

Educating the Heart, Head, and Hands: Servant Leadership as a Transformational Model for Student Success

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Abstract

Educating the heart, head, and hands serves as the primary model through which all students at a Christian university are assured a holistic education. Students experience learning at all levels; heart (spirituality), head (academic service learning) and hands (mission and service), that enhances their ability to develop and grow and become individuals better prepared to be servant leaders for lifelong learning.

There have been a number of institutions that have adopted the ideas of servant leadership, but few have attempted to approach a comprehensive university-wide model such as Pfeiffer University. Pfeiffer University is currently in its fifth year of implementing the Servant Leadership Initiative and is constantly re-evaluating how it can further its goals to embrace a servant leadership integrated university community. The focus of this workshop will provide a brief overview of university history and connection to servant leadership, a definition of servant leadership at Pfeiffer University, and a description of the Pfeiffer Servant Leadership Initiative. Strategies for use of the transformational model on other campuses will also be provided.

Pfeiffer University History

Pfeiffer began as a mission school founded by Ms. Emily C. Prudden; the daughter of a Congregational minister and was later taken over by a Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The teachings of The United Methodist Church are embedded in the rich history of Pfeiffer University. Just as early United Methodist's practiced love for others, missions and social justice, so it is with the university's heritage of actively being engaged in the work of the local community. After the eighth president was selected to lead Pfeiffer University, a broad group of faculty, staff, alumni, students, trustees and friends embarked on the journey of creating a new mission and vision for the 21st century. This new mission and vision embraced both the university's rich traditional United Methodist roots and long standing commitment to serving those in the local and regional community. Furthermore Pfeiffer University adopted as its mission of preparing servant leaders for lifelong learning. With the new mission and vision of the university, Pfeiffer began the work of creating a strategic plan where all areas of the university would embrace the ideals of servant leadership.

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The heritage of Pfeiffer and its relationship to the United Methodist church are intentionally focused into a comprehensive servant leadership initiative that makes learning available to students both inside and outside of the classroom. Pfeiffer University encourages its students to pursue excellence in their education while also developing characters that pursue an active practice of serving others through unselfish deeds and actions. The initiative focuses on three primary avenues for promoting servant leadership: *Christian Service* (Campus Ministries, Missions, Human Service and Volunteerism); *Service/Engaged Learning* (integrated learning with active involvement, experiential learning and applied knowledge expanded through internships, cooperative partnerships, mentorships and student involvement in research); and *Co-Curricular Development* (includes leadership, citizenship and character development that includes life-learning in residence halls).

The complete mission statement of Pfeiffer University is: “Pfeiffer is a comprehensive university, committed to excellence, service and scholarship—we invite our students to embrace Christian values of human dignity, integrity and service as they become servant leaders and life long learners. Rooted in our vision and mission are core values of the commitment to a learner centered environment, to help people to realize their full potential, to create a diverse community, fostering faith formation with the goal of approaching all we do with integrity, respect and dignity of all people” (Pfeiffer University Task Force, 2000).

As the president stated in his convocation address (September 4, 1998), one of Pfeiffer’s greatest distinctions and responsibilities would be to develop graduates who understand the meaning of service and leadership.

It is the guiding belief of the institution that the values and behaviors of servant leaders can be enhanced through these avenues. All students, faculty, and staff are allowed and encouraged to explore each of these areas based on their own interests and abilities (Task Force Report, October 2000). At Pfeiffer University servant leadership is an essential component of academic excellence, channeling the academic, physical, social and spiritual gifts and talents of each member of the community to the greater needs of the world.

Servant Leadership at Pfeiffer University

We know love by this, that He laid down his life for us—and we ought to
lay down our lives for one another.
How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees
a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?
Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

I John 3:16-18 NRSV

This passage of scripture, along with writings of Robert K. Greenleaf, embodies the spirit of servant leadership at Pfeiffer University. Greenleaf (1977) defines servant leadership as a practical philosophy that supports people who choose to serve first, and lead secondly as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Greenleaf contended that the servant-leader is servant first. The definition of servant leadership acknowledges that the individual who is a servant leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first, to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are met (1977, p.13-14). Spears (1998) further characterized servant leadership with specific qualities. These qualities and characteristics include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization,

foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building. The qualities of Servant Leadership identified by Spears (1998) serve as the framework for Pfeiffer University's common values and behaviors that all members of the community are encouraged to embrace. These values and behaviors are expressed as:

Concerned about social justice	nurtures family and community
Selfless	persuades rather than coerces
Committed	builds trusting relationships
Courageous (takes risks)	envisions positive change
Redemptive	empowers others

Creating a Campus Model

To further its mission Pfeiffer University created a university wide Center for Servant Leadership, with the goal of preparing servant leaders by nurturing the whole student-heart, head, and hands. The Servant Leadership Center was established in 2000 to provide direct leadership to the university community. Its mission is to infuse servant leadership experiences; which include engaged learning, volunteerism, and co- curricular experiences throughout the fabric of university by assisting faculty with the incorporation of engaged learning techniques in their classes, developing community partnerships which support internships and community based learning/research, and facilitating campus wide Servant Leadership Initiatives. A transformational model for students was further developed into the areas of educating the heart, head and mind and is described below:

Educating the Heart: Students are provided with opportunities that focus on selflessness and commitment to the good of all. Through programs and small groups in campus ministries and various cultural/spiritual programs students are presented with heart transforming opportunities.

Educating the Head: Students are engaged in service learning. Classroom instruction provides the needed nurturance of connecting academic knowledge to meet real community needs.

Educating the Hands: Students can participate in co-curricular service through on/off campus service opportunities and national and international mission trips.

Marshall (2005) believes that in order to be successful at integrating servant leadership on university campuses, it must be institutionalized within the university culture. An excerpt from Pfeiffer's transformational model for such a process is described below:

Goal 1: Provide both student and professional role models of servant leadership in order to promote growth in these values and behaviors throughout the university community.

- a. Describe servant leadership expectations in all student recruitment phases to increase the percentage of the student population that is attuned to development as servant leaders.
- b. Place Service Scholars in roles on campus that maximize their effectiveness as student leaders.
- c. Provide current faculty and staff opportunities for growth as servant leaders.

Goal 2: Provide growth as servant leaders through campus based programs.

- a. Create a university wide inventory of all current servant leadership activities.
- b. Evaluate weaknesses in the availability of such opportunities for all student populations and add appropriate programs as necessary.
- c. Promote participation in a wide range of campus-based servant leadership activities.

Goal 3: Promote growth as servant leader through community partnerships.

- a. Create a university-wide inventory of community partnerships, which promote servant leadership.
- b. Promote participation in a wide range of community-based servant leadership activities.
- c. Evaluate weaknesses in the availability of such opportunities for all student populations and add appropriate programs where necessary.

These goals and objectives outlined in the Pfeiffer University Servant Leadership model formed the beginnings of the campus transformation. While a number of values and ideas from this model are reflected in programs on campus, the university culture continues to be committed to embracing a fully integrated campus of servant leadership.

Strategies for Creating Transformational Model

Mitsifer & Miller (1999) state that a key aspect of creating change on university campuses is to gain the trust of members of the community by developing a common agenda and interconnecting common knowledge and actions.

Below are some strategies for integrating the ideals of servant leadership in any institution's strategic plan, vision and mission.

A. Practical application for integration of servant leadership

1. Evaluation of all existing programs to determine service and leadership application
2. Survey university community to determine desirability of future programs
3. Create coordinating council to facilitate university wide changes (Campus wide service center)
4. Create a university requirement for all students (First Year Program)

B. Create collaboration for entire campus

1. Offer retreat for specific groups,
2. Collaborative grant funding to support programs in specific areas
3. Create student, staff and faculty advisory groups

Creating a model for campus transformation is certainly an evolving and comprehensive strategy. While Pfeiffer University has seen much success (increase in student retention, increase

in enrollment, more students actively engaged in service, energized faculty) with its servant leadership initiative, much work still lies ahead to see all faculty, students, and staff embrace the mission of preparing servant leaders for lifelong living.

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