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Service Learning and Servant Leadership

Service Learning at The University of Texas at Dallas is about building leaders through service, utilizing the Servant Leader Leadership Theory.

What is Servant Leadership?

Servant Leadership is a philosophy of serving others first. It is, as Mahatma Gandhi suggested, being the change we wish to see in the world!

Servant Leadership encourages collaboration and engages participation through service, encouragement, modeling of service leadership behavior, and empowerment of others.

The servant-leader is servant first. It 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 being served. The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous; more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?"

(Greenleaf, 1970, pg. 7).

The following characteristics are viewed by Larry Spears, CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, to be at the core characteristics of the servant-leader.

- **Listening.** The servant leader listens with sensitivity to the words, feelings and needs of others. They practice the art of effective communication and reflective listening.
- **Empathy.** The servant leader seeks to understand, empathize and have compassion for the needs of others.
- **Healing.** The servant leader recognizes that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.
- **Awareness.** The servant leader must be aware of their own inner self so that they may be more in tune with their environment and the people in it.
- **Persuasion.** The servant leader engages others (and their talents) and utilizes that synergy. The servant leader seeks to convince and build consensus, rather than coerce and manipulate through authority.
- **Conceptualization.** The servant leader has a vision of the future and is intuitive! They balance conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach to problem solving.
- **Foresight.** The servant leader understands the lesson of the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future.
- **Stewardship.** The servant leader commits to serving and understands the power of investing in the lives of others. They seek the greater good of society.
- **Commitment to the growth of people.** The servant leader believes in the intrinsic value of individuals and commit to the nurture and growth of others. They provide opportunities for learn and build others up through empowerment and encouragement.
- **Building community.** The servant leader develops and nurtures community relationships in order to build community and meet the needs within community. They invest, collaborate and value individual differences. They respect diversity. References:

Greenleaf, Robert. 1970. *The Servant as Leader*. IN: Indianapolis

Spears, Larry C. (2000). On Character and Servant-Leaders: *Ten Characteristic of Effective, Caring Leaders*. As taken from www.greenleaf.org/leadership



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