

## USING THE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT (LID) MODEL TO FRAME COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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*Student affairs practitioners need to use theory or models to provide a framework for their work with college students. This article shows how a college campus practices leadership development within the Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model framework. In addition to providing steps for using the model in practice, some challenges are noted in its use.*

Student leadership development is an important part of the undergraduate experience that allows students to learn and practice a number of skills that they may not be able to hone in class. Plus, with the amount of virtual learning since March 2020, students may have had few out-of-class experiences. In order to provide students with different experiences and help them develop incrementally, it is important to utilize a framework as a basis for those leadership development experiences.

Leadership can be defined in many ways. St. Norbert College uses a definition similar to Komives et al. (1998, 2007) that says it is a relational construct not limited to formal or elected positions where anyone can be a leader. Therefore, how a college student develops their leadership identity is a salient way to organize leadership development programs.

Leadership development involves a mix of behavioral, intellectual, and social skills that are all required for leadership in a particular organization (Lord & Hall, 2005). As university staff, the particular organizations we've identified are our campuses. For leadership to be sustained over the 4-5 years that a student is on campus, this variety of skills must become a part of a student's identity (Lord & Hall, 2005).

### LEADERSHIP THEORY

From that relational leadership definition, Komives et al. identified the leadership identity development (LID) model (2005). The model includes six stages that an individual moves through as their leadership identity becomes more complex. With each stage comes a deeper understanding of leadership and in relation to others. (Muir, 2014)

#### **Leadership Identity Development Model**

The LID Model shows a six-stage process through which every student moves. The stages are: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity, and internationalization/synthesis (Komives et al., 2005). Figure 1 summarizes the model. The awareness stage recognizes that leaders exist, and students are inactive followers (Komives et al., 2005). These are usually younger children. Exploration and engagement result in students becoming involved and active followers (Komives et al., 2005). Students in the leader

identified stage believe that leadership is positional (Komives et al., 2005). These are often first-year students. The generativity stage results in an active commitment to a larger purpose (Komives et al., 2005). Older college students begin to help younger students transition into leadership roles and actively think about and work on how the organization will continue after they graduate. The internalization and synthesis stage means commitment and involvement with leadership is a daily course of action (Komives et al., 2005). Group and developmental influences are essential in understanding how the individual changes across the stages of a category (Shehane, et al., 2012). These influences include adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning (Komives et al., 2005). In order to help students discover their own leadership identity, we can provide these developmental influences on our campuses.

**Figure 1. Leadership Identity Development Model**

Stage →	1 Awareness		2 Exploration/ Engagement		3 Leader Identified	
	Key Categories	Transition	Transition	Transition	Emerging	Immersion
Stage Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizing that leadership is happening around you</li> <li>Getting exposure to involvements</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intentional involvements [sports, church, service, scouts, dance, SGA]</li> <li>Experiencing groups for first time</li> <li>Taking on responsibilities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trying on new roles</li> <li>Identifying skills needed.</li> <li>Taking on individual responsibility</li> <li>Individual accomplishments important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting things done</li> <li>Managing others</li> <li>Practicing different approaches/styles</li> </ul> <p><i>Leadership seen largely as positional roles held by self or others; Leaders do leadership</i></p>
View of Leadership	“Other people are leaders; leaders are out there somewhere”	“I am not a leader; other people do that”	“I want to be involved”	“I want to do more”	“A leader gets things done”	“I am the leader and others follow me” or “I am a follower looking to the leader for direction”
Individual factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Becomes aware of national leaders and authority figures (e.g. the principal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want to make friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop personal skills</li> <li>Identify personal strengths/weaknesses</li> <li>Prepare for leadership</li> <li>Build self confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize personal leadership potential</li> <li>Motivation to change something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positional leadership roles or group member roles</li> <li>Narrow down to meaningful experiences (e.g. church, sports, clubs, yearbook, scouts, class projects)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Models others</li> <li>Leader struggles with delegation</li> <li>Moves in and out of leadership roles and member roles but still believes the leader is in charge</li> <li>Appreciates individual recognition</li> </ul>
Group factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uninvolved or “inactive” follower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Active” follower or member</li> <li>Engage in diverse contexts (e.g. church, sports, clubs, class projects)</li> </ul>	Narrow interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader has to get things done</li> <li>Group has a job to do; organize to get tasks done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve members to get the job done</li> <li>Stick with a primary group as an identity base; explore other groups</li> </ul>
Developmental Components	Affirmation by adults (parents, teachers, coaches, scout leaders, church elders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observation/watching</li> <li>Recognition</li> <li>adult sponsors</li> </ul>	Affirmation of adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attributions (others see me as a leader)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role models</li> <li>Older peers as sponsors</li> <li>Adult sponsors</li> <li>Assume positional roles</li> <li>Reflection/retreat</li> </ul>	Take on responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model older peers and adults</li> <li>Observe older peers</li> <li>Adults as mentors, guides, coaches</li> </ul>
View of Self with others	<b>Dependent</b>				<b>Independent Dependent</b>	

From Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S., Owen, J. E., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47, 401-42.

Figure continues on next page

The KEY Transition	4 Leadership Differentiated			5 Generativity		6 Internalization/Synthesis
	Emerging	Immersion	Transition		Transition	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifting order of consciousness;</li> <li>• Take on more complex leadership challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining with others in shared tasks/ goals from positional or non-positional group roles</li> <li>• Need to learn group skills</li> <li><i>New belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group (non positional)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to facilitate a good group process whether in positional or non positional leader role</li> <li>• Commitment to community of the group</li> <li><i>Awareness that leadership is a group process</i></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active commitment to a personal passion;</li> <li>• Accepting responsibility for the development of others,</li> <li>• Promotes team learning,</li> <li>• Responsible for sustaining organizations</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued self development and life long learning,</li> <li>• Striving for congruence and internal confidence</li> </ul>
“Holding a position does not mean I am a leader”	“I need to lead in a participatory way and I can contribute to leadership from anywhere in the organization”; “I can be a leader without a title”; “I am a leader even if I am not the leader”	“Leadership is happening everywhere; we are doing leadership together; we are all responsible”	“Who’s coming after me?”	“I am responsible as a member of my communities to facilitate the development of others as leaders and enrich the life of our groups”	“I need to be true to myself in all situations and open to grow”	“I know I am able to work effectively with others to accomplish change from any place in the organization”; “I am a leader”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition that I cannot do it all myself</li> <li>• Learn to value the importance/ talent of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to trust and value others &amp; their involvement</li> <li>• Openness other perspectives</li> <li>• Develop comfort with being an active member</li> <li>• Let go control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns about personal influence</li> <li>• Effective in both positional and non-positional roles</li> <li>• Practices being engaged member</li> <li>• Values servant leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on passion, vision, &amp; commitments</li> <li>• Want to serve society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor and develop others;</li> <li>• Transforming leadership</li> <li>• Concern for leadership pipeline</li> <li>• Concerned with sustainability of ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to ideas</li> <li>• Learning from others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees leadership as a life long developmental process</li> <li>• Want to leave things better</li> <li>• Am trustworthy and value that I have credibility</li> <li>• Recognition of role modeling to others</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningfully engage with others</li> <li>• Look to group resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing the collective whole; the big picture</li> <li>• Learn group and team skills/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value teams</li> <li>• Value connectedness to others, inter-dependence</li> <li>• Learns how system works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value process</li> <li>• Seek fit with org. vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustaining the organization</li> <li>• Ensuring continuity in areas of passion/ focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipating transition to new roles</li> </ul>	Sees organizational complexity across contexts • Can imagine how to engage with different organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older peers as sponsors/ &amp; mentors</li> <li>• Adults as mentors &amp; meaning makers</li> <li>• learning about leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing leadership in ongoing peer relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, key faculty, same-age peer mentors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins coaching others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, same-age peer mentors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared learning</li> <li>• Reflection/ retreat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-cycle when context changes or is uncertain (contextual uncertainty), enables continual recycling through leadership stages</li> </ul>
<b>Interdependent</b>						

In a 2015 study, Sessa et al. found that most college students saw leadership as a position and that leadership is a personal characteristic of individuals. This means that most college students see their leadership identity in the leader identified stage of the LID model. Sessa’s study provided evidence that leader identity develops before their understanding of leadership (2015). That means we’re communicating information about positional vs. non-positional leadership before the student realizes their understanding of leadership may change.

When considering group and developmental influences, college and university staff can provide influence as they plan and implement leadership development programs, as well as work with college students in many ways. By selecting or hiring older students to hold formal mentor roles, they can role model different ways to lead. Meaningful involvement allows students to clarify personal values and interests, learn about themselves, and develop new skills (Komives et al., 2005). Including structured reflection opportunities as part of leadership development programs helps students intentionally learn about leadership (Komives et al., 2005).

For college students, these developmental influences either produce a new view of oneself or dissonance with the stage one is in. This is how a student gains a new view of leadership and, therefore, transitions to a new stage (Komives et al., 2005). As campus activities professionals, it's our job to help students through that dissonance to their new view of themselves.

If our goal is to help college students develop systemic thinking, it behooves us to help students develop from the leader identified stage to the leadership differentiated stage. The grounded theory that produced the LID Model showed that one experiences hierarchical thinking before developing systemic thinking (Komives et al., 2005). Students in the leader identified stage used hierarchical thinking and systemic thinking emerged in the leadership differentiated stage (Komives et al., 2005). Systemic thinking allows people to focus on a system as a whole and, ultimately, helps with creative problem-solving.

As seen in Figure One, five influences contribute to the development of a leadership identity: 1) broadening view of leadership, 2) developing self, 3) group influences, 4) developmental influences, and 5) a changing view of one's self with others (Komives et al., 2005).

Shehane et al. (2012) stated, "As educators, it is our role to provide a venue for students to explore connections between their leadership experiences within a formal leadership program and their academic experiences in the classroom" (p. 151). Besides looking at leadership experiences as college students, it is important to help students reflect on earlier leadership experiences during formal leadership programs (Dugan, 2011). Formal leadership programs should have a curriculum with student learning and development outcomes (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2009). Focusing learning outcomes on ways to develop from the leader identified stage to the leadership differentiated stage helps move students toward systemic thinking. At St. Norbert College, one of the college-wide learning outcomes is to problem-solve creatively. Being able to set learning outcomes that directly tie to an overall college goal helps campus activities actively contribute to the important learning that takes place both inside and outside the classroom.

### **Challenge and Support**

In addition to the model, assessment, challenge, and support are important components of leadership development (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). Assessment allows us to understand the effectiveness of the leadership development experience, but it could also help a student become more self-aware (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). A challenge can help a student stretch beyond their comfort zone and allow them to learn something new (Sanford, 1966). Students can get support from college/university staff or each other, allowing them to lean into a challenge (Sanford, 1966). A mentor (student or staff) can support and inspire the student with confidence (Muir, 2014). The balance between challenge and support is where development happens, and in a leadership experience that may provide the dissonance where a student begins to progress to the next stage of leadership identity development.

### **Importance of Learning Outcomes**

Komives et al. (2009) assert that each stage of the LID model encompasses a set of leadership learning outcomes and that a student's transition from one stage to the next indicates their leadership identity development. "A holistic leadership development program may seek to move all students and groups of students in student organizations from their current understanding and practice of leadership to more complex, integrated understanding and practice" (Komives et al., 2009, p. 33).

In short, students' views of leadership identity will grow and change during their time at college. It is the responsibility of an individual campus to help students move through the stages and to track that through programs that challenge and support students and assess student learning.

## ST. NORBERT COLLEGE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

For St. Norbert College students, one of the first leadership development experiences available is specifically for first-year students and is called Emerging Leaders. It is specifically marketed as an opportunity to help learn what is needed to become an executive board member for a student organization. When the marketing for this program has not focused on positional leadership, it has decreased the number of students who want to participate. That response correlates to first-year students being more likely to be in the leader identified Leadership Identity Development Model stage.

The Emerging Leaders program allows participants to learn new skills, better understand leadership on campus, and become familiar with at least one student organization. The program breaks the first-year students into small groups with an older mentor. The mentor is a student from a recognized student organization (RSO). There are typically about ten different RSOs represented. The participating RSOs self-select at the college staff's invitation, and each provides a project for the Emerging Leaders group to work on. The project could be a program for members or other students to attend, a fundraiser, or implementing a survey to the greater student body, etc. The mentor helps with each step and is the liaison between the RSO and the Emerging Leader group. In addition to the project, the Emerging Leaders and the mentors attend an overnight retreat (this was modified due to health and safety reasons in 2020 and 2021). At the retreat, the mentors interview a portion of the first-year students to help determine their team. Plus, there are team-building activities and some developmental sessions about leadership and engagement on campus. After the retreat, there are 4 - 5 workshops on a variety of developmental topics. Completing the project, the retreat, and at least three workshops earn a certificate for each participant. This cohort-based program creates an environment where participants develop long-term relationships that are viewed as more meaningful than a random group of students for coursework (Eifler, Potthoff, & Dinsmore, 2004). Some of the learning outcomes include:

- Students will apply the five components of the relational leadership model in a small group while completing a campus project.
- Students will understand how a person might be considered a leader when they don't hold a formal leadership position.
- Students will develop a group project that assists a student organization in attaining one of their goals.

College staff also work with the mentors to check in with them to see how they're doing, assist them in considering communication with their group, and offer advice as they go through the process as well. Mentors are also told about the importance of "tapping" the new students for leadership positions in the RSO. These students often appear to consider leadership as a role beyond holding a position. Typically, those students are juniors or seniors. If sophomores are mentors, they may still be thinking about leadership as a position, and this may be the first time they ever consider leadership roles beyond a formal position. Some of the learning outcomes for mentors include:

- Student mentors will apply the five components of the relational leadership model in a small group while overseeing the completion of a campus project.
- Student mentors will explain how to complete a campus project to the emerging leaders.
- Student mentors will appraise the completed campus project and offer feedback to the emerging leaders.

Another annual leadership development program is the Student Leadership Development Conference. This is a day-long conference that is open to all students to attend. Typically, the students who attend are already in positional leadership roles across campus. The theme for the conference changes every year, but it focuses on developmental topics. For example, topics have focused on equity, diversity and inclusion, self-care, change, civility, etc. Student responses to each year's topic can tell us which stage of the LID Model they may be in. Those students who are firmly in the leader identified stage tend to say they don't see the topic as leadership. They expect workshops about how to create an agenda, how to run a meeting, or how to delegate. The students who have already moved beyond the third stage of the model seem to be more likely to understand that these topics are

about leadership and use the information learned at the conference to challenge systemic thinking on campus. In order to help the students who still see leadership as positional, college staff have used this as an opportunity to introduce the idea that leadership may be about more than position. This helps students consider leadership from a different perspective. Learning outcomes for the student leadership development conference include:

- Participants will recognize the importance of \*that year's topic\* (e.g., equity, diversity and inclusion) as a leader.
- Participants will share at least three concepts learned at the conference with other participants.

St. Norbert College provides a number of other leadership workshops. Those topics run the gamut from topics that seem to lean towards positional leadership - how to run a meeting - to considering how students may interact with the world after graduation - adulting 101 (leasing an apartment, understanding credit). Workshops are advertised to the entire student body, focusing on RSO executive board members. RSO executive members are somewhat of a captive audience. The way the workshops are advertised allows students to self-select the topics that are top of mind in a given semester or year. These workshops can support students who are in different stages of the Leadership Identity Development model. Those students in Stage 3 tend to gravitate towards those topics that teach skills (e.g., how to run a meeting). Those students who have moved beyond Stage 3 are more likely to attend sessions about recruiting new members and/or executive board members or how to transition a new president into their role. Learning outcomes for these workshops vary greatly depending on the topic.

In addition to these programs, there are a number of one-off leadership programs or training sessions that focus on students in positional roles across campus. By their very definition, these sessions are focused on leader identified topics, but may edge into introducing those participants to Stage 4 (leadership differentiated). These learning outcomes also vary greatly depending on the audience and context.

## APPLICATION OF THE LID MODEL

Komives et al. made ten recommendations for the application of the LID Model (2009, p. 38-39)

- **Know your personal LID path.** As a staff member, sharing your personal story of leadership development in your undergraduate experience is important. In the Emerging Leaders program, student mentors are asked to consider and share (if they're comfortable) their leadership development path.
- **Ask students to reflect.** The Emerging Leaders program and the Student Leadership Conference include structured ways to reflect on those particular experiences as well as previous experiences.
- **Teach group process.** The Emerging Leaders curriculum and other training programs for student employees teach students about group process.
- **Teach the language of leadership.** Every St. Norbert College leadership program discusses the definition of leadership and introduces students to some basic leadership theories.
- **Encourage students to stay committed to a group over time.** The Emerging Leaders program encourages first-year students to continue to work with the RSO with which they had been paired after the program's conclusion. Leadership programs focused on members or executive board members of RSOs explain the importance of their commitment to the organization they're representing.
- **Help students connect their LID stage and the dynamics of their organizations.** When working with older students, office staff teach them about the LID model and discuss how the model fits their experiences.
- **Use mentors.** Mentors are used in the Emerging Leaders program. The executive board members for RSOs are often mentors for younger members of the organization.
- **View the role of educator as coach.** While St. Norbert College doesn't typically use the language of coaching, college staff view themselves as mentors or coaches to help undergraduates grow and develop.
- **Establish partnerships among leadership educators (student affairs and faculty).** The student leadership conference often includes faculty and other staff as presenters throughout the day. This is an area that could

be improved with all leadership programs.

- **Establish a K-20 development model.** Since the college doesn't work with K-12 students, the model used doesn't start before enrollment in college. However, using the LID model to frame leadership development experiences has helped create a framework for undergraduate students and their entire collegiate experience.

Overall, college staff decided to use the Leadership Identity Development model to help think through the types of leadership that would meet students where they are at and challenge them to view leadership differently. College staff ultimately want students to understand that they can create change in their communities - campus and beyond - and want them to discern how to do that as alumni in their new communities after graduation.

## Challenges

### *Intersectionality*

Leader identity is similar to other social identities and leadership educators must recognize that it intersects with other dimensions of identity (Komives et al., 2009). Komives et al. (2009) assert that a challenge in using the LID model is recognizing intersectionality and how students' multiple identities shift in importance based on the situation. "Students of color may experience the LID stages differently than their White peers" (Komives et al., 2009, p. 24). Gender and sexual orientation can also impact how one experiences the LID stages (Komives et al., 2009).

### *Gender Identity*

A study in 2018 found that female study participants showed limited awareness of their own gender identity (McKenzie). McKenzie recommended that an exploration of gender identity and stereotypes should be included in leadership development programs for both men and women (2018). McKenzie also recommended leadership education initiatives focusing specifically on women (2018).

### *Racial and Ethnic Identity*

In a study of the leadership identity of faculty/staff of color, participants' navigation of the cultural context of their predominantly white (PWI) campuses showed a significant challenge (Longman, et al., 2021). One participant in particular noted, "I don't fit the leadership mold that exists at my institution" (Longman, et al., 2021, p. 272). We can conclude that if faculty/staff of color are having difficulty with self-confidence in this campus context, undergraduate students would also have difficulty. The cohort-based program provided participants the opportunity to support one another (Longman, et al., 2021).

When considering leadership development experiences for students of color or other minoritized social identities on a PWI campus, this study provides support to consider at least two propositions. First, it could be helpful to include faculty/staff from offices that provide support for students of color or other minoritized social identities. Showing students that faculty/staff with similar social identities are leaders and can help teach leadership could help them see themselves as leaders on campus. Second, participation in a cohort-based program could specifically assist students with minoritized identities by helping them support one another throughout the experience.

### *Student Organization Type*

As campus activities professionals, different types of student organizations must be considered and how their history or culture might impact student leadership development. Cory (2011) found that membership in a fraternity or sorority provided considerable leadership identity development opportunities. The close-knit and, sometimes residential, nature of fraternities and sororities may provide leadership identity development opportunities not found in other student organizations. While it's unrealistic to change all student organizations to mimic the structure and culture of fraternities and sororities, student organization faculty/staff advisors and the older students in those organizations can be utilized to help provide the adult and peer developmental influences that are more readily available in Greek organizations.

## Broaden Participation

Campus activities professionals must determine who is involved with their leadership development programs and find ways to make those programs attractive to a broader audience of students (Sessa et al., 2015). In considering these additional challenges, understanding the social identities of those students who do not participate in current leadership development offerings may help us consider new programs that help focus on the intersection(s) of different social identities.

## CONCLUSION

Using the Leadership Identity Development model can assist leadership educators to understand how college students understand leadership at different points in their development. While there are a number of ways to apply the model, there are still some challenges to work through. However, this model is an excellent way to frame a leadership development program and tie together the various leadership programs that are planned on a college campus.

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