Artifact: Mentorship

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I have been fortunate in my leadership journey to receive the benefits of mentorship, which have been key to my growth as a leader and both aspirations and confidence in my own leadership. Recognizing in my DEL journey that ethical leadership includes passing along what we have learned, I have turned that around and have been able to offer others this same benefit through my mentorship over the past two years, not only expanding learning to others but also illustrating DEL Outcomes 4 and 6.

**Modeling Ethical Leadership through Mentorship**

DEL Outcome 4 states, "Model, design, and implement scholar-practitioner practices and processes to develop ethical leadership in organizational, community, or institutional contexts" (DEL Learning Guide, 2020, p. 35). Part of ethical leadership for me is the care we take in molding and shaping the next leaders behind us and offering to them what has been offered to us. My leadership model is called Conversational Leadership, and I believe we can accomplish relationship through our communications including conversation. Boies et al. (2015) noted that it is through communication that people experience and understand competencies and skills that ultimately lead to trust (p. 1083). As people interact, tell their stories, and listen, greater trust is developed. For me, this trust has often been built though mentorship.

Chandler & Kram (2005) talk about mentoring as those relationships that support our development as people and professionals. Murphy, et al. (2018) noted an additional challenge for

women in finding the informal networks that could advance them and suggested "developmental relationships" such as sponsorship and mentorship could impact women's ability to grow and advance in their careers (p. 361). I have been fortunate to have found three significant mentors in my life, including a professor in my undergraduate whom I am still in touch with who was one of my first champions, the source of much of my academic confidence, and who has remained one of my most faithful supporters. One of the most impactful on my career is the president at my former college. Though I did not report directly to Deana, she took an interest in my career, my professional development, and my personal growth. She is, in fact, the reason I am in the DEL program as she encouraged me to explore how I might use my skills beyond simply grant writing and how I might expand into higher education administration. Finally, my UC mentor, Dr. Wylie, has been instrumental in my growth as a scholar-practitioner. Our weekly conversations have ranged from interpretations and building on articles and research for papers and classes to how the theories and concepts learned in the DEL can and are put into practice in my daily work to how to grow as a leader in both leading myself and others.

Each of these people has sown into my life and has also encouraged me to mentor others in return as I learn and grow. Ibarra (2015) framed this as networking and noted that because no leader can have all the answers, it is important to be able to tap into a network of people with different ideas or perspectives (p. 77). Knowing how much I had learned from my own mentors and armed with their encouragement that I had something valuable to offer others, I set the goal to find three people to mentor. Though initial conversations felt tricky to me in offering mentorship to others when I wasn't sure how the offer would be received, if they would feel that I thought them deficient in some way, or if they might wonder what I had to offer, I quickly filled and overfilled my docket. My mentees include four younger colleagues at my former

college (one of whom just landed a new job as a chief diversity officer in a small hospital system and three who still come to me for career and leadership advice), an alum who runs a non-profit and whom I mentor on fundraising skills, and now a halftime report at my new college.

These relationships range in how often we meet, how formal the conversations, and in the content with some staying strictly to how to get ahead in their career, specific context growth advice, professional advice for how to handle work situations with colleagues and superiors, and the inevitable personal growth questions. But what stays consistent is the ability to speak into each other's lives and the perspective I can offer to each from my own experiences, growth, and leadership research, learning, and practice. This ability to pass along what I have learned feels like an ethical way to shape the next generation of leaders as I myself have been shaped and given opportunities.

**Generating and Conserving Knowledge through Conversation and Interaction**

DEL Outcome 6 states, "Generate and critically evaluates new knowledge, conserves the most important ideas and findings that are a legacy of past and current work and engages in the transformational work of communicating knowledge responsibly to others" (DEL Learning Guide, 2020, p. 37). For me, every piece of knowledge I have gained in the DEL has found its way into my mentoring, and every conversation feels like an opportunity to create and conserve knowledge.

One of the concepts that threads though my own learning is that of pragmatic process, which focuses on process and learning (Johnson, 2018) and places emphasis on flexibility in thinking about knowledge. One interesting concept toward this flexibility is dramatic rehearsal, which combines flexibility with the social aspect of pragmatism. Johnson (2018) defined

dramatic rehearsal as "mental imagination in action" and stated the process includes visualizing a variety of ways a decision could turn out and noted dramatic rehearsal as a way to think about "alternative strategies to resolve a situation" using both mental and emotional aspects of those stakeholders affected by the potential decision (p. 377). In a way, mentoring is a way to explore pragmatic processes and utilize dramatic rehearsal in a way that explores alternate outcomes, futuring, and flexibility in framing and thinking about a particular problem. Certainly, in my conversations with mentees, we engage in a sort of imagining and talking through situations.

In fact, as I consider the issues mentees bring to me or that I sense as we speak, I often find myself telling a story of my own learning or repeating an applicable tenant learned from scholarly research. As we talk through, using probing questions, open-ended conversation, and storytelling, we often come to new knowledge with both sides of the mentor relationship contributing and learning together. Stacey (2012) said it best, "Change can only happen through many, many local interactions" (p. 15). As we talk, share what each of us has learned, imagine alternate scenarios, and build on the conversation, change most certainly happens as we learn and grow together.

As a leader and as a scholar-practitioner, this is one of the deepest lessons I take from mentoring. Yes, you can teach and lead, but there is something special about co-creating – whether that co-creation is trust, care, knowledge, change, or futures – that is not found in other types of learning. I take that to heart as I both am mentored and as I mentor, creating trust, learning, knowledge, and growth. It is one of the greatest gifts of the DEL and one of the greatest gifts I can share with others around me.

References

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