The WPA as Leader
An Exploration

2009 WPA Conference

Minneapolis

The Need for Leadership Training

- "Leadership education is a neglected goal of faculty development, even in the most enlightened of recent efforts to rethink the career and preparation of the future professoriate. . . . Few graduate teachers think of leadership in that sense as a faculty competence to be cultivated in doctoral education" (3)

Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. "Turtles all the Way Down: Educating Academic Leaders." *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource*. Ed. Stuart C. Brown and Teresa Enos. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum, 2002. 3-39.

The Need for Leadership Training

- To be active members of academic community, "faculty themselves must develop thoughtful programs to foster the development of leaders from their own ranks—programs designed to operate seamlessly throughout a faculty career from graduate school to senior leadership roles in higher education" (4).

The Need for Leadership Training

- Leadership is an inevitable aspect of faculty life, but especially important to faculty in rhetoric and composition and to WPAs: "For that reason, graduate education in rhetoric and composition must incorporate *specialized leadership education* for prospective WPAs while also providing some level of preparation and opportunities for all students to play leadership role as academic citizens" (5, emphasis added).

Leadership Roles for WPAs

- By Location
  - Classroom, program/department, university
  - Community, profession
  - Meetings, committees
- By Goal
  - Effective operation of program
  - Foster change
- By People
  - Students
  - Peers
  - Administrators
  - Members of wider community

Leadership Challenges for WPAs

- Context, context, context
- Credibility/authority/ethos
- Faculty and staff
- Administration
- Vision and buy in
- Limited resources
- Lack of experience
- Patience

"Specialized Leadership Education" in Writing Program Administration

- Course work in administration
- Practical leadership experience in graduate school (assistant directorships, committee work, etc.)
- Mentorships and OJT
- Course work in rhetorical theory: "leading with words through the politics of persuasion and through the power of critical audience analysis"*
- Course work in leadership theory and research

* Mirtz, Ruth M., and Roxanne M. Cullen. "Beyond Postmodernism: Leadership Theories and Writing Program Administration." *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist*. Ed. Shirley K. Rose and Irwin Weiser.

Portsmouth, NH Boyton-Cook, 2002. 97.

Aspects of Rhetorical Study that Aid Leadership

- Rhetorical analysis
- Audience analysis
- Informative and persuasive speaking and writing
- Logos, pathos, ethos
- *Kairos*
- Critical reading
- Argument theory (especially Rogerian and feminist theories)
- Role language plays in forming relationships and shaping understanding
- Group dynamics

What We Can Learn from Work in Leadership Studies

- Theorize (and thus better understand) our views of leadership
- Better understand leadership traits, attributes, styles
- Move from good to great programs
- Identify one's strengths and limitations as leaders
- Learn effective leadership practices
- Develop better leadership education programs

Important Concepts from Work in Leadership Theory and Practice

- Identifying and developing effective leadership traits and skills
- Visioning
- Fostering change in an organization
- Understanding leadership styles
  - Transformative leadership
  - Servant leadership
- Developing effective listening skills
- Emotional intelligence

Leadership Theories

- "Great Man" Theory
  - Leaders born, not made—inherent skills
- Great Events Theory
  - A person rises to the occasion
- Situational Theory
  - Best leader determined by context—best fit
- Trait Theory
  - For some, inherent traits; for others, learned
- Behavioral Theory
  - Learn leadership behaviors through study, observation, and experience

Leadership Theories

- **Transactional Theory**
  - Good leaders are skilled at supervising and organizing current conditions
- **Transformative Theory**
  - Good leaders change the status quo through their guiding vision and inspiration of others
- **Principle-Centered Leadership Theory**
  - Leaders are committed to self-improvement and personal growth—theirs and others
- **Servant Leadership Theory**
  - Good leaders humbly serve those they lead

Leadership Traits

- John Gardner, *On Leadership* (1989)
    - Intelligence and action-oriented judgment
    - Eagerness to accept responsibility
    - Task competence
    - Understanding of followers and their needs
    - Skill in dealing with people
    - Capacity to motivate people
    - Courage and resolution
    - Trustworthiness
    - Decisiveness
    - Self-confidence
    - Assertiveness
    - Adaptability/flexibility

Leadership Traits

- Daniel Goldman, *Emotional Intelligence* (2009)
  - Self Awareness
    - ability to understand your own strengths and weaknesses
  - Social Skills
    - how you relate to others and build rapport
  - Self Regulation
    - ability to think things through before reacting to a situation
  - Motivation
    - strong will or dive to succeed
  - Empathy
    - ability to understand another's point of view

Vision and Change

- Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (1987)
    - Challenging the Process
        - Search for Opportunities
        - Experiment and Take Risks
    - Inspiring a Shared Vision
        - Envision the Future
        - Enlist Others
    - Enabling Others to Act
        - Foster Collaboration
        - Strengthen Others
    - Modeling the Way
        - Set the Example
        - Plan Small Wins
    - Encouraging the Heart
        - Recognize Individual Contribution
        - Celebrate Accomplishments

Vision and Change

- John P. Kotter, *Leading Change (*1996)
  - establish a sense of urgency
  - create the guiding coalition
  - develop a vision and strategy
  - communicate the change vision
  - empower broad-based action
  - generate short-term wins
  - consolidate gains and produce more change
  - anchor new approaches in the culture

Leadership Styles

- Hersey and Blanchard, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (1999)
    - **Telling / Directing**
        - Leader takes a highly directive role, telling others what to do. Building a relationship with others is not a high priority. Leader makes all expectations clear.
    - **Selling/Coaching**
        - Leader guides followers by listening to them then advising them on how to accomplish goals. Leader does not tell them how to do it.
    - **Participating / Supporting**
        - Leader attempts to find out why followers are underperforming and determines how best to motivate them to perform better. Leader spends a lot of time listening, praising, and supporting.
    - **Delegating / Observing**
        - Leader gets out of the way of motivated and capable followers. Leader may keep a distant eye on the project.

Transformative Leaders

Characteristics of transformational leaders:

- They identify themselves as change agents.
- They are courageous individuals.
- They believe in people.
- They are value-driven.
- They are lifelong learners.
- They have the ability to deal with complexity.
- They are visionaries.

Key Principles of Servant Leadership: Robert Greenleaf

- **Listening**
  - Listening to others and to oneself
- **Empathy**
  - Accepting and understanding others, assuming good will
- **Healing**
  - Striving for wholeness and well-being
- **Awareness**
  - Committing oneself to full awareness of oneself and others
- **Persuasion**
  - Being consensus through persuasion

Servant Leadership: Robert Greenleaf

- Conceptualization
  - Examining problems from a conceptual perspective
- Foresight
  - Applying lessons from the past to the present, understanding consequences for the future
- Stewardship
  - Marshaling resources well
- Commitment to the Growth of People
  - Promoting the personal, spiritual, and professional growth of people
- Building Community
  - Identifying the best way to promote a sense of community and engagement

From Good to Great Leadership: Jim Collins

- Manifest Personal Humility or Compelling Modesty
- Project Success Beyond Self
- Accept Responsibility for Failure
- Promote a Learning Culture
- Work to Achieve, not to Avoid Failure
- Be Rigorous rather than Ruthless
- Encourage Self-Motivation for Meaningful Work

Readings

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