

## **Wartburg College Leadership Certification Program Academic Course**

### **Requirement-**

In fulfilling the academic requirement of a class outside my major, I will reflect on my experience in PE 100. I realize this is not a common choice for one to demonstrate their understanding of leadership, but I feel my experience in this class exercised leadership. I took this class requirement for Wartburg students during Fall Term of 2002. This class is the one that everyone thought was done and over with as graduates of high school. In high school we were all required to take part in physical education, but I am guessing that I fall into the same category as many others in thinking that physical education is restricted to high school. Wartburg characterizes this class as lifetime wellness rather than physical education, but everyone approaches the class as they would high school p.e. In other words, very few people put forth any effort and even fewer leave with any sort of working knowledge of lifetime wellness. Wartburg intends to develop a love for exercise in its students as our country grows increasingly obese. By stating that we are supposed to be learning to exercise for life, an even smaller number of individuals put forth anything resembling effort. I quickly caught on to this, and I was inspired by Dick Peth to set an example. After observing the amount of enthusiasm that was not present the first couple of days, I went out of my way to exert myself the third. Being one of the older students in the class and one of the more athletic I was able to set a good example and others decided maybe it was alright to try and learn and maybe even enjoy this class. When I looked around to the many different workout stations that Peth had set-up, I would, without fail, always see

practically nothing. That station then became my next destination. I wanted to show people that it was alright to put forth effort in the stigmatized lifetime wellness/p.e. class and it caught on. There were a few people, as there always are, that would not respond to this, but getting a few to put forth a stronger effort was good enough for me. I learned that even leaders like Peth cannot always get everyone on board, so it takes a couple 'little people' that buy into what the leader is doing before the goal can be reached by more people. Even then, some people just cannot be reached, and those people just get drawn along. Sometimes, this is alright too. Leaders need to accept that not every single soul can be reached even with the most innovative and creative measures taken. We had these workout sessions two or three days a week and had one class each week. Nobody wanted to show up to this class either.

Our speakers for this class began to grow a bit perturbed by the poor turnout for these once a week classes. I then decided to counter the resistance to attending class by talking to other students in the class during the workout sessions about how we could incorporate what we had learned in class into the workout knowing well that most had not been to class. I got the feeling that people began to feel stupid or uneducated when I would talk about incorporating our learning into the workout and they had not learned anything, and suddenly it seemed to me that there were more students attending the classes. Again, this was a demonstration of how leaders can obtain followers by selling the goal to those that they wish to follow rather than deluding themselves into thinking that people will follow blindly. Maybe there was a time and place when people did follow and then evaluate later, but nowadays

widespread skepticism about following and even about leadership. Good leaders inform their followers of what to expect and why so that their followers remain interested in, and loyal to, the goal. Numerous people were not completely sold on the goal at the onset, but with some finesse from the instructor and some little people the sale was made. Leadership at multiple levels was needed for this goal to be reached.

## Wartburg College Leadership Certification Program Service Requirement

I will meet the Service Requirement of the LCP through discussion of two Community Builders experiences I have had. One took place during the Fall Term of 2003 in Communities, a sociology class. The other took place this past Winter Term 2004 in ID 315. These were both very different groups of students. With both groups, we met approximately six times through the term. We would get together and read books that had a common community-building theme, whether that theme was planting flowers to make the community physically beautiful or accepting someone different to make the community stronger. Each book had a theme like these and we would discuss these themes at the end of each book. It was my duty as a leader to incorporate how each one of the students in my group could be a leader in her/his respective community and make a difference using the concepts we had read about that day. I went into this with predisposed ideas as is always so easy to do whether we recognize this or not. I say this in conjunction with saying earlier that these were two entirely different groups of students. In the Communities class, we went to Longfellow Elementary in Waterloo. This is one of the poorest elementary schools in the state of Iowa, and the students that attend school here are equally poor. The group of students for my Community Builders experience in ID 315 were primarily from the Waverly-Shell Rock school district, with a couple of Bremwood students as well. The students from Longfellow were fifth graders, and the students from WSR were sixth graders with sophomore Bremwood students mixed in. In hindsight, I believe that I went into the Communities

expecting the children to be closed-off from the discussion. I thought this would be the general theme because with financial difficulties at home, I thought the students would have far more to worry about than making their communities better places to live. With the group from ID 315 I expected the exact opposite. With WSR students generally being financially stable and the Bremwood students being under close watch, I thought they would really take after the idea of making their respective communities better. I was wrong on all accounts.

Having previous CB experiences and demonstrating strong leadership usually landed me the more challenging groups of students. Often I was even warned beforehand by Sandra Hansen the project coordinator. I took this as a compliment, and I was happy to have been warned ahead of time. With both of these groups I was warned about the challenge they would present. So, with both groups, I went in the first day with an iron fist and established my role as leader. The second day I began my role as facilitator and this is where my predisposed ideas, or hypotheses, were put to rest. The students from Longfellow, although some demonstrated difficulty reading and sometimes a resentment for doing so, needed nothing more than a little encouragement to keep them going. The students from WSR and Bremwood were less than willing to read even when it was simple for them. The students from Longfellow were very engaged in the discussion that would always follow and were equally interested in how they could put to use these concepts we had learned. The WSR and Bremwood students were disengaged from the discussion and were uninterested in putting these concepts to use unless I really pressed them to engage in such things. And why did this happen?

I can only guess why each was engaged or disengaged in the ways in which they were. Maybe the Longfellow students had less `stuff at home to keep them busy and were thus more interested in getting out of the house to pick up trash as a service to their respective communities. Maybe the WSR and Bremwood students felt that public service was below them or maybe it is someone else's job. Maybe it was my predispositions that affected the presentation of the information and thus affected, in a diminishing way, the intended impact. Maybe it was the books we read relating to the age difference that was so. I am not sure, but I do know that by the third time we met for CB in both sessions I had seriously revamped my approach to better serve them and, in turn, the communities in which they lived.

Those experiences relate to leadership in a number of ways. I really had to use innovation and creativity in my efforts to effectively deliver a service to these students and help the students realize that they can each be leaders in their communities. And in these efforts I intended to develop a sense of wanting to do service for the community in each student. I know I reached some of the students in this sense, but knowing better the population that I was going to be leading rather than presuming what I did could have given me more opportunities in which to instill a sense of wanting to serve others in the students. I will work to not make this mistake again. I feel I ultimately performed a good service for these students and for our communities, and hopefully they are reflecting on what we did and will put some of the concepts we learned to use. Maybe I will see some of them doing this sort of service for others which would make me very happy as a leader of this type of service.

