Leadership Programs for Women in Higher Education

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Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) argued that “immediate demands for leadership confront us daily. Our cities are in crisis, our communities face turmoil, our political, religious, and business leaders are repeatedly charged with ethical violations, and the world’s multiple demands require our immediate attention” (pp. xi-xii). With such critical needs in society today, leadership development has become an important area of inquiry within human resource development (HRD), and is now emerging as foundational to our field. According to Rosser (2007), leadership development is a unique aspect of HRD “because it is important to both scholars and practitioners and is a common thread among the foundational areas of the discipline” (p. 236). In fact, Callahan, Whitener, and Sandlin (2007) stated that “leadership development is arguably one of the most important activities undertaken by HRD professionals” (p. 146). As a field dedicated to improving learning and performance (Stanley, 2009), it makes sense that leadership development has become increasingly central to HRD theory, research, and practice.

Clearly, the need exists for HRD professionals to strategically advance the development of leaders for organizations of all kinds and in all sectors (e.g., corporate, education, not for profit, government); this series of presentations seeks to address this need by providing an overview of research related specifically to women’s leadership development – offering implications for generating theory, research, and practice. The session’s focus on higher education extends the contributions found in Richard J. Torraco’s (2005) seminal
Special Issue of Advances in Developing Human Resources, titled *Organization Development and Change in Universities*, which highlighted the importance of HRD research and practice in postsecondary institutions. Within higher education, leadership development programs and interventions have now reached a critical level of importance. According to Brent D. Rubin (2004), author of the book *Pursuing Excellence in Higher Education: Eight Fundamental Challenges*, “Extraordinary challenges face higher education nationally, and leaders with exceptional capabilities are needed to help institutions meet these challenges” (p. 288). Postsecondary institutions face the daunting task of finding qualified, effective leaders not only to take the helms of their colleges and universities, but also to move into other important leadership positions. One reason for the lack of well-qualified leaders is the “leaks in the pipeline” that result in having fewer women prepared to take on senior leadership roles (e.g., Airini et al., 2010; The White House Project Report, 2009).

Recent literature continues to highlight the gender discrepancies in academia. In the U.S., for example, *The White House Project* (2009) report highlighted the following four key findings:

1. Nationally, women are 57 percent of all college students but only 26 percent of full professors, 23 percent of university presidents, and 14 percent of presidencies at the doctoral degree-granting institutions.
2. The number of female presidents has not changed in the last 10 years.
3. Women account for less than 30 percent of the trustees on college and university boards.
4. Female faculty have not made any progress in closing the salary gap with their male counterparts. In 1972, they made 83 percent of what male faculty made: today they make 82 percent of what male faculty make. (p. 10)
Report authors (The White House Project, 2009) argued that there is much more at stake than just the number of women who have reached top ranks in academia. These authors believe that “The presence—or absence—of female academic leaders can have far-reaching influences not only on the institutions themselves, but…on the scope of research and knowledge that affects us all” (p. 16). For example, when female academics are involved in research, it affects the nature of the questions that are asked as well as the findings. When successful women leaders work with students (male or female), faculty, and staff, it is more likely that others will have positive experiences that help change their perspectives toward women in leadership positions. In addition, these women can serve as “powerful role models and mentors to younger women starting out on the path to leadership themselves” (p. 16).

Airina et al. (2011) argued that while limited numbers of women are advancing to leadership roles in universities, “gender imbalance among senior university academics is an acknowledged problem in many countries” (p. 44) and that only slow progress has been made. Many authors (e.g., Airina et al., 2011; Bornstein, 2007; Dominico, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Ramsey, 2000) have discussed in detail what helps or hinders the advancement of women in university settings, also recommending how to fix or address these leaks in the pipeline. Researchers, such as Ramsey (2000), have acknowledged that women’s leadership development cannot be pursued in isolation if successful institutional changes are to occur. Yet, one thing remains clear: leadership development programs for women continue to be a critical element in teaching and supporting women in higher education to prepare for, attain, and maintain positions of influence within their institutions. The bottom line is that we need to help prepare (e.g., by increasing aspirations, developing skills and competencies, and obtaining mentors and coaches) more women for leadership in higher education.

For many decades there have been both established and emerging leadership development programs for women in higher education. Directors and boards of these
successful programs have worked hard to create various types of programs and experiences that will help develop, network, and prepare women to move into positions of influence. Researchers, scholars, and practitioners in this field are only beginning to publish in this area. Information and research about these programs, efforts, and strategies have not been widely shared, so scholarly articles on these programs are difficult to find. Thousands of institutions across the globe are struggling with how to design programs to help their own female faculty, staff, and administrators develop leadership skills. There is a need for scholarly work that can provide information on programs that will be helpful to these postsecondary institutions. These types of articles could assist women interested in personal and career development, as well as be helpful to educators, administrators, and consultants who will be designing future leadership development interventions (e.g., training, development, individual preparation, mentoring, career management, and self-directed learning). Such articles could also provide important directions for future research.

The purpose of this abstract is to propose an AHRD conference symposium that will focus on leadership programs for women in higher education. This would be the first of four presentations, and will set the stage for a symposium that would be based on articles that will be published in a February 2012 Special Issue of Advances. I have discussed this with the Editor-in-Chief of Advances and the 2012 AHRD Conference Program Chair and received approval for this submission. The other four articles (submitted separately) proposed in this session will include the following:

- Leadership Development for Senior Women in New Zealand Universities: Participant Perspectives and Experiences
- Equipping Women for Senior Leadership in Faith-Based Higher Education: Lessons from a 12-Year Initiative
• State-based Networks for Women: Developing Leadership in Higher Education

• Developing Women Leaders at the University of Minnesota

The purpose of this Advances Issue was to examine the topic of women and leadership development in higher education. Specifically, the intent was to link theory, research, and practice together to assess the current state of leadership development programs for women in higher educational contexts and also to offer suggestions for future leadership development programs, strategies, and research. The Issue provides researchers and practitioners in various fields of study (e.g., HRD, management, leadership, business, organizational psychology, education, and women’s issues) with frameworks to be used for developing, evaluating, and researching leadership programs for women in higher education.

To our knowledge, this journal Issue is the first of its kind, from any discipline, focused exclusively on women’s leadership programs in higher education. By filling this gap, this Issue directly contributes toward HRD, leadership development, and higher education research and practice. This Issue is also distinctive in that it is written by many scholar-practitioners, not solely researchers. Although most have terminal degrees, these authors are women who are directing and/or advising programs, centers, and/or initiatives related to helping women in higher education develop leadership. Yet, they have put on a reflective historical lens that has helped them in thinking critically about the development of their programs in a way that has assisted them (and their readers) in understanding how others might create and evaluate effective programs. These tales from the field, often in the form of non-traditional scholarship, can provide insights that exponentially advance the work of researchers and practitioners.

This presentation will highlight a few of the particularly important findings across articles in this Special Issue and offer some overall implications for HRD. We will also
present several tables that will be published in the Issue that include important resources—
sample leadership programs for women in higher education at the national, state, and
institutional levels. This information, as well as that in the other session presentations, can
help guide the work of HRD professionals in the thoughtful design of programs focused on
preparing future generations of women leaders in higher education.

The research methods used in this overview paper and presentation include content
analysis in three phases. First, literature was reviewed regarding the state of women and
leadership in higher educational settings. Second, the articles in the Special Issue of *Advances*
were reviewed so that overarching findings and implications can be presented. Finally, a
thorough web search was conducted to create three tables that will be included in this session:

- Sample International or National Leadership Development Programs for Women
  in Higher Education

- Sample State or Regional Leadership Development Programs for Women in
  Higher Education

- Sample Institutional Leadership Development Programs for Women in Higher
  Education

The intentional preparation of future leaders for higher education remains a critical
need, and “the extent to which higher education is underprepared for replacing a rapidly
retiring leadership” is concerning (Fusch & Mrig, 2011, p. 7). In a recent higher education
publication, Fusch and Mrig identified a lack of coordinated strategies for leadership
development at most institutions and emphasized the importance of increased leadership
development programming in higher education. In the face of this need, institutions across
the globe are seeking to design programs that develop the leadership skills of female faculty,
staff, and administrators; guidance and assistance are needed to do so effectively and
efficiently. We argue that the program frameworks and models described in this Issue of
Advances and presented in this session will not only be valuable for scholars who research women and leadership, but will also be useful as institutions, regional networks, national associations, and other entities seek to create and/or customize leadership develop programs for women in their own cultures and settings. This is important work for HRD professionals and also important future research for HRD scholars.

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Developing Women Leaders at the University of Minnesota

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Women currently make up more than half of the college and university student population in the United States (Martínez Alemán & Renn, 2002), and the number of women receiving doctorates has been steadily increasing. However, the representation of women in higher education leadership has not kept pace. For example, a 2006 study by the American Council on Education (ACE) found that 23% of college presidents were women, but noted that “women’s progress has slowed in recent years” (ACE, 2010, p. 1).

Campus-based women’s centers can provide resources and opportunities to support the development of women leaders in higher education. Examining successful programs at the national, state, and institutional level can reveal practices that may be useful for other entities who seek to develop women leaders. One such successful effort has been the Women’s Center at the University of Minnesota. This Center is the oldest campus-based women’s center in the United States and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2010. The purpose of this paper is to describe its programs and practices that support the development of women leaders on campus. The paper and conference presentation will accomplish this by providing a historical overview of the Center, identifying guiding principles for its work, and drawing conclusions that identify lessons that may be useful to others engaged in similar efforts.

Historical Overview

The work of what is now the University of Minnesota Women’s Center began in response to frustrations of married educated women of the 1950s. The Carnegie Corporation
funded what became known as the “Rusty Ladies” program, both because of its demographics – women between the ages of 28 and 42 years old – and its mission of “rust-removal” and “rust-proofing” the minds of its members (Opitz, 1999, p. 7). Through the 1960s, the program continued its contribution to both leadership theory and feminist activism, including a “pioneering role in 1969 in establishing the Council for University Women’s Progress, one of the first university-based women’s action groups in the United States” (Lehmberg & Pflaum, 2001, 126).

Between 1969 and 1980, Women’s Center programming corresponded with the burgeoning national women’s liberation movement, addressing issues such as Title IX and salary equity. A major galvanizing event at the University of Minnesota was a salary equity lawsuit which became known as the Rajender case (filed in 1973, decree in 1980, salary settlement began in 1989). The effects of the case went well beyond Minnesota, providing an impetus for other universities to review their pay equity discrepancies as well as examine other inequities. From 1980 on, the Women’s Center dedicated resources and effort to not only continuing to serve the “Rusty Ladies” and other students, but also to the broader goal of impacting the campus climate for women staff, faculty and alumnae. It began examining institutional policies, expressing the “commitments to affirmative action and diversity, with particular emphasis on those addressing academic women” (Spector, 1993, p. v).

In 2000 the Center sponsored the national teleconference, “Women’s Lives, Women’s Voices, Women’s Solutions: Shaping a National Agenda for Women in Higher Education.” More than 5,000 participants, from four regional sites and 200 satellite sites, contributed to a national multicultural women-led agenda for higher education, with recommendations that ranged from leadership development to work/life balance and policy development (Rios & Longnian, 2000).
Currently, the Women’s Center focuses primarily on institutional change and women’s leadership development. At the core of its mission to “advance equity for women staff, faculty and students across identities,” is the assumption that leadership requires “showing up, as you are,” (Lockhart, personal communication, 2010). We believe leadership development entails more than practical skill development, but is also about creating socially responsible change agents who can impact their spheres of power.

Guiding Principles for Leadership Programs

After reviewing the historical context of the Women’s Center and analyzing its current activities, we identified four guiding principles that inform its leadership programs and opportunities. These principles describe overarching themes that represent the work of the Center:

1. Overcoming bias against women in leadership;
2. Honoring women’s leadership styles;
3. Building collaborations and broad networks; and
4. Leading for equity and systems change.

Overcoming bias against women in leadership. Discrimination against women in this era tends to be less overt, resulting from historical structures, patterns of behavior, and stereotypes (Bielby, 2000; Reskin, 2000). These patterns may include negative stereotypes of a group’s ability, the lack of influential mentors, and exclusion from social networks that facilitate career or leadership advancement (Steele, 1997; Lach, 1999). In addition to overcoming externally manifested implicit bias against women as leaders, our work also includes overcoming the internal biases that our participants bring with them. Many women in the U.S. have tendencies toward modesty and lack of self-promotion that perpetuate their lack of involvement in management positions (Budworth & Mann, 2010). While leadership training can be beneficial for all, women report that they appreciate women-only “safe”
spaces in which to conceptualize these traits and increase their belief in their leadership capacity. The identification of safe spaces aligns with the Women’s Center’s initiatives to create communities for women to explore and enact leadership.

*Honoring women’s leadership styles.* A second principle of the Women’s Center is a belief that a female leadership perspective is especially needed in today’s society. Earlier models of leadership tended to reflect the views and experiences of those traditionally in positions of power, i.e., a predominantly white, male, upper-middle class, heterosexual orientation to leadership (Amey & Tombley, 1992; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). In its leadership programs, the Women’s Center encourages participants to seek “full-range leadership,” (Smith, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004) choosing transformation or transactional leadership behaviors when appropriate and at a desired frequency to optimize organizational effectiveness (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Our experience has been that as women in higher education learn about new models of leadership and find that their style is valued and needed, they get energized and begin to think creatively about how they can use their strengths to problem-solve and create change – in effect, to become leaders.

*Building collaborations and broad networks.* A third principle guiding the Women’s Center is the need to work collaboratively and build broad networks within and outside of the University. In addition to its partnership with Human Resources, the Women’s Center has strong ties to many other groups on campus. Staff from the Women’s Center serve on a range of University committees. The Center convenes meetings of the University Women’s Consortium, representing units that provide a range of services for women. These relationships enable the Center to take a more active role in decisions that affect women students, faculty, and staff.

*Leading for equity and systems change.* The Women’s Center believes that leaders need to learn to lead with equity in mind and to create long-term institutional change that
improves the climate for everyone. Women’s Centers, predominantly staffed by white women in the past, have been negligent in teaching and acting with any depth about equity and diversity, perhaps because their understanding was not fully formed, or perhaps they thought the best strategy was to gain a foothold with some societal acceptance of white women as leaders.

Currently, the bulk of our leadership training, and the training we have seen across the country, focuses on empowering the individual leader. Although this is important, we now know that leading toward organizational justice means going beyond individual empowerment to teaching participants how to affect systems-level changes. Working at the institutional level against -isms is complex and requires intentional education and focus (Kirkham, 2005). Our hope is that greater focus on systems change will accelerate the path toward a time when all individuals and university structures actively encourage all citizens to develop all of their talents.

Current Women’s Leadership Programs and Opportunities

Guided by the aforementioned principles, the Women’s Center currently offers several initiatives to advance women’s leadership. A sample of these programs and opportunities are described in the presentation. In addition to the development programs, the Women’s Center participates in the University’s governance structure through the Women’s Faculty Cabinet, Professional and Administrative Women’s Council, in addition to a Civil Service/Bargaining Unit Women’s Action Network.

Conclusions

The Women’s Center has remained relevant for the past 50 years because of its ability to evolve and consistently focus on the needs of its stakeholders. The four principles help guide decisions about where to focus energy and resources. In the process, we have learned...
lessons that may assist other professionals (e.g., human resources, leadership development, HRD) who seek to develop women leaders in higher education.

First, there is an ongoing need to monitor trends and improve the environment for women in higher education. A quick read of current popular literature (Rosin, 2010) or a conversation with a first-year college student might imply that the work is no longer necessary. However, statistics reveal that there is still a dearth of women in higher education leadership across the United States. Martínez Alemán and Renn (2002) found that “women not only are less likely to have access to tenure-track positions but may fall behind because of extra demands, such as committee assignments, heavier teaching loads, and student advising. They also have less access to powerful mentors and networks in their field, creating a cumulative disadvantage at the time of promotion and tenure” (p. 373). These difficulties, the authors noted, are even greater for minority women, older women, lesbian, and disabled women, who face “double discrimination” (p. 410). There is still a need to monitor implicit and overt bias against women leaders in higher education and deliberately bring women’s voices to the leadership table.

Second, the success of the University of Minnesota Women’s center illustrates the importance of collaboration across stakeholder groups. The Center has developed long-term partnerships with academic leadership, human resources, and other identity groups. It has a broad focus that provides service to a wide range of constituents. Where possible, it builds activities that support other organizational initiatives. Many leadership programs in higher education focus on narrowly defined stakeholder groups, such as new faculty. A broader focus creates mutual benefit in bringing together individuals with diverse viewpoints and perspectives.

Finally, it is no longer enough to focus on developing the individual strengths of women students, staff, and faculty. Successful efforts in the future need to also focus on
system-level change and eliminating institutional barriers. Institutional change is slow and can be overwhelming, but through improved leadership development programs, future leaders will be more prepared to create organization-level solutions.

References


Leadership Development for Senior Women in New Zealand Universities: Participant Perspectives and Experiences

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*Keywords*: women, leadership development, universities, New Zealand

Universities are facing increasingly complex challenges in attracting and retaining human capital. Academic salaries, an ageing academic workforce, the impact of the performance based research funding and a mobile and global academic labor market are just some of the pressing human resource influences. Yet despite the pressures on universities to maximize their talent pool, women continue to be systemically under-represented in senior academic and general staff positions in universities internationally. Research indicates that women can assist with overall organizational climate and culture (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, Bilimoria, & Piderit, 2007) and that there is a need to increase diversity and with this the quality of decision-making (Singh, Vinnicombe, Terjesen, Bilimoria, & Piderit, 2007). Furthermore, women excel as leaders in universities (Thanacoody, Bartram, Barker, & Jacobs, 2006).

New Zealand universities are no different, where women hold only 22.45% of senior academic positions in New Zealand’s eight universities and represent only 17.22% of professors and 28.02% of associate professors (McGregor, 2010), similar to most other countries (Kloot, 2004; Knights & Richards, 2003). This paper discusses the findings from a longitudinal case study on the main learning participants gained from the New Zealand Women in Leadership (NZWIL) program.
Hamlin and Stewart (2011) suggest that Human Resource Development (HRD) is “any process or activity that helps or enables individuals, groups, organisations or host systems to learn, develop and change behavior for the purpose of improving or enhancing their competence, effectiveness, performance and growth” (p. 213). While HRD comprises the skillful planning and facilitation of a variety of formal and informal learning and knowledge processes and experiences, these do not need to occur exclusively in the workplace (Harrison & Kessels, 2004).

Given the importance of leadership in organizations, Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) argue that it is not surprising that leadership development attracts the largest percentage allocation from training and development budgets of most organizations and is among the most popular areas of HRD practice and academic research. Management and leadership is clearly a major strategic HRD concern as building the capacity of strategic management of an organization depends heavily on the development of future managers (Ripley, 2008). Women are in the majority as both students and staff in many universities worldwide, but are still under-represented at the senior and management levels (Browning, 2008).

As women face unique challenges in leadership Hopkins, O’Neil, Passarelli, and Bilimoria (2008) stress that it is imperative that leadership development strategies are advanced to meet their specific needs. Women-only leadership training, along with other leadership development initiatives, is essential for women to develop a stronger sense of self and stronger relationships to other women (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003). Bilimoria, Joy and Liang (2008) call for empirical research that aims to identify the specific circumstances and structures needed for effective gender equity solutions within a comprehensive change project. This paper provides empirical evidence to inform future leadership development programs for women within academia.
The NZWIL program is a five-day residential leader development program, denoting that the focus of the program is developing individual leaders for universities in the New Zealand tertiary system. The NZWIL program is an example of a strategic HRD approach operationalized at a national level for all eight universities. NZWIL was designed for women at upper-middle levels in universities in academic and general staff positions and catered for women who are in, or aspire to be in, leadership positions such as managers of sections or work units, senior academics (professor or associate professor), Heads of Schools/Departments or Associate Deans.

The benefits of leadership development programs include achievement of both individual and organizational objectives (McCauley, 2008), however, research specifically on women’s leadership development programs is limited. Research has indicated that increased self-confidence can result in performance improvement (Dickerson & Taylor, 2000; Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004). Similarly, self-confidence has been identified as a key element of effective leadership (McCormick, 2001) and leadership development. Whilst there has been much debate about whether leaders are made or born, we contend that both self-confidence and leaders are made and can therefore be developed – which means there is a place for leadership development that results in increased self-confidence. Leadership can be a difficult and at times lonely job, hence self-confidence is important. Another benefit of self-confidence is increased emotional stability, which can be very important when resolving interpersonal conflicts or when representing an organization (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1995).

Gibson (2008) explains that because access to developmental relationships within organizations is limited for women leaders due, in part, to the small number of suitable potential mentors and their exclusion from informal male dominated networks (Ibarra, 1993), the impact of extra-organizational developmental relationships for women leaders may be even more important for their advancement into leadership senior roles. A key benefit of
networks is that through their ability to connect women (McCarthy, 2004). Many of the networks supporting women at work are emergent, meaning that they were set up by an individual or a group of individuals, in response to an identified need (Coleman, 2010).

A longitudinal case study approach was adopted (Cresswell, 2003), focusing on the experiences of NZWIL participants. Firstly, we conducted a postal survey administered 12 months post completion of the program focusing participants’ demographics, leadership roles within and outside the University, career development, and the NZWIL program. This resulted in a response rate of 54% (n=52 -36 faculty and 16 general staff). A content analysis of the responses was conducted resulting in 24 different categories with networking and increased confidence being mentioned the most often.

Secondly, all 155 alumni were contacted by phone and email in January 2011 requesting feedback on similar areas as the postal survey. Seventy-six women responded (49% response rate). For the purpose of this paper the focus will be on the responses to the question on key learning the women gained from the program: networks and confidence.

The findings highlighted the importance of networking with other women across the tertiary sector and increased self-confidence. Eighty percent of participants indicated that NZWIL led to an increase in self-confidence, providing empirical evidence that leadership development programs can increase self-confidence (McCormick, 2001). This increase in confidence has then been translated into action including applying for promotion, taking on new leadership roles within the university, speaking out at university meetings and providing clarity in terms of career direction. As evidenced in the phone follow up in January 2011 over 75% of alumni have taken on leadership roles since participating in NZWIL. These roles are varied in nature including, but not limited to, journal editorships, chairing committees, HODs, and running research centers. The findings would support the notion of broader multiple developmental relationships as advocated by Higgins and Kram (2001). In many
ways it could be argued that the NZWIL network is an excellent example of Coleman’s (2010) notion that networks offer both support and are instrumental in achieving outcomes pertinent to its members.

Our study raises interesting implications for HRD and leadership development professionals. While leadership development and the advancement of women is clearly an important issue for the New Zealand university sector, the multi-organisational sector response to the problem of women’s progression is one that other industries can adopt. The benefits of leadership development conducted in sector-wide peer groups was clear from our findings, showing that learning may be enhanced when beyond the individual workplace as Harrison and Kessels (2004) posit. While leadership development programs vary widely in their content, pedagogical techniques, purposes, and targeted outcomes (McCauley, 2008), we stress the critical importance of a visible presence by senior organizational leaders during the program, as well as appropriate levels of resourcing to develop and sustain strong program offerings. In addition, robust and ongoing longitudinal evaluation of programs to determine the key benefits for participants enable continuous improvements to be made to content and delivery, as well as understanding how the program added value to the participants’ leadership development journeys. It is imperative to collect empirical evidence to highlight the importance of programs specifically designed to meet the needs of women leaders, as discussed in this paper based on the New Zealand Women in Leadership program, in order to increase women’s’ visibly in leadership positions world-wide.

References


Prepared Women for Leadership in Faith-Based Higher Education

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Keywords: women, leadership development, higher education, gendered organizations, HRD

As American culture has experienced shifts in gender roles over recent decades, changes have also occurred in terms of gendered realities within the field of higher education. The trend toward increasing numbers of women in higher education has been impressive, with documentation that as of 2007-2008 women earned 57.3% of bachelor’s degrees, 60.6% of master’s degrees, and 51% of doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Educational attainment by women has therefore increasingly provided the preparation typically required for professional advancement. However, women continue to be underrepresented in higher education senior administrative positions. According to data from the American Council on Education, the percentage of women serving as university presidents more than doubled from 9.5% in 1986 to 23% in 2006; women held 38% of the chief academic officer positions, the primary pathway into a presidency (King & Gomez, 2008). Notably, only 14% of the public doctoral universities and 7% of the private doctoral universities nationwide are currently led by women (Hartley & Godin, 2009).

While a variety of factors have historically limited access by women to top-level leadership positions across higher education, these factors can become more complicated when juxtaposed with the theological commitments that influence the leadership journeys of women in faith-based institutions such as the 110 member Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU). Research on this sector of faith-based higher education confirms that women are significantly underrepresented in all senior leadership roles.

Within the CCCU membership as of 2010, only six of 110 presidents were female,
with the two most recent additions only in the 2009-2010 academic year. Given that the role of chief academic officer is the primary pathway to the presidency, it is notable that as of 2010, only 18 female chief academic officers in the CCCU were women (Longman & Anderson, in press). Trends in CCCU senior-level leadership from 1998-2010, analyzed by Longman and Anderson, documented that as of 2010, the average number of individuals serving in vice presidential roles or higher across the 108 U.S. member institutions was 4.9 men and .99 women; the percent of institutions with no women in such executive positions was 33% (36 institutions) while the percentage with one woman in executive leadership was 44% (48 institutions).

This lack of women’s voices in senior leadership is problematic in part because the gender balance of students across the CCCU. According to data gathered by the U.S. Department of Education (2009) through the Integrated Postsecondary Data System, the gender balance of 105 CCCU institutions that reported data in 2009 was 60% women in undergraduate population and 61% women for all students. Regarding gender representation on the faculty, UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) data reflects that approximately 66% of the CCCU faculty are male and 34% are female (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2004).

In the sector of U.S. higher education represented by the CCCU member institutions, historical and theological patterns and commitments are often juxtaposed with deeply-held personal beliefs about authority structures and gender roles. Numerous authors have discussed connections between hierarchy and traditional Christian beliefs (Creegan & Pohl, 2005; LaCelle-Peterson, 2008). While a spectrum of opinions and practices related to gender roles exists across various Christian traditions, a major study supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts noted that the “vision of a hierarchically ordered universe has been drawn on with
great success historically and continues as the orienting gender story among the majority of conservative Protestants today” (pp. 218-219).

Thus, for a variety of reasons, women who seek leadership positions in CCCU institutions continue to meet more barriers than men. Some of these challenges include a lack of role models, theological conservatism that limits access to top leadership positions, embracing a collaborative leadership style that can be misunderstood or disrespected, and feeling “out of sync” with the leadership style of some male-dominated administrative cabinets (Schreiner, 2002). One faculty member at a CCCU institution commented in a 2005 Chronicle of Higher Education article, “…at conservative religious institutions, women face a stained-glass ceiling, with the Bible and church tradition routinely used to justify gender discrimination” (Mock, 2005, p. B24).

In seeking to address the need to identify, prepare, and support more women in their leadership journeys into senior administrative leadership, the CCCU in 1998 launched a two-pronged Leadership Development initiative that has focused on emerging leaders, with one track serving both men and women; the other track has been structured for high-potential women. The starting point for the year-long WLDI/LDI experience is a four-day Institute held in June every other year (1998—2010) involving a cohort of 16-22 participants at a retreat center in Washington state. In addition to the Institute itself, the broader year-long WLDI/LDI program includes: (a) the gift of a modest leadership library of articles and books; (b) the design of a one-year Professional Development Plan; (c) networking with experienced administrators on the Resource Team; (d) financial support toward a two or three-day “shadowing” experience with a senior leader on another CCCU campus; and (e) opportunities to attend an Advanced Leadership either at the conclusion of the year or in future years.

The Resource Team at each Institute offers a variety of presentations and panel discussions, with ample time for group interaction. Sessions typically have included an
introduction to board governance, higher education finance, understanding organizational culture, external constituency relations, conflict resolution, team-building, decision-making, strategic planning, team building, and balancing multiple responsibilities. Additionally, participants in recent years have entered the summer institute having taken the Clifton StrengthsFinder, a web-based instrument developed by The Gallup Organization and used with over five million individuals worldwide to assess patterns of natural giftedness. Discussions about individual talents and giftedness have been combined with opportunities to discuss and discern the participants’ sense of calling in their personal and professional lives.

This session will provide both a description of the leadership development format and contents, as well as a summary of findings from both quantitative and qualitative research designed to evaluate the effectiveness of various institute components based on survey responses (79%) of all institute participants between 1998 and 2008. Six multiple regression analyses were conducted, entering all predictor variables simultaneously in one block. Each analysis used the same predictor variables: (a) creating a Professional Development Plan to serve as a building block to consider future academic leadership opportunities; (b) the beneficial impact of the WLDI experience being limited to other women; (c) the shadowing experience on another campus as an influencer to consider future academic leadership positions; (d) the helpfulness of informal conversations with other women during the WLDI; (e) the helpfulness of the books, handouts, and other written resources provided before, during, and after the WLDI; and (f) the helpfulness of the workshop sessions for professional development.

In addition, one open-ended question asked participants to specify what they deemed to be "the single most beneficial impact of the WLDI" in their professional and/or personal life. Rank ordering of responses indicated that getting to know other women through the WLDI was the most frequently cited response; the mentoring/shadowing experience being
significant in reframing participants’ thinking about their own potential leadership was cited second most frequently.

An analysis of participants in the leadership institutes held between 1998 and 2008 was conducted in 2009 to compare the role of participants while attending the LDI/WLDI with their current role. The LDI advancements have included three provosts, five vice presidents, eight deans, and three directors. The WLDI advancements have included two presidents, seven provosts, 11 vice presidents, 14 deans, and nine directors.

Lessons emerging from this Women’s Leadership Development initiative can benefit leadership development and HRD professionals within and beyond higher education. With critical needs for effective leadership facing organizations, businesses, and social structures, learning from leadership development research and generating informed theory and practice is essential. Given that information about existing programs has not been widely shared, five implications distilled from 12 years of experience with the WLDI initiative will be discussed.

For example, leadership development initiatives such as the WLDI can have a cumulative impact on an organizational culture, particularly when individuals advocate for the program from a variety of perspectives. Clearly, intentionality about the task of identifying and equipping high-potential future leaders needs to be taken seriously both by HRD professionals and by leaders throughout every facet of the organization. The WLDI initiative began with enthusiastic support from the CCCU board in addition to member college presidents and provosts, who have been asked to nominate program participants over the past 12 years and fund their involvement. Creating an organizational culture that affirms individual giftedness and opens opportunity for leadership development is a broad scale responsibility.

Additionally, emerging leaders benefit from both internal and external validation of their talents and an awareness of calling. Whether from a religious or non-religious
perspective of life, talents and strengths represent an innate part of who one is, reflecting an internal source of the calling. Awareness of calling is viewed as conceptually overlapping meaning and purpose, with beneficial results to individuals and organizations (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010). Recent research suggests that women and men discern their calling in different ways (Phillips, 2009) and have divergent conceptions of career success. Nomination and acceptance to participate in the WLDI was viewed by many participants as an affirmation of giftedness and a potential indication of calling to more senior leadership roles. Thus, creating venues and strategies for identifying and affirming natural talent patterns can expand self-understanding that contributes to preparing for more senior leadership.

Further research is needed regarding what motivates women and men to move into senior leadership roles—and to what extent those motivators differ in ways related to gender. Additionally, the sources of encouragement and discouragement as women begin moving into leadership roles are only now being researched. Clearly, much of what is known has implications for HRD. Well-designed and targeted strategies for women’s leadership development can bring exponential benefits not only by expanding the pool of gifted individuals to meet today’s current leadership challenges but also by providing role models for future generations of leadership.

References


State-Based Networks for Women: Developing Leadership in Higher Education

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Women continue to be under-represented in the leadership of higher education, a particularly pressing problem given the aging of college presidents and growing numbers of women students (American Council on Education, 2007). With 57% of our current student population consisting of women, insuring that women are well represented as higher education leaders will be important to meeting the challenges. Currently women account for only 23% of university presidencies and that percentage has not changed in the last ten years (The White House Project, 2009). Finding and developing future women leaders and adequately preparing those leaders for the multitude of issues related to operating the uniquely complex organizations of higher education are essential to the future of higher education, and consequently, our nation.

According to The White House Project (2009), not only do women possess strong leadership capabilities, but the American public believes women are ready and able to fulfill critical leadership roles. In a 2007 GfK/Roper Public Opinion Poll cited in the White House Report (2009), 69% of those surveyed believed women make equally good leaders as men. Women were rated above men in five of eight character traits they value highly in their leaders. Women were rated higher for honesty, intelligence, creativity, outgoingness, and compassion. They were ranked equal to men for hardworking and ambition. Men were rated higher than women only in the category of decisiveness.
The reality, however, is much different from the public’s perception. While women now comprise the majority of the work force, only 39% of females sixteen and older work in management or professional occupations (United States Census, 2010). Women hold on average only 18% of the top leadership positions within the various sectors and organizations (The White House Project 2009). To better prepare women for the complexity of challenges faced by leaders of modern institutions and organizations, effective leadership development programs are needed. The American Council on Education’s Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE) and its system of state networks provide such leadership development programs and support for women leaders in higher education.

The purpose of this article is to examine the history and structure of leadership development programs created and supported by the OWHE and its state-based networks which reach thousands of women each year. The use of volunteers to provide leadership training and development in each state allows OWHE to successfully leverage its limited resources, scaling-up the delivery of quality leadership development programs to women in higher education throughout the country. The networks also help prepare women for advancement by developing attitudes for success, helping women create a vision for their future and motivating them to passionately work from a set of core values. This organizational system can be a model for the use of volunteers to implement human resource development practices in other leadership networks, both academic and non-academic.

OWHE and its unique organization of state networks are not well-recognized in the leadership or human resource development literature, outside of the unpublished work of Elliott (2011). The most informed references to the network comes from Yolanda Moses, who mentions the OWHE “national women’s network” (Moses, 2009, p. 201) and from Susan Madsen (2008). Others who have studied leadership issues for women in higher education refer to ACE, but not always to OWHE and rarely to its networks (see Sloma-
Williams, McDade, Richman & Morahan, 2009; Turner & Kappes, 2009; Glaser-Raymo, 1999). Claire Van Ummersen (2009), who led OWHE from 2001 to 2005, identifies succinctly the continuing need for the kind of professional development these networks uniquely provide:

Preparing women for leadership means providing professional development to improve leadership skills at all levels as well as prepare for advancement. Competency counts, as does demonstrated ability, so women must seek out experiential opportunities, enlist outstanding mentors, and join support networks. Most important, they must develop attitudes for success. Regardless of one’s position, all leaders must be motivated by core values, have passion for their work, and have a vision of where they are headed and why. (p. xii)

We believe the value of these networks lies in the way states have used a common national framework to meet the local needs of women. Each state network decides and organizes events and activities that are best believed to serve the needs of the women in each state. We highlight three of those state-level operations.

First, OWHE and several state networks host leadership training programs and summits focused specifically on women of color administrators in higher education. The goals of the OWHE summits are to 1) advance and sustain women of color into higher education leadership positions, from the dean’s level and above, 2) highlight the cultural diversity and strength of women of color and 3) establish meaningful coalitions allowing women to build strategic alliances across cultural and racial groups. Through sessions designed to meet these goals, women of color administrators can achieve their professional and leadership goals. According to a summary of the 2008 Women of Color Summit prepared by OWHE,
Participants engaged in candid discussions about different paths to the presidency. In the summits women learned to manage the expectations of others and to balance work and family obligations. In addition, this opportunity assisted women by promoting professional fulfillment and personal satisfaction in their lives. Women in academia shared and captured experiences and strategies that successfully moved women of color into senior administrative positions. (American Council on Education, Office of Women in Higher Education, 2008)

Several states host their own women of color summits modeled after OWHE’s national summits with some variations. The article discusses the success of the women of color summits held in Virginia and New Jersey.

A second case study of the effectiveness of the state network structure is found in Michigan where the network partners with other women’s organizations in the state. The network, with help from its partners, Michigan Women’s Commission, the Michigan Department of Labor, coordinates three annual workshops for women students at no charge. Results have been notable during the last two years. The workshops themselves have been high profile, involving an appearance from Governor Jennifer Granholm in 2010.

The third case study reviews regional breakfasts in Pennsylvania and Iowa. In Pennsylvania, leaders focused on regional breakfasts as a key component of reaching women around the large and populous state—one also with hundreds of institutions of higher education. Dividing the state into Eastern, Central, and Western regions, the network used a simple formula to develop an effective network: meet regionally twice per year, from 8:30 to 10 am on a Friday, and combine a breakfast and a keynote address with time for networking. Annual evaluations are used to adjust the timing, format and topics for future events. When the Iowa Network heard of the Pennsylvania regional breakfasts, it arranged its own version, with slight variations.
As examples highlighted in the article suggest, one size for event-planning and networking does not fit all states or their women. Those states that have made it a priority to assess their network activities have been able to improve events and membership, but assessment has not been comprehensive—a result of a volunteer-run organization managed by women who are already almost always overcommitted professionally and personally. Aware of the uneven success of the networks, the ACE State Network Executive Board (also volunteers, of course) established a sub-committee in 2010 to review relationships among the various components of the ACE/OWHE/State Networks. The sub-committee determined that a survey of network coordinators would allow the Executive Board to understand and then improve the relationship between the Executive Board and the State Network Coordinators and in the end improve leadership development at the state and national level. The results of the survey are being used by the Executive Board to strengthen their relationship with the state networks and to solidify the framework of expectations for the work of each state network consistent with the goals of OWHE.

In this paper and conference presentation, some narrative comments from survey results pinpoint the unique value of the state networks in the OWHE’s leadership development goals will be shared. While the assessments of the OWHE and state network programs is uneven and much of the article is based upon antidotal evidence of the effectiveness of OWHE programs, the case for the success of such programs rings clear through relevant testimonials that describe the direct impact their experiences with OWHE programs had on their path to presidencies and other leadership positions of higher education institutions. This article will conclude with implications to HRD and leadership development professionals and scholars.

This unique system of state networks reaches about 8,000 women per year and continues to help promote women to administrative positions, from dean to president (Elliot,
The structures and strategies of this volunteer-lead organization deserve further study as possible solutions not only to gender representation in higher education leadership, but potentially to other stakeholders: those charged with diversifying leadership in business and industry, in professional fields allied with academe (engineering, business management, health sciences, etc.), and in the public sector (government, non-profits).

References


