstract or “bigger picture” level.

*What is important or unimportant about student leadership at UAF?*

After brief introductions, I posed the question of the relative importance or unimportance of student leadership development on the UAF campus. The group
responded strongly, both verbally and nonverbally, with one member initiating the discussion with, “well, there’s not a question that it’s NOT important.” Reasons for the importance of supporting and providing for student leader development were then offered.

Participants asserted that the way in which students experience leadership is an aspect of how “we’re helping students at UAF,” and emphasized that these experiences are integral to the support of students as “rounded, whole persons.” It was noted that the development of leaders is one of the university’s stated goals, and student leadership development is directly linked to organizational work culture after students graduate, suggesting that the university is “building” leaders for society and organizations. For example, one participant stated:

We’re developing . . . active members of society . . . contributing in some way to helping the world . . . that’s pretty lofty, but it’s true and that’s where I think leadership development is really critical.

From this conceptual discussion, an informal assessment of UAF’s success at comprehensive student leadership development arose. The group agreed that while there is a great deal of “talk” about leadership on campus, little actual action at the institutional level occurs. One participant observed, “the University has not made a real commitment to accomplishing [student leadership development] as a stated goal.”

A number of areas were noted as lacking, including the number of students who participate in the various leadership development options. The group noted that
while there is no lack of opportunities, per se, a lack of appropriate utilization of these leadership options does exist. Here, it seemed that the missing element is any consistent and/or comprehensive method for communicating such options for participation and involvement to students. As one participant said, when students arrive at UAF, they are often “left wondering what the next step is.”

In particular, this disconnection was noted to arise from the profound separation between “curricular and co-curricular kinds of things.” One participant stated:

The University [is] not committed to actually going out there and being behind what they’re mouthing . . . scholastically, I think this University excels but for the rounded whole person, I think we are left behind there.

Another suggested, “we don’t have a way in which we’re integrating both the extracurricular and the curricular.”

Several ideas of past or possible intersections between academic and student affairs were noted, including a freshman seminar, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, and a prior discussion about the lack of academic leadership research at UAF. In this discussion, a sense of frustration was nonverbally evident though not explicitly stated; participants displayed a level of exasperation about prior sharing of ideas that have not yet come to fruition. They also noted their concern that some students are not being well served due these lack of connections. For some of the participants, these issues can be resolved only when leadership is “a regular part of the curriculum.”
How do we identify leaders? What skills and knowledge are associated with leadership?

I followed up on parts of the ongoing discussion by asking participants what skills they associate with student leaders, and in particular, how do they come to label someone a “leader.” The discussion included a variety of terms and ideas, which one participant expressed as “teaching people judgment, decisive initiative, [and] sensitivity.” Other descriptors that were consistently verbalized were “action,” “motivation,” “define what’s important,” “passion,” “commitment,” and “moving a group.”

In general, this group was reluctant to narrow their responses to this question in any substantial way; one participant suggested, “I think an answer, but not necessarily the answer, would be someone who is willing to take initiative.” Another stated a distinction between “citizenship” and “leadership,” specifically because “teaching someone to be a good, effective citizen doesn’t necessarily mean he [or she] will be a good leader.”

After several minutes on this topic, I stated, “So, leadership is a way to group and to understand a whole list of adjectives?” Most of the participants nodded and one said, “exactly . . . I don’t think you can be just a leader . . . you have to have so many other traits.”

Throughout this focus group, participants expressed dissatisfaction with their understanding and use of the terms associated with leadership. Implicit dissatisfaction was evident in statements such as the above quote regarding how the distinction of
leadership from these “other traits” is not clear. Explicit dissatisfaction was stated several times. One participant posited, “students become leaders because they have a certain passion for something. And what’s the difference between a leader and a zealot? I don’t know.” Another ventured, “integrity . . . I have no clue what that means in the society today. I have no clue what it means to me. What does it mean?” Participants also agreed that sometimes a discussion of “semantics” does not clarify leadership.

The notion of effectiveness became important as participants spoke of their definition of leadership development as helping students “have a chance at being more effective.” There was recognition that “leadership” continually exists in groups of people, and that universities have an obligation to help students sort through these experiences, and thus must be intentional in providing student leadership development.

What is the relationship between academic achievement/GPA and student leadership?

Several members of this focus group have and do serve on the Graduation with Leadership Honors committee, so this question was not a new one to them. Students apply for this honor when applying for graduation, and the criteria include “academic success,” which is measured by cumulative GPA, among other indicators of involvement and successful leadership. The bulk of this discussion centered around the participants’ experiences, and their angst, with the award selection process, which has been contentious in several recent years. For example, one participant noted,
“we’ve been up and down on what the GPA ought to be a couple of times. I personally have changed my mind back and forth.”

The “imperfectness” of GPA as a measure of academic achievement was brought forth in the early part of the discussion. Participants posited that GPA is a relative measure but that academic success is part of “what we do” at a University and at some level is intrinsic to successful student leadership development. After this general agreement, participants conveyed that the relative nature of GPA is continually problematic for a number of reasons. First, GPA has “different weights” in different disciplines, which means it is not useful as a measurement across disciplines. Second, student leaders share a heavy load between involvement and academics. As one participant summarized, “we expect too much of our student leaders to put them in a leadership position and then also have them excel to a 3.5 GPA.” Third, individual students are each in different circumstances; whether recovering from an unsuccessful or poor semester or experiencing learning disabilities, GPA is relative to each student’s life, and therefore is difficult to use as a measure when comparing students.

**What is the relationship between community service/volunteerism and leadership?**

I asked the group about the relationship between volunteer action and leadership. There was a long pause before anyone responded. I wondered if discussion fatigue was a factor at this point as we had been talking for well over an hour.
The conversation moved beyond the pause when one participant said, "just the first thing that comes to mind is sort of giving of one's self." Other participants, who agreed that there is overlap between volunteering and leadership described leadership as giving of one's talents, time, and energy to others. However, they were not sure if one was an antecedent or a necessity to the other. As one participant stated, "I think volunteering can create leaders, but I don't know that leaders [say] 'I'm a leader so I'll just volunteer.'"

Another way leadership and volunteering seem related to the participants was through varying desires for compensation; some people are motivated to serve as leaders or as volunteers because it "looks good on a resume," while others specifically volunteer for such opportunities due to the lack of "compensation for the work" and a desire to have a "learning experience."

Unlike the student focus groups, staff and faculty participants expressed much confusion about descriptors to use in clarifying the relationship that they all appear to believe exists between volunteerism and leadership. Comments included, "I view service very differently than volunteering", "I guess I look at them pretty much synonymously . . . you're volunteering to serve and I mean it's just different levels of volunteering," and "working at the Bread Line or . . . giving that's a service thing to me. It's part of leadership . . . but it's different from volunteering."

*What is unique about leadership at UAF or in Alaska?*

In order to explore the particular context of UAF, I asked the participants to comment on anything they perceived as unique about our campus and/or state in
regards to leadership. The ensuing discussion was lively and involved a good bit of laughter about cabins and dogs, and “living . . . not so tied into the grid.” One participant stated, “it does appear that Fairbanks and Alaska have their own unique way of doing leadership and getting involved in leadership.” The distinction between UAF and other places involved at least two factors: the type of students and the nature of the community in which this campus is situated.

UAF students were characterized as “interesting and unique.” A few participants reported that “we have a lot of students, young and old, that are here for the process rather than the end result of the degree.” After a few minutes on this topic, I clarified by asking, “so school is part of their lives but not their entire pursuit at this time?” Several participants answered “exactly” and one went on to say that students are into “education for education itself,” after which, another participant quipped, “right, but I’m going to fish this summer to provide, put cash in the bank, you know.”

The nature of this arctic community was described as “more active,” though no direct comparisons were made with other communities. This idea stemmed in part from a statement made by one of the participants that, “we have the highest number of non-profits in the nation. There is lots of work to be done.” In direct contrast to what students said in their focus groups, several of these staff and faculty participants purported that UAF students are “more active in their community,” and that myriad opportunities exist to “build your own” business, home, or club.
In addition, due to the relative isolation of the town and the campus, participants perceive that students have limited social choices, thus, they become quite “tied” to the community and often stay in the state after graduation when they are “actively involved” in community service. Participants suggested that UAF furthers this connection through offering tuition credit to staff and faculty who want to continue their education. At other universities it was noted, “you don’t get that option.”

*If you could design a leadership development program for UAF students . . .*

The final question I posed in this focus group centered on activities, events, and programs that would be involved in an “ideal” leadership program at UAF. A consistent broad theme, which was repeated by several participants, was the need for support from “within student affairs and through the academic side of it.” In particular, a need for continuing assessment of the UAF program was maintained by all present.

Specific applications such as a “leadership transcript” or “e-portfolios” were mentioned as ways to help students track their development in co-curricular areas, and one participant reported that employers are increasingly seeking this kind of information. The amount of logistical work that such a transcript involves was also discussed.

Another particular area of concern was space for students to participate in leadership activities. Here the discussion ranged from office space for the Leadership Development Coordinator to “rotating office space, board space, and meeting space
that is just for student clubs.” With designated locations, students could go in person and locate involvement options and access information specific to UAF, and for at least one participant, “that’s part of what would be great in a leadership building” (referring to an actual housing structure).

Individual Interviews with Administrators

The three individual interviews involved the current Chancellor, Provost, and Dean of Students at UAF. One of the interviews took place before the focus groups, and the other two were conducted after the three focus groups. The interviews lasted from forty five to sixty minutes and all involved a one-on-one discussion between the administrator and myself. I inquired about particular areas and the interactions were conversational and fluid. As one administrator put it, “it’s kind of how I see these things, they’re all related.” All three administrators offered their full and uninterrupted attention for the course of the interview, and all referred to previous conversations with me concerning leadership and the UAF Leadership Program (LP).

Each of the administrators has earned a doctoral degree, and all have been involved with either K12 or higher education for the majority of their professional careers. All three administrators are male and Caucasian. Two are long-time Alaska residents and the third is in his first year in Alaska.

At the conclusion of the interviews, two of the administrators explicitly thanked me for conducting this study. And, all three of these stakeholders were insistent and forthcoming about the importance of leadership to students, to UAF, and to society. All three also expressed that they enjoyed the interviews. One example is
when an administrator laughed and said “as for that [analogy], I just made it up, but I kinda like it!” Another thanked me and stated, “I think it’s great that you’re doing this thesis and I’m excited to see where it heads.”

What is important or unimportant about leadership at UAF?

After explaining the assessment and thanking the administrator for committing the time to talk about leadership with me, I asked each of them what they believe is important or unimportant about student leadership development at UAF. The common and consistent answer was that leadership experiences are “part of an overall educational effort.” This sentiment includes the idea that leadership development is “another plus the institution can give [students].” Administrators agreed that leadership exists in “anything” students will go on to do after graduation, and therefore the university “should” be helping them develop their own strengths and understand their weaknesses as leaders. One administrator stated:

When our students leave us, graduate [and] go off to their next experiences whether it be jobs or graduate study . . . this experience of leadership . . . will enhance their ability to make further contributions and accelerate their opportunities to move forward.

Another administrator asserted, “leadership is . . . a frame of mind, a way of doing things . . . I think that’s why we do it at the university, because that understanding ought to be part of an education.”

Included in the broad discussions of leadership as an essential part of education were thoughts on how leadership development should be infused into the
UAF student experience. One administrator evoked the university’s core curriculum as a means of helping students learn about a wide variety of topics and opinions as well as having a broad array of experiences. Another noted that basic courses are already quite full of content, and that what is “really neat about this leadership program is that it is something outside of the curriculum.” All three administrators noted the importance of a multi-faceted approach to leadership development. As one interviewee put it, student leadership opportunities exist in a “wide variety of places on this campus” and leadership “should be part of everybody’s thinking.”

*What is leadership? How do you identify leadership when it is happening?*

After exploring the importance of leadership to UAF, I asked each administrator to share his personal definition of leadership. Two of the administrators began by citing authors; one quoted author Robert Greenleaf’s understanding of servant leadership, which involves the leaders assuming an attitude that they are performing a service for the group. The other named author Joel Barker’s definition, which the administrator restated as “leadership is taking people to places where they wouldn’t go on their own.” Though the third administrator did not name a particular author, his initial description of leadership closely corresponds with the first two. He stated that leadership is “dealing with others . . . causing others to go in some direction or do something that they probably wouldn’t do on their own.”

Though each administrator independently described leadership in similar terms, each of them also hesitated before giving a definitive answer to the question, “what is leadership?” A commonality of all the discussions was the view that
“leadership is a way of living” and therefore it persists across all areas of society, including work, school, and volunteer activity. For these stakeholders, the real sign of leadership is when something has changed in the referent situation, and any definition more specific is inherently lacking. As one of the interviewee’s stated:

This leadership thing is so broad, means so much, means so many things to different people. We know we’ve got ideas of things we should be looking for in the leadership area, but it changes so much depending on the situation.

For these administrators, a few of the “things we should be looking for in the leadership area” include communication competence and interpersonal skills, sensitivity to others, self-assessment abilities, and organizational skills. In addition, administrators talked about motivation, attitude, vision, and integrity. Many of these attributes are related and overlapping. One stakeholder shared an example of the inter-relationships:

You have different experiences around campus [and] you, the student, [are] hopefully assessing some of your own strengths and weaknesses. And getting better acquainted with who you are as a person because that’s going to definitely affect what kinds of leadership activities you’re most comfortable with.

Communication skills are one of the attributes that each interviewee talked about as interlaced with effective leadership. For example, when asked how he recognizes leadership when it’s happening, one administrator replied, “it probably
starts with communication... and the ability to interact with people in a positive way.” For another administrator, “communication” includes a full range of skills:

Our ability to communicate doesn’t mean just talking. [It is a] whole... set of skills... our ability to listen, to be sensitive to what others are telling us... to recognize that everybody doesn’t see things the same way.

The ability to communicate is also important in terms of adapting to changes in the situation. Administrators asserted that leadership is “keeping things in perspective” and being able to “adjust to new situations.” Without applying different skills to different situations, leaders are “not nearly as effective in situation B as they were in situation A.” These changes come from both internal and external factors, and the interviewees noted that often such changes lead to failure and/or frustration. Two of the participants specifically noted that “every leader fails in their leadership role” at some point, and that a leader’s ability to “show a bit of grace” in these situations is important.

In particular, two of the administrators stated that failure and integrity are both related to good leadership. One administrator noted that integrity is the only consistent commonality in all the lists of leadership characteristics in the myriad number of available leadership books and articles. Since the word integrity had been mentioned throughout the assessment, I specifically asked one administrator “how do we teach or provide experiences around integrity?” to which he replied, “I don’t know, or even DEFINE it!” After some probing, he stated that integrity, for him, is “being genuine, and being genuinely devoted to some principles.” Such a definition
of integrity matches the other administrators’ general understanding of the term as well, but the most common way that each administrator shared their understanding of integrity was through exploring its absence. One shared that:

The best way to teach [integrity] is to demonstrate the problems that develop when it is not obvious. It’s almost like you develop an appreciation for it because that’s all that’s left.

Other administrators expressed that, “every leader will fail their followers . . . but what you can’t recover from is a failure of integrity” and “if you look at trying to do things without maintaining integrity, basically they all fail.”

The relationship between integrity and leadership is, in the view of these administrators, also intertwined with a leader’s ability to provide vision. For example, one administrator stated that an “idea depends on how strong the possibility of failure is.” Other administrators noted that leaders are responsible for identifying a new approach or idea and then “getting people to see things in [that] way.” One interviewee also noted that the leader does not have to always have the best idea, but is responsible for first identifying and then helping the group move toward the most beneficial approach, as in “vision is seeing potential.”

Administrators discussed their thoughts on how a leader’s ability to perform these functions for a group is related to their ability to perform self-assessment. Though the “business of honestly assessing yourself is tough,” each administrator emphasized the importance of student leaders learning their strengths and their weaknesses. One administrator stated that an “introspective, reflective process” helps
leaders to answer the question, “am I the person that I claim to be, or imagine myself to be?” Another administrator offered that honest self-appraisal helps with other leadership skills such as adaptability and communication. Students can more easily identify what kinds of leadership activities they are best suited for because “roles change depending on the situation” and often students need to be “involved as followers” too. One administrator said:

Some students will be excellent leaders in small groups and some will be really good leaders in the residence hall . . . and others with just their same sex, [or] on academic matters. Not that one is better than the other . . . but it’s a reflection of their own assessment of who they are and . . . a recognition that not everyone is expected to do the same thing in the same way.

*What is the relationship between academic achievement/GPA and leadership skill?*

When discussing skills associated with leadership, two of the administrators noted that organizational ability is important for leaders. A student’s ability to organize and prioritize tasks was specifically related to academic achievement. For example, a student who is highly involved must manage her or his various responsibilities with attention and care in order to succeed in all areas.

I followed up on this line of discussion and asked each administrator explicitly how he perceives academic achievement, specifically as measured by GPA, and leadership to be related. In all three situations, the administrator smiled or laughed about relating the two ideas. After laughing, one stated, “GPA in higher education is probably not all that important in terms of your development as a leader.”
In all three interviews, it was also discussed that “most . . . students that are really involved are not going to be your 4.0 students.” The reality of involvement and competing priorities was offered as a consistent reason for lower GPAs for involved students. As one administrator noted, it is important for student leaders to “keep things in perspective.” But, each administrator also submitted that a 4.0 GPA is not the only measure of academic achievement. For one administrator, the better measure of such achievement is whether or not the student can answer “yes” to the question, “did you get what we offered as an educational experience?” Administrators noted, “somebody’s attitude toward academics” is more important than the grades they get.

Beyond just organizational skill, the administrators report that leadership success and academic achievement require the same skill set. As one commented:

There’s these special traits that enable them to do well in both areas. And a lot of them that I see are individuals who are very highly motivated, energetic, [and have] a positive outlook on life. They emerge as good leaders and good students.

*What is the relationship between community service and leadership?*

Next I asked each administrator for his thoughts on the connection(s) between community service and leadership. The consistent answer was that community service is like leadership in that it involves “stepping forward to do something beyond what you really have to do.” For two of the administrators, this action is specifically about students gaining a variety of “experiences” in which they explore themselves and their strengths and weaknesses. The importance of “broadening horizons” and
“moving out of self-centeredness” was also perceived as an act of serving others, i.e. leadership qualities.

All three administrators said that though community service is “not required,” it seems “hard to escape” as a part of any leadership development process. As one administrator expressed, “I’d stop short of saying it’s required, but I would certainly ask some questions if I saw somebody who claimed to be serious about leadership who wasn’t involved.”

In one of the interviews, this question of relating community service and leadership launched a longer discussion about the “triggers” for student involvement. In that discussion, the administrator and I explored the potential “causes” for a student’s decision to become involved in a leadership capacity and/or volunteer their time for a community organization. The dialogue focused on the human maturation process as well as various factors in middle or high school that might increase “readiness” for various types of involvement. The administrator pondered:

The whole idea is just kind-of an interesting one, what is it that kind-of triggers this within individuals at certain points in their life. ‘I now really want to volunteer; I really want to take on a leadership role.’ They’ve had the ability probably all along . . . but the timing wasn’t quite right . . . what is it that makes this happen?

What is unique about leadership at UAF or in Alaska?

Near the completion of each interview, I posed a question about the uniqueness of leadership in the context of UAF or Alaska. All three administrators
answered quickly and clearly in saying that they do not see a difference. To follow up, two administrators said “people being with people.” Each administrator acknowledged that some factors such as culture, population, and goals might differ at UAF, but each maintained, “the same principles apply.”

*If you were designing student leadership development at UAF . . .*

The final area of focus in each of the interviews centered on ideas for student leadership programming at UAF. I briefly reviewed some of the programs and events that currently exist in the program, and then asked for their input and suggestions. Two of the administrators mentioned that they hoped part of what would come from this assessment is a better understanding of ways to deliver leadership development to students at UAF and in particular, they wanted the assessment to “flush out what leadership development is.”

Two administrators spoke throughout our conversations about the value of a “variety of experiences” and each of them repeated that belief during this part of the interview. From volunteering, to conferences on campus and out of state, to student employment and the Associated Students of UAF (ASUAF), the administrators asserted that students benefit from exploring leadership in a full range of settings. All these experiences help demonstrate that there are “different ways of doing things” and that leadership is a part of life for everyone.

One administrator also talked about the necessity of leadership “scholarship” at UAF. He pointed out that in a previous discussion on campus, a leadership graduate program had been discussed, but that the idea faded when UAF’s lack of
scholarship in the area of leadership was clearly understood. For him, scholarship could be, “additional courses, faculty with research interests in the area of leadership, or . . . some kind of experience elsewhere [like a] leadership institute.”

**Modified Twenty Statements Test (TST)/Leadership Program Assessment**

The “UAF Leadership Program Assessment” questionnaire was distributed to all the focus group and individual interview participants as well as the staff of the Wood Center (student union) in which the LP is housed. Students and others were encouraged to participate though inclusion of this assessment in two monthly leadership e-letters. In addition, for the duration of the project, questionnaires were available near the Leadership Program office for anyone to pick up and complete.

Thirteen forms were returned, which resulted in one hundred and thirty one written statements. The majority were returned anonymously, however, a few participants handed their completed forms to me at focus groups, and one was returned via email. A complete transcription of the compiled statements can be found in Appendix F.

**Leadership is . . .**

In the first part of the written assessment, respondents were asked to complete the statement “Leadership is . . .” five times. A variety of statements were received, ranging from specific ideas to lofty ideals. A first major grouping of answers dealt with leadership as related to “inspiring others,” or to dealing with a group. Respondents wrote that leadership is:

“. . . finding consensus,”
“... giving of myself to others,”
“... guiding the actions of others,”
“... empowering yourself and others,” and
“... the ability of a person to lead his/her team in to the end state.”

A second major area of focus in the responses to this first statement involved the idea of leadership as “making things happen.” For example, numerous statements were made about leadership as “energy,” “action,” and/or “task management” and one respondent wrote that leadership is “taking responsibility and following through on commitment.”

Directly related to the idea of leadership as action was a focus on “vision.” For example, a respondent wrote that leadership is, “thinking big.” And, an apparently complementary skill was the idea of organization, or “orienting” of groups. Other references to the idea of vision and organization included:

“Taking initiative in something you believe in,”
“Looks beyond means to an end – paints tangible picture in mind of followers,”
“Inspiring others,”
“Defending what you believe in,”
“Task management,” and
“Provides direction for group members.”
Leadership is also related to caring in many of the statements. One respondent noted that leadership is “as friendly and fuzzy as it is portrayed at UAF.” Other related responses included:

“Making a difference,”
“A way to change the world,”
“Volunteering yourself for the greater good,” and
“Being equal, fair, and sensitive to all people and their opinions.”

Another commonality among the written statements was a focus on communication and interpersonal skills, including the need for adaptability. Several respondents wrote statements about leaders “knowing when to be quiet and listen,” while others concentrated on the skill of helping the group stay focused even when “times look bleak.” Using effective communication skills to convey change is also mentioned several times. As one participant wrote, leadership is “measuring, motivating, and celebrating the group’s progress towards fulfillment, and ongoing evaluation and re-planning as necessary.”

The UAF Leadership Program is . . .

In the second section of the written assessment, respondents notably recognized the “growing” nature of the LP. In this section, they were asked to complete the statement “The UAF Leadership Program is . . .” three times. Twelve of the thirty-eight statements characterized the current program as “new,” “a work in progress,” and/or “searching for a direction.” Several statements were written about the positive potential of the program, including a statement that the LP is “helpful,
resourceful, [and] necessary." In addition, there were several statements regarding the role of mentorship in the program. Respondents wrote about the LP being a “place to bring great leaders to talk to future leaders.”

Another common theme among the statements was the focus on student development. Seventeen of the thirty-eight statements referred to student learning in some way. For example, several respondents referred to the LP as an “opportunity,” “rewarding,” and/or “beneficial.” A broad range of both skills and knowledge were referenced in this focus on learning:

- “. . . a way students can get a better understanding of leadership,”
- “. . . an opportunity to develop skills and grow in a variety of expressions of leadership,”
- “. . . aware of diversity and cognizant of various expressions of leadership,”
- “. . . help future leaders discover many types of leadership,” and
- “. . . to encourage students to be positive leaders.”

**The UAF Leadership Program could be . . .**

In the third statement on the assessment, respondents strongly emphasized the possibilities for partnerships between the LP and various campus entities. Respondents were given two opportunities to complete the statement, “The UAF Leadership Program could be . . .” Of the twenty-eight written responses, thirteen suggested the program be “implemented more throughout and around campus.” From academic departments to ASUAF (student government), the written statements centered on the integration of leadership throughout UAF, as in the LP could be:
“... one of the most important programs on campus,”
“... more fully embraced by the administration,”
“... embraced by many departments as a vital partner,”
“... the driving force behind a lot of programs on campus,” and
“... well regarded if given academic program status.”

A second commonality in these responses was a focus on large-scale optimistic visions for the LP. From helping to “create better leaders for the state” to “becoming a great powerhouse of educational possibilities,” respondents expressed intense enthusiasm for future achievements of the program.

Several specific ideas were submitted, and some of these contradicted each other. For instance, several respondents wrote about the LP being “available to more students” while one respondent wrote about focusing on a “manageable number of students.” Other ideas included the development of an additional leadership course for student employees on campus, creating a leadership floor in one of the residence halls, operating as a “springboard” for student volunteer involvement off campus, and/or aiming a marketing campaign at non-traditional student leaders with an emphasis on the notion that “Leadership is YOU.”

**Ongoing Participant Observation**

While collecting data through focus groups, interviews, and the written leadership assessment, I was also talking with students, staff, faculty, and administration about leadership and the Leadership Program (LP), coordinating our major spring Leaders for Alaska Institute, and re-writing the program’s mission
statement. Among other things, I also hired, trained, and supervised a student employee and created a Leadership Internship. In addition, I sorted and filed the four-year history of LP files, met with a grant writer about funding options for our program, and transitioned the former steering committees into a ten member Student Leadership Program Team. In essence, I spend at least forty hours a week focused on student leadership development at UAF.

My immersion in the LP has been intense. For instance, on the day of my first focus group, I also hosted our first ever “leadership date.” After preparing for and facilitating a two-hour focus group with five students around the lunch hour, I took a group of five students to a movie and dinner to discuss leadership. The event was conceived as a part of the UAF LEADS (Leadership Education and Development Series) and my intent was to provide a fun and relaxing forum in which to discuss leadership theory and application. Two of the first focus group participants also joined me at the evening event. Though I did not take notes or tape record the discussion that took place at the northernmost Denny’s restaurant that night, the student comments and perceptions that were shared certainly informed me about the climate of leadership at UAF. And, I was impressed by the similarities in the two discussions; what students said in the focus groups after signing a consent form was quite similar to the sentiments expressed by students in response to the movie “Calendar Girls.” One example is that students in the focus group talked about humility as important in good leaders. At dinner, students rallied against one of the main characters of the movie for being overly proud of herself and her work.
During the course of gathering and analyzing data, I facilitated two more “leadership dates,” and had experiences similar to the first one including some additional participant overlap between focus group and “date” attendees.

The first student focus group also helped me clarify the approach I wanted to take with a special event for clubs. I had abstractly devised a “Clubs Only Dinner” to be held once per month. The idea was to feed student club leaders and facilitate a discussion around a pre-determined topic, so that they could utilize each other as resources. In the first focus group, the participants discussed the concept of a “round table” and emphasized that providing ways for student leaders to dialogue with each other is essential. That afternoon, I changed the wording on the poster about the club event to “dinner and round table.” And when facilitating the first ever clubs only event a week later, I used my notes from that discussion with the student stakeholders as a guide.

Also at the beginning of the data collection for this study, I was heavily involved in transitioning the LP from “what it was” to “what it can be.” In one week, I made four presentations, including PowerPoint and question/answer session, about the program’s history, our accomplishments, and my plans for this next phase of the program. I balanced known and unknown visions and goals of various stakeholders in attempts to both congratulate and honor the previous efforts while simultaneously moving the program forward. Though I had numerous conversations and email exchanges with various stakeholders about potential directions for “our” program, in the end, it is ultimately my version of the LP and my vision that is being created in
the everyday work of the LP staff. For many stakeholders, this was a relief. As one of them wrote to me in an email, "it's like we've been hoping for four years for a pony, and now we've got [one]. Just go for it!"

In programmatic planning, I heavily emphasize opportunities for leadership dialogue among students. My approach is borne from experiences with the Student Leadership Conference over the past four years, and from the early part of the data gathering for this study. At the Conference, students have often enjoyed the "talk" times more than the "lecture" experiences. They often write comments such as "the best part was meeting other student leaders" on their evaluation forms. And as mentioned, students in the first focus groups emphasized the positive impact of talking with one another about leadership successes, foibles, and challenges.

An example of the focus on dialogue is the changes I am making to the UAF LEADS events. Originally, the format of the UAF LEADS training sessions was designed as "workshops" where students came to hear "experts." The average attendance at these sessions was three students, on a campus of approximately 6500 students, 1600 of whom are residential. When I asked identified student leaders why they were not attending these trainings, the most common answers were "I can't go to one more thing" and "we want to DO something, not just hear about it." With all this information, I reconceptualized UAF LEADS in more appropriate and targeted formats, each of which includes interaction and discussion, and are often facilitated in places where students are already engaged and involved (such as Resident Assistant Training, Orientation, Clubs, and student employment). Though UAF LEADS is still
evolving, my attention and intention about the series has been an important part of my thinking about student leadership development at UAF.

Part of the impetus for change in UAF LEADS and other programs also stemmed from my immersion in the leadership research and literature specific to higher education. For example, I compared the programming delivery methods we had used in the program with formats that are recommended by the 2003 Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). At the beginning of this study, the LP did not include an internship and did not utilize movies as programming formats, but now both are in place. I also read books and articles on leadership written by Students Affairs professionals and participated in teleconferences hosted by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The reference sections in each of these works led me to other important research and literature.

One tangible outcome of these readings is a large poster on the wall of my cubicle that contains various lists of leadership characteristics and outcomes. Next to the list of CAS standards is the Duke University Hart Leadership Program’s focus areas, which is beside the University of Illinois’ four “I’s” of leadership focus (Insight, Intersect, Ignite, & Imprint). Also on the sheet is the list of leadership qualities that emerged in a multi-campus study performed in 2001 by Cress et al. and the Center for Creative Leadership’s five-step leadership process. All these are on the same sheet as the UAF 2005 Strategic Plan focus areas. None of the lists of qualities or outcomes overlaps with another completely, but some commonalities do exist. For
instance, “critical reflection” or “values” is mentioned in each of the lists while “appreciation of diversity” or like statements is present in three of the eight lists of qualities and outcomes. Students and colleagues make comments on this list when they visit my cubicle, and I gaze at it often as I am on hold on the phone, waiting for the computer to boot up, or sipping my coffee.

Another area where assessment informed the ongoing program planning was through the development of a new mission statement for the program. The former mission statement was developed in 2000 along with vision and values statements. When volunteers, including myself, were first conceptualizing the program, student leadership development was a key part of the mission, but not explicitly the primary focal point. With the creation of the Leadership Development Coordinator position, a new stage of the program began and a refreshed, student-focused mission seemed necessary. I, among others, perceived that the old mission was becoming stagnant (it was four years old), and that part of our program transition required reframing and refocusing our purpose (personal communication with stakeholder, CS, January 18, 2004).

I used multiple methods of information gathering to draft several versions of a new mission statement. First, I used language from the original mission statement, precisely because the work that created to that statement also led the recent creation of the Leadership Development Coordinator position, in which I serve. Second, I focused on the main three areas of the program, which had been identified in conjunction with the Dean of Students, the Chancellor, the Director and Associate
Director of Wood Center, and various other stakeholders. These conversations occurred primarily out of the bounds of the formal data gathering for this study, but certainly are part of the relevant information about student leadership development at UAF. The three areas are student leadership development opportunities, student leader recognition, and leadership resources for the campus (see program organization chart in Appendix H). Third, I read and reviewed the focus group and written assessment data to find any useful language and to contextualize any statement I might draft. Fourth, I looked at the compiled list of characteristics of leadership on my wall.

One example of how all this information informed the draft mission statement is the use of the word “effective.” In focus groups and individual interviews, and in informal discussions with colleagues, the need to focus on “good” or “useful” leadership often emerged. As one participant put it:

It’s not that we’re going to produce . . . leaders because of this program. People are going to be leaders. What we’re trying to do is take people who are going to get into . . . leadership and give them a set of skills that makes [them] more effective.

The idea of developing positive, “good,” leaders is implicit in student leadership programs, and indeed throughout this study. Nonetheless, due to the western worldview preference for explicit and direct information, I believed that our intention about “cultivating effective leaders” needed to be explicit.
The new program mission statement was created during the data analysis of this study and the vision statement developed four years ago for the LP has remained the same. I expect that a new values statement will be one of the results of this assessment. These examples are one way of noting how fundamental my ongoing participation and observation are to both the study and program; some areas of program planning and coordination went on without the full assessment while others are “on hold” until the full assessment is complete.

Accounting for and documenting the level of immersion that I have experienced before and during this study is virtually impossible. My focus “on understanding [this] given social setting” (Janesick, 1994, p. 290) required continual attention to both participation and observation. As a Student Affairs and Leadership professional, students often come to me wanting to know “what is leadership?” or, “who is the ‘new’ leadership program for?” In the course of this assessment, I was continually balancing between an answer that advocated for the program and their involvement, and one that harvested their opinions of what a good leadership program at UAF would look like. Sometimes I answered, “we’re doing an assessment right now to determine the course of the program; would you like to participate?” and sometimes I told them about the current program or event that was coming up. Often I replied to their queries as a researcher: “That’s a good, and challenging, question. What does leadership mean to you?” These discussions represent the rich and complex array of experiences that I have had as an active participant and intentional observer in this study.
Chapter Four – Data Analysis & Theme Emergence

"The province of qualitative research is the world of lived experience, for that is where individual belief and action intersect with culture . . .

[Qualitative researchers] seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning."

Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8

Overview

A guiding question in a UAF Leadership Program (LP) planning session one year before the formal onset of this study was: “where do we want to be?” One of the primary answers to that question, as indicated in the meeting minutes, was to “define leadership, and promote leadership research, skills, and scholarship.” This study is one of the ways that the UAF Leadership Program (LP) is moving toward that vision of exploring, understanding, and promoting effective leadership at UAF.

I collected extensive data via focus groups, individual interviews, a written assessment, and participant observation. Precisely because leadership is an amorphous concept, which conjures various images of human organization, this data was reviewed over a period of time for any repetition of phrases, consistency of content, and emphasis and/or intensity on particular areas of discussion (Owen, 1994). In addition, I sought to understand the underlying assumptions within the data. However, as Fontana and Frey (2000) note:

Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first. The spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no
matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers. (p. 645)

Therefore, I acknowledge that leadership has multiple definitions at UAF and elsewhere, and that my analysis of the data is simply one interpretation. I chose methodology and analysis methods carefully in order to build and maintain the credibility of the study. As Janesick (2000) states:

Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible? (p. 393)

Methodologically, I used multiple techniques to analyze the data, which encouraged multiple interpretations to emerge, and this approach allowed me to view the research from various “angles.” For example, while transcribing interviews, I also wrote observation notes and while describing and analyzing the data, I co-facilitated a large leadership event, the Leaders for Alaska Institute.

Van Manen (1990) suggests three approaches toward isolating themes in qualitative data. The wholistic approach requires the researcher to move toward answers to the question: “what sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning of the text as a whole?” (p. 93). Second, the selective approach recommends a search for “essential or revealing” phrases about the referent phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). The third approach centers on details and involves analysis of the question, “what does each sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon?” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93).
Each of these approaches was used throughout the study. I moved between viewing the data as a whole, as selections, and as phrases in an attempt to develop a balanced view of the leadership phenomenon at UAF. More precisely, this approach led me to understand the emerging definition of leadership as both related to the answers to the question “how do you recognize leadership when it’s happening?” and interlaced within answers to the questions about community service, academic achievement, and programmatic elements. In this way, the research questions served as “signposts” within the data, but were not the exclusive guide for the content of the discussions.

**CAS standards**

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) includes a complete chapter of standards for student leadership programs. CAS states that student leadership development must be “based on a broad philosophy of leadership, upon which subsequent competencies are built.” No particular philosophy of leadership is offered or recommended. The current study moves toward a definition and philosophy of leadership as it is understood at UAF, and identifies particular skill areas that are borne from that definition.

Indeed, the CAS standards are wide-ranging and broadly defined. Part two of the standards for student leadership programs reads:

The formal education of students consists of the curriculum and the co-curriculum, and must promote student learning and development that is purposeful and holistic. . . . relevant and desirable outcomes include:
intellectual growth, effective communication, realistic self-appraisal, enhanced self-esteem, clarified values, career choices, leadership development, healthy behaviors, meaningful interpersonal relationships, independence, collaboration, social responsibility, satisfying and productive lifestyles, appreciation of diversity, spiritual awareness, and achievement of personal and educational goals. (p. 2)

As one step of data analysis in this study, I used the above list of sixteen standards as categories in which to cluster focus group and interview comments as well as the one hundred and thirty-one written statements that were returned on the written assessment. Several of the areas were emphasized throughout the interviews and others were not referenced at all. The areas of emphasis are discussed along with the rest of the data below.

**Leadership is Intrinsic to Human Experience**

A common overarching theme throughout the data is that leadership is simply “part of life.” That is, leaders and followers do, and always will, exist as part of the way humans organize. Whether it is families, churches, workplaces, or classrooms, it is the understanding at UAF that “leadership will always exist in groups of people.” Not only is this a prominent theme in this study, it is a common thread throughout leadership literature and research as well. For example, the CAS standards listed above relate leadership to everything from the internalized experience of self-esteem to the external practice of social responsibility, and seemingly everything in between. Likewise, the multi-campus study conducted by Cress et al. (2001) identifies broad
personal and societal themes from “personal values” to “civic responsibility” as common within leadership development programs.

Perhaps due to the expansive nature of the leadership phenomenon, LP stakeholders deemed it important to distinguish between acts of leading by default (such as people in position titles with no clear leadership intention), and acts of effective or intentional leadership. For example, when focusing on student leadership development, the LP stakeholders are clear about wanting to build effective, positive leaders, rather than simply giving students opportunities to lead. One participant noted, “we have some pretty solid evidence that we have some people with some serious character flaws holding some of those [student government positions].”

Intrinsic to understanding leadership as an ever-present part of human experience is a set of qualities that are not measurable by quantifiable or rigid standards. LP stakeholders understand student leadership as part of the educational process but not necessarily related to GPA or other quantitative measures. In each aspect of the data collection, participants consistently depicted leaders as those who possess a wide range of personal and interpersonal skills. In many cases, leaders are those people who participants understood as “well-rounded.” Furthermore, virtually every participant in a focus group or individual interview explicitly mentioned the connection between student leadership development and student success in the workplace after graduation. Likewise, all sixteen of the CAS standards are relative measures of personal and interpersonal experiences. In fact, it is challenging to locate
a university program that measures student leadership development in any quantitative manner.

The focus on leadership as ubiquitous in human organization constitutes a three-fold argument. The first is a strong statement opposing traditional models, which focus primarily on hierarchy and positional power as seats of leadership. If leadership is intrinsic to the ways humans organize in groups, then it happens at all levels and despite job titles. LP stakeholders understand leadership as a broad range of skills and knowledge, which is not constrained by the demands of linear learning nor by rigid organizational systems.

Secondly, students cannot fully develop as leaders through the exclusive use of any version of a three- or seven-step plan of leadership. As a student participant in the Leaders for Alaska Institute commented, “I came in today expecting a ten step plan for how to be a leader, but I didn’t get that at all; in fact I actually learned something!” Student leadership development occurs through a variety of experiences, and over an extended period of time.

Finally, as LP stakeholders understand leadership as both part of an educational experience, and part of every student’s post-graduation life, then effective and sustainable student leadership development efforts at UAF are simply critical. As Carry (2003) asserts, “leadership development is . . . a bonifide component of the college experience . . . institutions that fail to reflect this . . . are being left behind” (p.1). LP stakeholders understand this, and are committed to providing appropriate opportunities and experiences for UAF students.
Leadership is Contextual and Personalized

Effective leadership has multiple meanings to LP stakeholders at UAF. At the broadest level, leadership is an “attitude” and a “way of living” and is unique to each person and each situation, and therefore is not always consistently recognizable. In fact, participants clearly articulate what happens when leadership is missing, yet are unsure how to report when it is happening. They often reserved the privilege of identifying and labeling leadership until a specific situation had been described, or they used a specific situation to demonstrate their current understanding. For example, some students discussed the difference between leading their peers of the same gender versus a mixed gender group while others explored the difference between leading in the classroom and leading in club meetings.

In these ways, leadership is understood as highly contextual, and most often personal. Identification of leadership depends on context, culture, communication, motivation, vision, and more. As one participant expressed:

Not everyone is expected to do the same thing in the same way. That’s why leadership is so broad, and so general. You know of example after example where people can be great leaders in one job, change jobs and their leadership roles . . . and they’re not nearly as effective in another kind of a situation. The problem is that sometimes people don’t realize that. They think that they can do the same thing in every situation and it doesn’t work that way.

Within this understanding, two important, but generally implicit, assumptions emerged. First, the leadership being spoken of by the participants is positive, useful,
and productive. Any mention of negative or ineffective leaders or situations was simply ignored or dismissed immediately as not worthy of attention. Similarly, one of the CAS standards details a leader’s progress toward a “satisfying and productive lifestyle.”

Second, LP stakeholders equate some kind of personal system of ethics and morals with effective leadership. In particular, many of the participants talked about the importance of integrity to leadership. Integrity seems related to each leader’s consistency of choices and value systems. But again, integrity is something best defined by situations where it is lacking, which highlights the contextual and personal nature of leadership within groups. One of the CAS standards is “clarified values,” which seems closely aligned with the LP stakeholders understanding of integrity and ethics. In essence, LP stakeholders understand leadership as being, in part, about each individual’s personal value system; leaders must operationalize words like “leadership,” “integrity,” and “values” for themselves.

Leadership in a Western/Individualistic Context

One of the primary contexts of leadership at UAF is that of our western, masculine worldview. In this frame of reference, individual action and achievement are more important than group success (Beamer & Varner, 2001). For instance, though participants continually reported that leadership is about groups, the language they used constructed images of individual leaders and their location “above” followers. In other words, LP stakeholders demonstrate an understanding of leadership as intrinsically about a collective product or outcome that is created
between people, yet, the language they perceive as available to express this group experience is limiting.

Our western frame of reference involves conceiving of the world as linear and defined by cause and effect relationships. For example, LP stakeholders understand the acts of service and leadership to be related to each other in important ways, but are unwilling to assign one as the cause and the other as an effect; they struggled to find a way to express the relationship between volunteer action and leadership development because a linear relationship simply did not make sense to them. Participants asserted that leaders are volunteers and volunteers are leaders, but each can “cause,” i.e., create the other. For example, one stakeholder stated that he would “stop short of saying [volunteerism] is required” for leadership development, but added that he would “certainly ask some questions if [he] saw somebody who claimed to be serious about leadership who wasn’t involved [in volunteering].”

The struggle with language was not unique to the community service discussion. Numerous times during the interviews participants fought to express their understanding of leadership. Often, they used language from the more traditional management leadership models, such as, the leader is “above the crowd” or the leader is the one who “steps up.” These statements express a hierarchical model of leadership, which is built on a linear system of progressive responsibility. Yet, participants rejected specific examples of this model of leadership. In some cases, participants hesitated, seeming to search for words, when using language such as “the follower is behind the leader.” In some cases they used such colloquialisms
conversationally just like one might say, “let’s not throw the baby out with the bath water.” Indeed, it appears that we understand leadership at UAF in ways we do not know how to talk about.

In the U.S., our traditional socialization and either/or logic modality results in a false dichotomy: leaders as strong, “ahead,” above, and powerful while followers are weak, behind, below, and powerless. Such an understanding and continuous depiction of the complexity of human organization stunts our understanding of our experiences within organizing. That is, traditional views of leadership get in the way of talking about the true lived experiences of students, staff, and faculty as they lead and follow at UAF. Perhaps there is a need for an entirely new language to express the leadership phenomenon, as it is currently understood. At the least, leadership needs to be understood and expressed as a continuum or circle of experiences, where leading and following are partners in organizational life.

During the Leaders for Alaska Institute, the keynote speaker divided the thirty-five students into six groups and asked each to generate a list of adjectives in answer to the question she presented. Each group received a question without knowing what other groups were doing; two groups each answered these questions: “what traits make a good leader,” “what traits make a good person,” and “what traits make a good follower.” All six groups reported words focused on positive group interactions, such as “collaborative,” and “cooperation.” Five of the six groups said “communication skills” and caring words such as “empathy” and “giving.” The overlapping descriptions continue throughout the adjective lists; in fact, when a
student assistant typed the list, I had a difficult time telling which list was about the “leader,” “follower,” or “good person.” At UAF, there is not a need to choose between these labels, but there is a need to understand that leading and following often happen simultaneously.

When LP stakeholders wanted to distinguish between acts of following and acts of leading, the statements generally began with “well,” or “depending on . . .” In the dominant western worldview of the U.S., participants believe they must choose between leader or follower and this either/or construction does not match their experience. Conceivably, leadership, as it is understood at UAF, is about groups and their actions while “leader” is a separate concept. However, at this point, the two terms are used interchangeably, which recursively emphasizes the individualistic bias in the U.S.

**Leadership and “Diversity”**

LP stakeholders rarely explicitly mentioned the term “diversity” in conjunction with leadership. It seems likely that because “diversity” is a current “buzz” word, without a commonly understood meaning, that LP stakeholders simply avoided using it or assumed diversity as inherent. For instance, when I was drafting the new LP mission statement, several stakeholders circled the word diversity and commented that they did not know what it meant, and did not like it in the statement.

However, participants did talk extensively about the necessity for leaders to “adapt” to changing situations, opinions, and groups, and in many ways an openness to diverse experiences was an implicit understanding throughout the study. In other
words, diversity can be recognized as a more inclusive term, beyond designations such as “race” and “gender” to include political perspectives, opinions of how the university “should” spend money, and the like. For instance, LP stakeholders express the need for leaders to be “open-minded” and willing to listen to all points of view.

In addition, a focus on some aspect of “multicultural awareness” is a stated element of most extant leadership programs, as well as in the UAF strategic plan. The CAS standards state that students should have opportunities to develop an “appreciation for diversity.” Viewed in conjunction with these standards, the before mentioned limits of our westernized language, and LP stakeholders’ continuous expression of leadership as being about groups, it is important to recognize the necessity of knowledge of and experience with diverse perspectives and peoples to student leadership development.

**Leadership is about Self and Groups**

Participants believe that leaders possess or develop the ability to perform “realistic self-appraisal,” which is also one of the CAS standards. Participants spoke directly and indirectly about the importance of “knowing who you are” and “dealing gracefully with failure.” Therefore, for LP stakeholders, the ability and willingness to consistently and honestly assess one’s own actions as a leader are inherent to leadership. Indeed, virtually all leadership development efforts, on and off university campuses, focus on this aspect at some level. For some it is “critical reflection,” while for others it is “insight” into self. Thus, leadership requires skill and knowledge at a
minimum of two levels: self and others. As Cress et al. (2001) report, “personal and societal values” are a key component of most leadership development efforts.

Though LP stakeholders understand leadership to be necessarily personalized by each individual, they simultaneously understand the purpose of leading to be fundamentally about a group of people. The majority of participants articulated a strong, clear message: leadership is about affecting a group of people. As one participant stated, leadership is “dealing with others . . . causing others to go in some direction or do something that they probably wouldn’t do on their own.” Beyond the simple idea that performing leadership requires other people, LP stakeholders understand leadership to be about “motivating” groups of people, as well as providing others with support and direction; leaders are to be concerned about the group in the same ways, and with the same care, that they are with themselves.

In effect, the focus on groups as a leadership necessity highlights the concept of leadership as service to others. Often, participants expressed opinions such as leadership is “a way to change the world” or “the act of inspiring others to create a mutual beneficial vision.” In the same way, leadership is somehow inextricable from volunteerism as well; both involve the “giving of one’s self” in ways that is not "required." Service and leadership are also related in the CAS standards and the Cress et al. multi-campus study as “civic” or “social” responsibility. Thus, though service is a concept as broad as leadership, the idea of sharing one’s personal resources with a group is implicit in both.
The dual focus on self and others brings forth an implicit angst. In the U.S., we are primarily focused on individual experiences and achievements, and so the tension between service to self and service to groups is strong. Such angst arose primarily in the study through participants’ reactions to acts of following and followership. The majority of the LP stakeholders are U.S. citizens, and therefore perceive that a choice between either “leader” or “follower” must be made in every situation. Yet, LP stakeholders express leadership in a both/and logic modality. That is, leaders are following while they lead; the experience is simultaneous.

Throughout the study, I noted that discussion helped ease this implicit tension; when participants could explain their full understanding of how leadership happens, they no longer felt compelled to simply label actions as “leadership” or “not leadership.” In fact, for participants who made statements such as “leadership is a terrible buzzword that has been over utilized and is slowing losing its glamour,” just such a discussion helped to re-engage them with the concept of leadership and moved them away from focusing on the word as a static symbol.

**Leadership Requires Knowledge**

In the CAS standards “intellectual growth” is first on the list. In the Cress et al. (2001) multi-campus study, the use of “leadership theory” was one of the four commonalities among leadership programs. At UAF, leadership knowledge acquisition for student leaders involves two main areas, according to the LP stakeholders. First, students must understand themselves, particularly in the context of the group. As mentioned, the ability for self-reflection was emphasized throughout
the study. Often, it was talked about in conjunction with feedback from others. Contextually, LP stakeholders make the point that knowing oneself in isolation is fundamentally different than understanding oneself in groups. As one participant noted, “our behavior frequently changes with two other people or dealing with fifty people.”

Secondly, LP stakeholders focused on the necessity of connecting leadership development to academic experiences. They noted numerous intersections between co-curricular pursuits and curricular experiences. And, they believe these experiences should complement and enhance each other. In this way, students are in a position where continual learning and growth occurs, which is one of the fundamental purposes of education. For instance, in the written assessment, four specific new partnerships were presented.

In addition, LP stakeholders emphasized that while GPA is not the best measure of leadership, they do believe that student leaders are also successful students. For many, the skill set and attitudes that help students develop leadership skills are the same that aid students in the classroom. Fundamentally, the “in classroom” experience is about knowledge acquisition, and by association, so then is leadership development. These intersections were described by one participant in this way:

Academic achievement and leadership development . . . go hand and hand because those . . . who are going to be successful in a leadership activity . . . exhibit the same qualities that you find in academic success . . . leadership
activities [and] responsibilities vary with each situation and each course you take has [varying] requirements as well.

Significantly, only two participants referred to leadership theory or a “history of leadership” as useful to student leadership development. Instead, LP stakeholders focused primarily on leadership experiences. Perhaps this was implicit in the consistent discussion of “academic connections” and perhaps the stakeholders are not overly familiar with leadership theory or scholarship themselves. In any case, the inclusion of scholarship in any curricular leadership experience is intrinsic to the nature of that experience.

**Leadership is Experiential Action**

“Action” was one the most common words used by LP stakeholders when describing both leadership and its development in students. Students expressed their desire to “do it” and administrators emphasized the necessity of a “variety of experiences” for students. Furthermore, LP stakeholders insisted on the necessity of ongoing leadership experiences, integrated in each student’s life, for student leadership development to occur. Students wanted leadership to be a part of what they are already doing on campus, to include involvement with clubs, student employment, and classes. In addition to opportunities for experiences, “action” is also about a leader’s willingness and responsibility to accomplish tasks and goals. Several participants noted that leaders are not people with great ideas that “go nowhere;” rather, leaders “make things happen.”
Participants' consistent focus on action also retained a "something for everyone" attitude. Students understand that not all leadership activities will appeal to everyone, but assert that something should be available for all students. Administrators, staff, and faculty note that a broad array of experiences, from volunteering to serving as a club president, help students define "who they are" as leaders. The CAS standard of "achievement of personal and educational goals" synthesizes these concepts of leadership action and individual choice.

For many of the study participants, dialogue about leadership is also appropriate action. Many commented on how they enjoyed and benefited from talking about leadership in the focus group and individual interviews. And several stakeholders emphasized the importance of discussing leadership rather than merely hearing or reading about it. For instance, students who participated in the "leadership date" discussions about movies reported that they have learned more about their own leadership styles in those experiences than through other "trainings."

Another example is the "talk" that has been created by the widely differing keynote speakers at the UAF Student Leadership Conference in the past several years. From a professional "polished," Baby Boomer consultant from "outside" Alaska, to a local, caucasian female dog musher, and from an informal down-to-earth keynote wearing a baseball cap to a twenty five year old Alaskan Native village chief, students have "loved" and "hated" each of them for various reasons. Yet, each speaker was passionate and committed to their particular understanding of leadership, and each expressed him- or herself clearly and with great energy. Afterward, when
asked whether or not the experiences of listening to viewpoints that diverge from their own helps clarify their own understanding of leadership, all participants answered “yes.” In the end, it seems that experiences which spark leadership “talk” are beneficial for student leaders, particularly when the discussion is well facilitated.

**Leadership is Vision and Motivation**

Connected to the theme of action is another word commonly used by LP stakeholders: motivation. Two levels of motivation emerged as related to leadership at UAF. First, leadership is recognized when students are independently motivated. That is, they initiate action for themselves and have both “energy” and “passion” about those actions. Within the CAS standards, this understanding of motivation is most closely related to the idea of “independence.”

Secondly, LP stakeholders continuously referred to leaders as those who motivate others to action. Such motivation is intrinsically related to the leader’s “vision.” Participants spoke many times about the role of leader as “guide” because the leader is the person who “sets the direction.” For many, “vision is seeing potential” and moving the group toward that horizon. As one participant noted, “it always takes one person to start something.” Fundamentally, participants noted that leaders perform the service of identifying direction and focus for groups. In many cases, several individuals perform this function simultaneously, and therefore collective action is understood as leadership.
Leadership is Communication

By far the most commonly mentioned attribute of leaders is the ability to communicate effectively with others. LP stakeholders repeatedly expressed the sentiment that, leadership “probably starts with communication.” Whether they were talking about vision, motivation, organization, diversity, or experience, communication was presented as the “connective tissue” of leadership; communication was discussed as an essential ingredient of positive interpersonal interaction as well as the ability to adapt to changes and different viewpoints. For LP stakeholders, “communication is the critical part of [leadership].” Likewise, “effective communication” is one of the CAS standards.

For participants in this study, the “ability to communicate doesn’t mean just talking,” indeed, “communication” represents a broad skill set which underlies all aspects of leadership. In particular, listening was discussed as integral to successful communication and effective leadership. For example, at the Leaders for Alaska Institute, four out of the six groups identified listening separately from communication. All six groups named communication as important to being a good leader, follower, or person. During the entire study, it was not uncommon for participants to identify listening as one the most important communication skills, because, they argue “if you’re not listening to the people around you then you are not going to be a very effective leader.” Such a sentiment further emphasizes the group nature, and individual responsibility inherent to leadership at UAF.
Communication is a transactional process that occurs between people, and the product of this process is shared meaning (Rothwell, 2004). Likewise, LP stakeholders view leadership as a communicative process between people. The product of leadership is also meaning, or “vision,” which is then translated into action. Essentially, participants in this study understand leadership in same way as Hackman and Johnson (2000), who argue that leadership is fundamentally a “special form of human communication (p.11).”
Chapter Five - Conclusions

"Leadership is human (symbolic) communication which modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs."

(Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 12)

"Despite the powerful combination of invigorated youth and University resources, something of the elusive nature of leadership remains . . .”

(Illinois Alumni magazine, 2003, p. 22)

Overview

As with any research project, qualitative or otherwise, there are various conclusions to be drawn from this study. Here I offer both a model for desirable leadership outcomes for the UAF Leadership Program (LP) and areas for further discussion and investigation. The plight of human inquiry research is to always have more to write, more to say, and more to explore. In qualitative research specifically, this means that each completed project is always simply the “latest draft.” Therefore I assert that the discussion of what leadership means at UAF is a continuous act of communicative action between ever-changing members of the campus community.

Nanook Leadership Model

Using the CAS standards as a model, I synthesized the data collected and analyzed during this study into a model of desirable outcomes for student leadership development efforts at UAF. Our campus mascot and symbol is the mighty white polar bear, which Eskimo peoples call “nanook.” Nanook Leadership can be understood as effective student development in these areas:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student learning objectives</strong></th>
<th><strong>Examples of evidence of student achievement</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Community</td>
<td>Demonstrates ability and commitment to recognize and provide effective leadership in groups; ability to define community for oneself; leads or follows where appropriate; shares personal resources such as talents and skills for the good of the group; consistently and positively contributes to a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Demonstrates ability to motivate self and others toward goal achievement; performs the service of identifying direction, possibilities, and focus for a group; positively and consistently communicates group direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Action</td>
<td>Demonstrates ability and commitment to seeking and serving in roles both in and out of the classroom; performs consistently and positively in group and personal goal attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Acquisition</td>
<td>Demonstrates interest and ability to maintain a holistic perspective of leadership including connections between curricular and co-curricular pursuits; seeks knowledge of leadership theory and practice in a wide variety of circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of Diversity</td>
<td>Demonstrates respect for and openness to viewpoints &amp; experiences different from one’s own; displays ability to adapt to a wide variety of situations; understands own worldview and its effect on interpersonal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Demonstrates ability and commitment to an intentional leadership process in one’s life; performs consistent and honest self assessment; seeks knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses; articulates a personalized understanding of leadership and applies this understanding; demonstrates a clear and consistent personal ethical and value system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skill</td>
<td>Demonstrates ability and understanding of a wide range of communication skills; interacts effectively with individuals and groups for the purpose of goal development and achievement; articulates abstract ideas and goals coherently; demonstrates consistent listening abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For further discussion

In this study, my focus was on a broad understanding of leadership at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and therefore did not focus on the myriad particular contexts of leading and following that emerged. These included thoughts on how the context of leading and following are affected by gender, culture, and personality factors of each group. Throughout the discussions, many specific examples presented by participants involved these factors, but no particular pattern among the examples emerged. Another study could focus on several of these contexts, which are common at UAF, and explore how each affects and is affected by student leaders and their development.

The focus on a broad understanding of leadership at UAF was also framed by the context of student leadership development, and therefore is not necessarily an indication if there is a difference between desirable leadership assets between students, faculty, staff, or administrators. A separate study could expand on this current research to explore whether there are perceived differences in the ways that these constituency groups lead and follow.
References


Appendix A

UAF Leadership Program Assessment, Focus Group Invitation

Greetings UAF Leadership Program supporters,

I am requesting your participation in a focus group or individual interview, which is part of an assessment of the UAF Leadership Program. Began four years ago by volunteers, the program is now a permanent part of UAF, and is located in Wood Center, a Division of Student Affairs. The program focuses on providing opportunities for, as well as recognizing, student leadership development. In addition, the program serves as a clearinghouse for other leadership activities on campus. If you are interested in leadership and UAF students, then you are an important voice in this assessment.

“Stakeholders” are defined as individuals who participate in, support, and/or otherwise benefit from student leadership programming at UAF. You may have volunteered to help coordinate an event, attended a conference or workshop, or used various leadership resources that are available.

Data for this assessment will be gathered through focus groups, individual interviews, and short written statements. Gathering data through these methods will allow multiple voices to be “heard” in the assessment. The data will be used for program planning and assessment, as well as for my thesis in the pursuit of a MA degree in Professional Communication.
We’ll provide you a meal, and have a great conversation about leadership. If you are willing and able to participate, please RSVP via phone (474-1170) or email (tonya.trabant@uaf.edu) for one of the following sessions. After you confirm, I’ll send you additional information. Thanks!

Tues, Feb. 3, 8-10am, Alumni Lounge (Constitution Hall), BREAKFAST included

OR

Monday, Feb. 9, 5:30-7:30pm, Wood Center Conference Room B (downstairs)

DINNER included
Appendix B

Focus Group Confirmation (via email)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a focus group concerning the Leadership Program. We will meet in the Alumni Lounge in Constitution Hall on _____ at ____. Please come hungry, as dinner/breakfast will be provided. Listed below are the major questions we will discuss during the focus group.

Two important pieces of information are attached. Please review and sign the consent form and complete the questionnaire and bring them to the meeting with you.

Thank you again for investing your time and thought in this assessment. If you have questions, please contact me at the information listed below. I look forward to seeing you. Tonya

Basic Question Guide

- What are the meanings associated with “leadership” at UAF? What do we intend when we say “leadership?”
- How do you understand and explore the theories, research, and skills of leadership? What is most important to us, the UAF community, about these areas?
- What leadership competencies do the stakeholders expect student leaders to develop as a result of involvement with this program?
- What are the programmatic expectations of stakeholders for this new stage of the ongoing program?
Appendix C

Question Guide for Focus Group & Individual Interviews

Introduce selves (name, involvement with leadership program, time at UAF, other relevant info)

- What are reasons that student leadership development is important or unimportant at UAF?
- What does “leadership” mean to you? How do you define leading or following?
- What skills are necessary for leadership development?
- What knowledge is necessary for leadership development?
- What do we want students to gain from participating in the Leadership Program?
- What is the relationship between community service/volunteerism and leadership?
- What is the relationship between academic achievement, GPA, and leadership?
- Is anything about leadership in Alaska or UAF different than leadership in other places?
- What kinds of activities, events, programs, etc. are necessary for the Leadership Program to be most effective?
Appendix D
UAF Leadership Program Assessment

Thank you for your interest in participating in an assessment of the UAF Leadership Program. If you are involved with UAF students and/or leadership, then you are an important voice in this assessment. The purpose of this research is to develop a set of leadership competencies, which will be used for program assessment and planning, and for my thesis toward an MA degree in Professional Communication.

Please complete each of the statements below. Please do not put your name or other identifying marks on this sheet. You can confidentially return this sheet to me via campus box 756640, fax to 474-5508, or in my in box in the Department of Communication, 5th floor Gruening. Data for the assessment is also being gathered through focus groups and individual interviews.

If you have questions, please contact me at 474-1170 or fntdt@uaf.edu.

1. Leadership is

2. Leadership is

3. Leadership is

4. Leadership is

5. Leadership is

1. The UAF Leadership program is

2. The UAF Leadership program is

3. The UAF Leadership program is

4. The UAF Leadership program could be

5. The UAF Leadership program could be
Appendix E
Participant Consent Form

UAF Leadership Program Assessment

I am requesting your participation in a focus group or individual interview, which in part of an assessment of the UAF Leadership Program. Began four years ago by volunteers, the program is now a permanent part of UAF, and is located in Wood Center, a Division of Student Affairs. The program focuses on providing opportunities for, as well as recognizing, student leadership development. In addition, the program serves as a clearinghouse for other leadership activities on campus. If you are interested in leadership and UAF students, then you are an important voice in this assessment.

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of leadership competencies that stakeholders wish for students to develop through participation in the program. For this study, "stakeholders" are defined as individuals who participate in, support, and/or otherwise benefit from student leadership programming at UAF. You may have volunteered to help coordinate an event, attended a conference or workshop, or used various leadership resources that are available. Additionally, you may be a recipient of the program in other ways such as employing UAF students and alumni. All participants must be over 18 years in age, and special care will be taken to represent a broad selection of stakeholders.

Data will be gathered through focus groups, individual interviews, and short written statements. Gathering data through these multiple methods will allow multiple voices to be "heard" in the assessment. The data will be used for program planning and assessment, as well as for my thesis in the pursuit of a MA in Professional Communication.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time, with no prejudice or penalty. No names will be used in any version of the final report. Ethical guidelines of privacy, no coercion, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, sharing results, debriefing, and sharing benefits will be strictly followed throughout the study.

There are no apparent risks involved in the research process, nor are there any anticipated reasons that you would be terminated from the project by the researcher. You may benefit from exploring the concept of leadership with others, and/or from supporting the development of a new UAF program. Food will be served at the focus group session.

My signature indicates that I have read the above information and have voluntarily decided to participate in a focus group interview concerning student leadership development at UAF. I realize that I may withdraw at any time from this study, without prejudice or penalty, should I decide to do so. In addition, I understand the ethical guidelines as outlined above. A copy of this form has been provided to me.
Thank you for your interest and participation. A copy of the results will be available to you at your request.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact:

Karin Davidson, Research Committee Coordinator
Office of Research Integrity, University of Alaska Fairbanks
474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area)
fyori@uaf.edu.

If you have questions about the study, please feel to contact either of us:

Principal Researcher: Dr. Pamela McWherter
Office: 503B Gruening
Phone: 474-7405
Email: ffprm@uaf.edu

Researcher: Tonya D. Trabant
Office: Wood Center offices
Phone: 474-1170
Email: tonya.trabant@uaf.edu
Appendix F

Transcription of UAF Leadership Program Assessment forms

Leadership is . . .

1. The act of inspiring others to create a mutual beneficial vision, and to develop and fulfill action plans toward achieving that vision; measuring, motivating and celebrating the group’s progress towards fulfillment, and ongoing evaluation and re-planning as necessary.

2. Having high standards of conduct and good character and using your good character to meet high standards.

3. Developing perpetual bonds of friendship that enable one to network and grow socially and emotionally

4. Developing social consciousness in oneself and helping others achieve social consciousness

5. Bad leadership is . . . self aggrandizement

6. Treating others as maturing individuals who possess dignity, worth, and self-direction

7. The act of continuous scanning of the internal and external environment to assess what changes would benefit the group’s ability to fulfill or to redesign its mutual beneficial vision.

8. Undefined, or has many definitions

9. Orienting: provides direction for group members under his/her authority

10. Preparedness: concerned with minimizing costly effects of disorganization

11. Visionary: looks beyond means to end — paints tangible picture in mind of followers (attractive)

12. Empowering: does not issue directives w/o ensuring necessary support in place

13. Participative: leaders get their hands dirty in the menial as well as the administrative

14. Action

15. Thinking big

16. Task management

17. Effective communication skills, including listening and not just public speaking

18. Finding consensus

19. Taking responsibility and following through on commitment, not necessarily resulting in public acknowledgement

20. Energy

21. Best learned through practical experiences

22. Best learned when there is constructive feedback

23. Adaptable

24. Part learned skills and part inherit characteristics

25. As friendly and fuzzy as it is portrayed at UAF

26. Accepting the good with the bad

27. Knowing when to compromise
28. Defending that which you believe in, however miniscule it may seem
29. Being involved in something you care about
30. Having the ability to lead in any way, shape, or form
31. Developed through hard work, responsibility and assuming agency
32. Displayed through charisma, reliability, and directness
33. Being equal, fair, and sensitive to all people and their opinions
34. Knowing when something just won’t work, no matter how much time or energy is put into it
35. The ability to create enthusiasm when times look bleak
36. Having knowledge of resources, rules, and morals needed to complete a task
37. The ability of a person to lead his/her team in to the end state
38. Anyone with knowledge who is willing to make a difference
39. Something that can be developed
40. Critical in the business world
41. What people will follow
42. Responsibility
43. Fragile because it can be abused easily
44. A way to change the world
45. A way for people to have a positive role model
46. A way for my thoughts and opinions to be relayed on a platform free of bias and persecution
47. A way to develop my interpersonal relationship skills
48. An alternative to followership in that I am able to be the primary “place holder” and have all eyes on me
49. Is terrible buzzword that has been over utilized and is slowing losing its glamour
50. The giving of myself to others (what I have to offer as a person)
51. Different than managing
52. Makes a difference in everyday life
53. A choice and a necessity
54. Recognizing the accomplishments of others before your own
55. Following
56. Recognizing that you can’t do everything and “allowing” other people to step up to the plate
57. Knowing when to be quiet and listen
58. Teaching people integrity
59. Guiding the action of others
60. Something that is innate and learned
61. Taking initiative in something you believe in
62. Volunteering yourself for the greater good
63. Making things happen
64. Empowering yourself and others
The UAF Leadership program is . . .
1. A model of what a “leader” can do/be/act
2. A work in progress
3. Extra-curricular. It cannot be taught in a classroom, which is hard for recruitment but in the long run doesn’t inflate “leadership credits” on transcripts
4. An opportunity to develop skills and grow in a variety of expressions of leadership
5. Aware of diversity and cognizant of various expressions of leadership
6. Not exclusive or single faceted
7. A great opportunity for students to expand themselves
8. Beneficial to me as an individual, hearing and learning from others (self rewarding)
9. Rewarding
10. A network of proven & emerging leaders at UAF
11. Open to any who wish to use or improve their leadership skills to affect positive social change
12. Growing, seeking and seizing opportunities to widen it’s collective influence at UAF and beyond
13. Making a difference
14. Designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn about leadership, to practice leadership skills by taking leadership under the supervision of mentors who will provide guidance, direction and feedback as students enhance their skills and gain confidence in their abilities
15. Something that has developed over several years
16. A way students can get a better understanding of what leadership
17. A clearinghouse for leadership materials and published information/leadership resources
18. Ambitious
19. Helpful, resourceful, necessary
20. New
21. Important to personal development
22. Growing
23. Not fully developed
24. Searching for a direction
25. Lacking any real rigor
26. A great opportunity
27. Benefits all students
28. A great thing to have
29. Help the future leaders discover many different types of leadership
30. A great tool in creating better informed and developed leaders
31. Providing new and necessary opportunities for our students
32. Still considered disjointed by some
33. A place to bring great leaders to talk to future leaders
34. To develop leadership skills in those who want to be leaders
35. To encourage students to be positive leaders
36. New
37. A great mentor program

The UAF Leadership program could be . . .
1. Alaska’s foremost breeding ground for movers, shakers, and policy makers that make this state a great place to live
2. Needs to be more fully embraced by the administration, but I’m happy they did for this year.
3. Better advertised. This will come with planning, marketing, and effective program implementation. This goes back to administration making leadership program part of normal operations i.e. an annual budget for the coordinator
4. More attractive to students by a campaign aimed at bolstering leadership as not only possible for the privileged or outgoing few. Leadership is YOU. (Just a thought)
5. Better understood, better at outreach to a wider group of students
6. One of the most important programs on campus
7. Work more closely and effectively with the Volunteer Program. One may learn leadership through coordination of volunteer opportunities or developing community service programs, i.e. 4H model “learn by doing”
8. A venue for personal development
9. A vehicle to redefine what leadership is
10. A great resource for students, faculty, and staff
11. A way to help create better “leaders” for the state
12. A fun place to grow and develop leader and follower friends
13. A place to bring followers to give them skills
14. Embraced by many departments as a vital partner
15. Implemented more throughout and around campus
16. Ongoing, not just a few events, but more of a continual ongoing process
17. Really cool if the information passed out was a lot more fun rather than super professional looking
18. Be something that, if consistently growing, ahs the potential to be the driving force behind a lot of programs on campus
19. A credited minor/major program
20. A great powerhouse of educational possibilities
21. Working with the School of Management to create a 200 level course for student managers on campus, who could earn three academic credits in the theoretical study of leadership while at the same time overlaying theory with experience as they lead their own student organizations.
22. Effective, if focused on a manageable number of students
23. An integral part of the UAF college experience
24. A spring board for student to get more involved in the community
25. Held each semester
26. Well regarded if given academic program status
27. Associated with ASUAF
28. Available to more students (prospective, etc.)
29. Assign one residence floor as a "leadership floor" where those students who are student leaders or interested in developing their leadership skills could live together, work on leadership initiatives throughout the campus, run a leadership retreat for other students, take the 200 level SOM leadership course as a cohort, and run a leadership project each semester on campus as part of their course and their leadership commitment.
Appendix G
UAF Leadership Program vision and mission, 2004

VISION
UAF is nationally recognized as a center of excellence for leadership development that provides effective leaders for Alaskan communities, business, and industry.

MISSION
The mission of the UAF Leadership Program is to cultivate effective leaders for Alaska by creating and supporting a rich variety of student leadership development opportunities, partnering with academic departments and the community, and recognizing successful student leadership.
Appendix H
UAF Leadership Program Short Organizational Chart

Division of Student Affairs > Wood Center >

Student Leadership Program Team
(Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Employers)

Student Leader Recognition
Graduation with Leadership Honors
(Fall, Spring, Summer)
Emerging Leaders Scholarship (Spring)
Nanook Honors Celebration (Spring)

Leadership Resources & Clearinghouse

Assessment & Planning

Student Leadership Development
Nanook SpringFest (Spring)
Leaders for Alaska Institute (Spring)
Student Leadership Conference (Fall)
UAF LEADS Leadership Education and Development Series (Fall and Spring)
Clubs & Greek Council
Community Mentoring Program
Leadership Internship & Student Employment

Events involve a committee of volunteers, including students and other stakeholders on each planning committee. Campus-wide engagement and collaboration will be enhanced by these volunteers who provide ideas, energy, and knowledge.