

Name  
Leadership Certificate Competencies Essay  
Date

### **Section 1**

The beauty of the Leadership Certificate (LC) curriculum for me was its seamless connection between the work I have done in student organizations, volunteer work, and especially my work in SLP and CfLI. Additionally, the educational course allowed me to work on projects similar to those I have done in these groups, but through a different lens and with different motives. Instead of planning group activities for a workshop that would provide service to a student group on campus (as I did in SLP), I was doing these things specifically for the betterment of myself through reflection assignments and instructor evaluation. This added a different element of pressure to the process (a healthy pressure) and allowed for an evaluation of my performance from a set of experienced eyes – with those projects I was able to take a dipstick measurement on my facilitation skills.

As I was challenged to look deeper inward in the Leadership Seminar course, I emerged more confident in my Self-Awareness. I identified both strengths and weaknesses in my leadership: that was done through the diverse selection of readings that touched on the traits of famous leaders and through the course's guest speaker series. As I read and heard about this diverse selection of success and failure stories, I considered which success tactics I employed in my leadership and which mistakes I make. For example, I know that a leadership style that gives me tons of excitement and energy is the coaching style – one of my favorite things to do is to mentor young students in areas in which I feel competent and confident.

However, when I lead peers, who are equally competent and confident as I, the coaching leadership style can play out as condescending or overbearing. In my current committee within CfLI, I've had to learn to adjust from a coaching style to a more collaborative style. This inconsistency initially created some tension for me. Social awareness is a strength of mine so I knew how my fellow committee members felt in response to my "over-coaching" but I didn't really know what to do! After the reflection opportunity I had with these writing focuses, I was able to actively make the change I needed to best support the committee members I lead.

Interpersonal Communication would be my highest self-ranked competency. Where a lot of this competency was built throughout my LC process was through the SLP Coordinator role. I had not considered this would be an outcome of my SLP work, but as I began to practice public speaking at workshops, meetings, and events and as I began to model after co-coordinators and CfLI professional staff, I realized that I could communicate far more efficiently and effectively. I noticed the most marked improvement in my written communication. I attribute my skills in written communication to the mass of emails the coordinator position required I sent. In order to get through them all and still carry out my daily responsibilities, I needed to up my efficiency in my emails. I learned to cut out the clutter in my writing, resulting in a clearer, more effective brand of writing. Improving in my written and verbal communication skills has helped me to better share my insights into leadership as I help others develop in multiple areas of my life: in research, within student organizations, and with classmates.

A competency I may have felt less confident in a year ago, but feel strong in now is Moving Ideas into Action. Last summer, a group of my friends approached me about joining a new student group aiming to involve men in the fight against campus sexual assault. When I joined the group, “We’re Better Than That” – Men Against Sexual Assault (WBTT), the primary challenge the group faced was determining exactly how we were going to go about fighting sexual assault and involving men in that fight. I knew we wanted to engage men in a dialogue on sexual assault, so they felt more equipped to have these conversations with peers and to intervene in high-risk assault situations. Drawing from my SLP and CfLI experience in implementing leadership education for students, I had an idea of how to set up a framework for the organization’s programming. We planned to use a workshop model to begin engaging students in a dialogue, with tri-weekly group meetings to build a community within WBTT, and the planning of large-scale events that would hopefully reach hundreds of students on campus. It wasn’t easy to set this system up but I learned how to take an abstract idea, break it down, make a plan of action, and apply that plan in real situations. Using this plan, we now are working to effect positive change on campus by engaging peers in that conversation on campus sexual assault.

In the same student group, WBTT, a key competency I’ve drawn on and built my skills around is Fostering Bridge-Building and Collaboration. Again, this is one I may not have marked as a confident competency of mine before my WBTT experience. A key piece to our group’s sustainability as a new student group is creating connections with the community, university administration and other well-

established student groups. In particular, I made connections with University Housing administrators and we have been collaborating on the development of a workshop geared towards first-year students living in UW housing. I feel I did a fair amount of collaboration with different groups and university departments as an SLP coordinator, but it was all through the lens of leadership – an area I have been working for a long time and feel comfortable with. This business around sexual assault prevention is a new area for me, and this experience working with departments that are relatively foreign to me have challenged me to develop my bridge-building and collaboration skills, and I learned how to communicate with folks in different departments with different office cultures and with different interests. The success my group and I have had has given me confidence in the skills surrounding fostering bridge-building and collaboration.

## **Section 2**

A competency I have some confidence in based on my experience with it is Supporting Learning and Development of Others. Though I've done a lot of work, especially as an SLP coordinator, to support the growth of others, I don't feel satisfied with my ability to do so. Others may have a different appraisal of me but it's something at which I'll always try to prove myself I can be better. Where I think I do okay is in engaging thought-provoking conversations. I'm inherently a curious person and I feel like I can help folks dig a little deeper in their own self-reflection – I have done so this year as Organization Development Consultant (ODC) committee chair in conversations with ODC members as we discuss their leadership development. However, I struggle to provide leadership-development opportunities

for those I lead. I am always hesitant to delegate difficult assignments to folks because I dislike making people uncomfortable. This year I have learned to embrace my assigned leadership role as leverage for my need to push people. This cannot be something I rely on my whole life, but it has been a start in my ability to put others in uncomfortable growth situations.

Decisiveness in major life choices has been a challenge for me since I was a little kid – it used to take me hours to pick out which birthday presents I would ask for each year, choosing which sports I would play in high school was a challenge, and it took weeks to decide where I would attend college. Having good self-awareness, I knew my decision-making skills weren't where they could be as I entered my role as SLP coordinator. It helped to have three co-coordinators who could make major SLP decisions with me, but I did struggle to make some of the bigger decisions within my organizational branch. For example, the SLP committee chair for the Big Ten Leadership Network committee (the committee I oversaw) unexpectedly stepped down at the beginning of the spring semester – the decision I had to make was whether we hired a new chair, or whether I would absorb that chair's responsibilities. Since this was a difficult decision to make, I fell back to my instincts. As I explained before, I don't like to make others uncomfortable so I didn't want someone else to have to absorb the responsibilities of a committee within my branch. Hence, in order to make the decision I chose the route that would cause the least pain for others and nominated myself as the new committee chair. I tend to make these decisions as a leader that put extra work on myself so as not to burden others, but I know I need to rely to some extent on the resilience of others. The

**Commented [KT1]:** Can you give an example, and explain how this struggle has impacted your leadership, or how others experience your leadership?

impact on me was that I became stretched too thin as a leader and was not able to take care of all my responsibilities with the depth I would have liked. Sometimes I need to be willing to administer challenges to others – they can handle the adversity.

Finally, I'm not fully confident in my skills around Honoring Context and Culture. I'm part of a feminist group like We're Better Than That and I consider myself well educated on other social justice issues, so I think I'm a fairly socially just leader. However, I know I'm too quick to judge or appraise others based on their visible traits. For example, I value extroversion, confidence, and communication skills disproportionately highly. I unconsciously begin to discredit the ideas of those who don't fit this bill in my mind – for the top leaders of WBTT who don't have much experience in student org leadership, and thus have less confidence when facilitating meetings, I begin to discredit their ideas simply because they aren't elegantly delivered. Something I need to improve upon is honoring the context that these leaders have less experience than I – I need to adopt a student development mindset as I collaborate with these leaders, so they can not only get their ideas across to me, but also so they can begin to build the confidence that I so highly value.

### **Section 3**

Who am I? Right now, I'm a UW-Madison undergrad with one month remaining to make a significant, sustainable positive impact on the climate of this campus. I also have the perfect vehicle through which to do so in this student organization, WBTT. My group and I still have some big plans, especially for the month of April, which is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. I would like to finally begin putting on pilot sessions within UW Housing for the workshop I have been

**Commented [KT2]:** And what was the impact on your peers?

**Commented [KT3]:** I understood later on that you were choosing to focus on putting ideas into action, but can you make that more clear in the beginning of this section?

putting together with my group. I've come very close to moving that idea fully into action and next month is my chance to finish the job.

Who will I be some day? Down the road, I'll be a medical doctor. As a physician, I honestly don't know if I'll need to move ideas into action in the way that I need to now in WBTT. If I end up a hospital administrator or policy-maker, I'll surely have to create ideas and tactfully implement them. If I'm a surgeon, I'll meet with patients, perform surgeries, check in on them, and move on to the next patient: who knows – maybe I'll need this competency, maybe not. How will I get to either of those points in my life? First, I'll have to get accepted into medical school. How do I get into medical school? By proving to admissions committees that I do truly have a passion for practicing medicine and that I truly have a passion for service to humanity. To explain myself I will have to draw from experiences and showcase my accomplishments and skillfully articulate *why* I spent so much time on moving WBTT and SLP ideas into action. To have tangible accomplishments that allow me to stand out as a medical school candidate, I will need to move ideas into action. WBTT and SLP have been opportunities for me to do so, but I'll need more. I'm planning to take a gap year before medical school, so I have another twelve months to make myself stand out.

My plan for this gap year is to continue conducting research on campus and to publish a research paper. I'm currently working on the beginnings of my research project – in other words, it's still an idea. Thankfully my experience in WBTT this year has helped me to build the skills and confidence I need to put my idea to work. In order to push myself further with this competency, I plan to use this research

experience as a developmental one. I've gotten quite good at putting ideas into action in the student affairs/student life fields with my work in SLP, CfLI, and WBTT, but the science world is different: different ways of thinking, different challenges, different people and mindsets. This experience will help me build plasticity for the environments in which I can develop. In order to achieve my goal of becoming a doctor, I will have to become comfortable with pushing myself, and pushing myself in all sorts of contexts and climates. The medical field is a competitive and rigorous one and devoting myself to the similarly competitive research field will be a smart way to prepare myself for what is to come.