

MIT Leadership Center

The MIT Leadership Center completed a productive and innovative year of curriculum redesign and development along with ongoing research pursuits. Our new faculty steering committee structure allowed for broader participation and closer alignment with the Organization Studies Group. This past fall, we also convened a working group of faculty who teach leadership or related topics (“the Narrative Group”) to assess current leadership offerings and present recommendations for further improvements. The overall goal was to create leadership synergies both within leadership programs and across the MBA, Executive MBA, Leaders for Global Operations (LGO), and Sloan Fellows curricula. The meetings provided an opportunity to share and learn about what is being taught and to create a core narrative that ties this work together, identifies the characteristics of an MIT Sloan leader, and helps set the stage for integrating our work for students.

In addition to this important work, the past year’s programmatic curriculum highlights included oversight and delivery of more than 70 well-received Sloan Innovation Period (SIP) leadership workshops, including ongoing integration of leadership content into the Core SIP; the launch of a peer-to-peer coaching program in collaboration with the Dean’s Student Advisory Council subcommittee on leadership; increased use of the online leadership development tool (LEADon) for first-year MBAs; experimentation with online peer feedback tools; and provision of leadership content to numerous executive education programs as well as programs across the MIT campus. The Leadership Center also spent a good deal of time building relationships and connections across degree programs; for example, it actively collaborated with LGO to strengthen connectivity there.

On the research front, the Leadership Center completed data collection for a theory-generating, comparative case study on distributed leadership; collaborated with a team at our first case study site on the design of a survey instrument to measure distributed leadership in organizations; and compiled data from a 360-degree questionnaire based on the 4 Capabilities model, which serves as a key element in MIT Sloan’s leadership curricula. Two papers on distributed leadership and the 4 Capabilities model are currently being written for publication.

MBA Program-Focused Initiatives

Personalized leadership development and coaching program scale-up: After the overwhelmingly positive response to the first two years of this program, we offered the program to any member of the incoming Class of 2013 who wished to participate. To do so, we contracted with senior lecturer Pat Bentley, tapped the continued participation of the original 12 volunteer coaches, and recruited four new faculty coaches, mainly from the managerial communications faculty.

Integrating SIP into the core curriculum: The Core SIP provides a common experience for all first-year students focusing on the theme of “principled leadership.” In addition to the required three-session sequence on ethics, the Leadership Center created a

curriculum of 17 leadership offerings (from which students chose two) that specifically focused on understanding one's personal leadership signature (credibility, confidence, and credo). Fifteen of our offerings received a student evaluation of 4.0 or higher on a 1 to 5 scale, and five received a 4.7 rating or higher.

Peer-to-peer coaching program: A new leadership development program was launched this year, allowing 20 second-year MBA students and/or Sloan Fellows to be selected to serve as executive coaches for up to 40 first-year MBAs. The goals of the program are to provide first-year MBA students with ongoing support in defining leadership goals for their time at MIT Sloan and beyond, as well as to create a concrete infrastructure for continued development of leadership competencies and behaviors; to provide second-year MBA students and Sloan Fellows with the opportunity to learn and practice a behavior-based coaching model and prepare for coaching in the professional arena after graduating from Sloan; and to enhance community building by allowing students to create meaningful relationships with other students across programs at Sloan.

LEADon tool: The LEADon tool was designed and launched in fall 2010 at the request of students to make leadership development more integrated throughout their two years at MIT Sloan. It is a self-directed learning tool built on self-assessment, goal setting/action planning, and reflection. This year, the tool was integrated and used in all sections of 15.281 Advanced Managerial Communication.

Leadership SIPs: This year the MIT Leadership Center offered more than 70 leadership sessions as an integral part of the fall and spring Sloan Innovation Periods, including the Core SIP. We also offered a number of new and innovative SIPs and engaged 10 area alumni in teaching workshops.

Second-year leadership orientation: A "leadership orientation" designed specifically for second-year MBAs was offered on registration day. The aim was to have strong visibility with second-year students and to remind them of the importance of leadership development as part of their educational experience. Senior lecturer Peter Senge facilitated the program, and more than 100 students attended.

Ongozi (online feedback tool): Ongozi (Swahili for "guide") is a social networking leadership development tool developed by MIT alumnus Allan Jaenicke (MBA '11). This online tool allows for quick and easy ongoing peer feedback, self-assessments, and team assessments. The Leadership Center worked with Jaenicke to integrate assessment tools developed and taught here at MIT Sloan and piloted the software with groups of students, including the peer-to-peer coaches and coachees, and Global Entrepreneurship Lab teams in January.

Final reflection milestone for second-year students: "Looking Back and Looking Forward," a two-hour session held in early May, provided graduating MBA students with a unique opportunity. In the midst of celebrations and making future plans, it allowed them to consolidate critical learnings, put their two years in perspective, connect with classmates, and build a collective memory of their experience.

Other Educational Initiatives

The center continues to tailor and teach its leadership models, tools, and cases not only to MBAs but also to the various degree programs across MIT Sloan and in the broader MIT community.

Narrative group: The narrative group established a preliminary architecture for a leadership program. This overall pathway for training principled leaders includes the frameworks, tools, and applications that produce the kind of leaders we hope to develop at MIT Sloan. While the architecture will have to be customized for each of the academic programs, it will be a general blueprint to unify the various leadership programs within MIT Sloan.

Open enrollment programs: FY2012 saw three offerings of the Transforming Your Leadership Strategy program, taught by Deborah Ancona, and one offering of Leading Change in Complex Organizations, taught by John Carroll. All sessions were well attended and each received average ratings above 4.2. In addition, center-affiliated faculty offered leadership sessions in the managing change open enrollment program, the Sloan Fellows program, and the Greater Boston Executive Program.

Custom programs: Deborah Ancona, John Carroll, Wanda Orlikowski, and Ray Reagans, along with other faculty associated with the center, provided leadership content in executive education custom programs offered for Aker, BP, Cisco, the US Department of Energy, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Li & Fung, Mahidol, NTU, Sabanci, and Vale.

Cross-Institute community: Leadership Center faculty and staff teach in MIT's Leader-to-Leader program, the MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives, the Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies, the MIT Supply Chain Management Program, the Gordon-MIT Engineering Leadership Program, MIT LeaderShape, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and the Technology and Policy Program. Many of these programs incorporate the 4 Capabilities leadership model, the X-Teams model, and/or the Three Lenses framework.

Research Initiatives/Activities

Distributed leadership research initiative: Over the past three years, the Leadership Center's main research project has been a theory-generating, comparative case study designed to identify organizational structures, practices, and cultures that support more collaborative forms of leadership. This year, a research team consisting of Deborah Ancona, Jason Davis, Wanda Orlikowski, Ray Reagans, and research scientist Elaine Backman completed data collection and provided a summary of their findings to Cisco, the third and final company participating in the distributed leadership study. Ancona, Backman, and graduate student Kate Parrot are analyzing the data from all three of the company sites and are writing up the resulting distributed leadership model for scholarly publication.

Distributed leadership measurement: The chief technology officer at the first company to participate in the distributed leadership study—Xerox—created a team in July 2011 to help leadership practices at the company’s research and development labs become more distributed. The team asked the Leadership Center for assistance in developing a survey to provide baseline data on current leadership practices in the company’s four labs. Deborah Ancona and Elaine Backman worked with the team on the survey instrument, helped them interpret the survey findings, and met with the team and additional senior managers to develop recommendations to enhance the practice of distributed leadership across the four labs. Ancona and Backman are currently analyzing the survey data to augment the qualitative data they collected previously at the company.

4 Capabilities model analysis: In the 1990s, Deborah Ancona, Thomas Malone, Wanda Orlikowski, and Peter Senge developed the 4 Capabilities model of leadership based on existing scholarly research. Subsequently, Ancona and Michelle Williams used the model to develop a 360-degree questionnaire that has been administered to MBA and executive education students over the past few years. This year, Ancona and Elaine Backman collated all of the 360-degree data and are analyzing the information in order to provide the first formal test of the 4 Capabilities model, which has become a key element in MIT Sloan’s MBA and executive education leadership curricula.

Creating a Learning Community of Practitioners and Academics

Cosponsorship of the Dean’s Innovative Leader Series: The center partners with the Office of External Relations each year to bring important speakers to campus to share their best practices and leadership lessons with students. These sessions are available on MIT World so that their content can be shared beyond the walls of MIT Sloan.

External outreach: Leadership Center faculty and staff continue to build and maintain relationships with academics and practitioners whose work is relevant or directly connected to that of the center. Important connections were established this year with Marshall Ganz (Harvard Kennedy School), Josh Margolis (Harvard Business School), and Bob Thomas (Accenture), as well as the Center for Creative Leadership and the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT. We made a concerted effort to reach out to non-MIT Sloan graduate students at the Institute as well as students from the Harvard Kennedy School and included them in Independent Activities Period workshops this year. Classes were also taught at Krotenville (GE’s leadership training site) this past spring.

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