

Benchmark Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

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General

According to Thomas Sweeney, leadership is “defined to be those actions by individuals in professional counseling that contribute to the realization of our individual and collective capacity to serve others competently, ethically, and justly as helping professionals” (Sweeney, 2022). While I agree with this definition, I wrote down a quote during our leadership intensive week that has continued to resonate with me: “Leadership is a process of persuasion and example by which others are motivated to take action”. I don’t know the author of this quote, other than my professor, Dr. Mary Deacon, but I will refer to this often throughout my PhD journey. I believe that leadership requires action, and I also believe that I lead by doing. This belief comes from a lifetime of trial and error, and through a continual process of self-reflection and personal flexibility. I have learned a great deal from my mistakes in life and I believe this has increased my capacity for empathy and compassion for my clients and for students. My leadership style aligns with the Charismatic Leadership Theory (Lewis, 2022). This theory has the following characteristics: vision and communication with others, healthy risk taking, responsive and sensitive to followers needs, and outside the box thinking and behavior (Lewis, 2022). As a leader, I believe in casting and articulating a vision that I can share and mobilize with others. I strive to be innovative, collaborative, and attentive in my leadership skills.

At the graduate level, Todd Lewis described a three-pronged approach that aligns with my leadership style; context, vision, and action (Lewis, 2022). Context reminds us to remember and respect the sacrifices made by others in the profession to make it what it is today. Vision is the act of inspiring and collaborating with others to move towards a common goal. Action requires reflection that invites conversation and innovation based on a grand vision. I see this

model working at the graduate level because it is collaborative and inspirational; it inspires me to lead others by lifting them up, encouraging them while educating them.

My father informed my leadership approaches throughout my life and into adulthood. He was a vibrant and dynamic leader who cared deeply for people and worked passionately for issues that resonated with his values and beliefs. He served in the military for thirty years, and I had the privilege of watching him lead thousands of troops all over the world. My dad imparted three significant lessons that have helped shape my value system: 1. Your word is your bond; if you say “yes” to something, you do it with your whole heart. 2. Lead by example; never ask someone to do something you aren’t willing to do yourself. 3. This is one of my favorite quotes from my dad, and one that I repeat often to myself; “Ain’t nothin’ to it, but to do it”. My dad was one of my biggest cheerleaders and I am incredibly thankful for how God used him to lay a firm foundation of leadership in my life.

I have had the privilege of working with counselor educators who have modeled amazing leadership for me. They have encouraged me, challenged me, and helped me grow in ways that I never would have achieved on my own. Their support and encouragement played a significant role in my decision to pursue my doctoral journey. My beliefs as a supervisee have been influenced by these counselor educators because they have illustrated collaborative leadership for me in a counseling setting that I plan to model for my future supervisees and students.

As I practice self-reflection, I have high aspirations for myself as a leader in the counseling world and in the post-secondary context. I hope to make an impact on my students and supervisees that both challenges and encourages them to continue paving the way for future counselor educators. As a counselor educator, I am ethically bound to be knowledgeable in all

aspects of the counseling profession, and to make my supervisees aware of their responsibilities (ACA, 2014). I want to ensure that my leadership invites discussion, collaboration, and innovation for future educators and leaders.

Impact and Influence

I believe that God has allowed every experience in my life to lead to this moment in my doctoral education. From living around the world and experiencing diverse cultures, getting married and raising kids, returning to school later in life, experiencing illness and the loss of my parents, I can see how every experience has shaped me as a leader. I can draw on difficult circumstances to empathize with my clients and share that with my students. I have shared my love for holistic and integrative counseling at several counseling conferences, and plan to continue presenting as often as I am able to balance it with work, life, and school. I thrive on sharing my love for this profession with others, educating on the power of presence, and illustrating how counselor educators have a unique opportunity to positively impact our clients and the profession. I have served on a variety of leadership boards, and I look forward to completing my teaching, supervision, and leadership internships where I know I will continue to gain knowledge and expertise as a servant leader.

Future Aspirations

As I progress in my doctoral education, I will continue to develop, grow, and improve as a leader by gleaning from my instructors and cohort members, as well as learning new counseling and leadership skills embodied in the five pillars of my counselor identity. Through practicing self-awareness, these five pillars of counseling, leadership, supervision, teaching, and research are not things that I do, but who I am as a counselor educator. I see a vast field of

opportunity for me when I think of my future in counselor education and am in awe of how God has opened doors of opportunity for me. I am thrilled at the prospect of teaching, researching, and shaping the future of the counseling profession. I plan to make an impact in my local community and be a global voice for this profession by speaking at local and national conferences and looking for innovative ways to highlight counseling and its benefits. I hope to serve in leadership capacities for national counseling associations and model that involvement for my future students and supervisees. As the Dire Straits sang, “the future is so bright, I gotta wear shades”.

References

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Chang, C. Y., Barrio, C. A., & Sweeney, T. (2021). *Professional Counseling Excellence through Leadership and Advocacy*. Routledge.