

Evaluation of the 2006 *AdvanceVT* Leadership Development Program
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Interviews were completed with all three female faculty members who completed the *AdvanceVT* Leadership Development Program in 2006-07. Interviews were completed between July 19th and August 3rd of 2007. Participants were asked if they would prefer the interview to be completed over the telephone or in person. Two interviews were completed in person and one over the telephone. At the completion of the interview, the researcher typed up field notes from the interview. The field notes for each interview were sent to each participant for review. Each participant was instructed to review the field notes, making sure their comments were accurately represented. Participants were instructed to make any changes to the field notes as they saw fit. Minimal changes were made to the field notes. This reflects the quality of the data.

The following is a summary of the responses to the interview questions. Report summaries are presented in the form of “majority” and “minority” responses. “Majority” responses indicate that two or more of the participants noted this experience. “Minority” responses indicate that only one participant expressed the idea or had noted the experience.

Question #1: What motivated you to participate in the *AdvanceVT* Leadership Program?

Participant responses:

- To develop personal skills (i.e., personal capabilities/abilities, become more well-rounded)
- To develop professional skills (i.e., leadership skills)
- I was supported by my department chair to participate

Quote: “The program was instrumental in my success here. I knew I could learn more professionally by participating in the program. I hoped it would make me well-rounded”.

Question #2: What types of skills did you hope to acquire by participating in the program?

Participant responses:

Majority:

- To improve communication skills
- To improve conflict resolution skills

Minority:

- To increase participant’s assertiveness
- To increase participant’s ability to do strategic planning
- To improve sense of (personal) confidence

Quote: I hoped to increase my assertiveness, increase my communication skills, and to increase my strategic planning. We really did not address this last one, but other areas of the program more than exceeded meeting my expectations.

Question #3: On a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning “exceeded your expectations” and 0 meaning “it fell short of your expectations,” to what extent would say the program has met your expectations?

Participant responses:

Majority: Program met or exceeded expectations

- 8-360 program was enjoyable
- It connected participants to new and different resources.
- 9/10-The program was well structured.
- Meetings with project leader/coach were useful

Minority:

- More meetings dealing with professional image issues (i.e., dress, body language, how to address larger male crowds) would have been helpful

Quote: It was valuable to have one-on-one time with a coach (an unexpected benefit of the program). The 360 survey was helpful to learn about others’ perceptions of my capabilities.

Question #4: In what ways has the program influenced your goals for leadership positions in the future?

Participant responses:

- Increased participant’s confidence level to pursue a leadership role
- Initiated dialogue about leadership possibility
- Helped me deal with complicated issues with diplomacy and patience

Quote: It’s kept me open to the possibility of going into leadership. It has opened the dialogue, but I still need to be careful about what I am taking on.

Question #5: What part of the leadership program have you found to be most personally valuable?

Participant responses:

- 360 analyses with project leader
- Personal dialogue with project leader
- Development workshops (i.e., writing with CEUT)

Quote: I worked with XX in the spring to improve my writing skills (focusing on the writing process). These workshops helped me move forward more efficiently with my NSF research grant and several journal papers.

Question #6: What part of the leadership program has been least valuable or useful to you personally?

Participant responses:

- Networking lunches (minority response-1)

Quote: Overall, it was a net positive gain for me. I did not waste time participating in the program.

Question #7: Can you identify any tangible outcomes to your own career that you attribute in whole or part to your participation in the leadership program?

Participant responses:

- Participant took the lead in developing a new policy for department
- Too soon to answer
- Program has made participants think more concretely about leadership positions in the future.
- Training received directly applied to proposal writing project

Quote: I am working on a National Science Foundation (NSF) proposal—so the training I received from XX directly applied to writing that proposal. I also completed and submitted a journal paper for review, and I also revised a journal paper for review. The impact is there and will continue in the future.

Quote: In part, my participation fell nicely with a summer leadership program at Harvard I participated in. Research leave in the fall also allowed me to pursue leadership development. It gave me directions about where my leadership should go. I took the lead in developing a graduate student annual review policy. Creating contracts and statements of expectations [for graduate students] makes it easier for evaluating them. The annual review and my use of contracts resulted, in part, from a point that came up from 360 report—That I avoid conflict.

Question #8: If you had to do it all over again would you participate in the program?

Participant responses:

Majority: Yes

- Timing was convenient
- Useful even if participants do not have administrative aspirations

Quote: The timing was good. I would participate again.

Question #9: What advice would you offer other VT women who are considering participating in the program?

Participant responses:

- Women from across disciplines would benefit from the program.
- Be ready to see how others perceive you.
- It will open your eyes to other opportunities you might not have realized.

Quote: I come from Social Sciences. I understand the rationale for engineers [to be targeted by Advance], but women across disciplines would benefit from participating in this program.

Question #10: Do you have any suggestions about ways the program can be improved?

Participant responses:

Majority response (2):

- Networking between cohorts with a specific objective

Minority response:

- Requirement for participants to meet once a month to share experiences and for support
- More compensation for project leader/coach
- Formal inclusion and compensation for outside project supporters (i.e., CEUT)

Quote: Locally, have cohorts interact with other (previous) cohort members. For example, cohort number 1 and number 3—see how program is influencing us. Networking among cohort groups once a year would be nice.

Question #11: Have you actively applied for a leadership position within or outside of Virginia Tech during the past year?

Participant responses:

Majority response: No (2)

- Two participants indicated that they will wait 5 to 10 years before applying for a leadership position.
- One participant serves a PI for a grant (research leadership), but has not pursued an administrative leadership position.

Quote: No; This is related to advice I have been getting about making associate and then full professor before taking leadership positions. To take a lateral move and then get promoted would put me in a vulnerable position. So, it would be another 5 years before I pursue an official leadership position. However, improved leadership skills benefit all my roles at the university.

Question #12: Are you applying for a leadership position in the near future?

All participants indicated that they will not be applying for a leadership position in the near future.

Question #13: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in the leadership program?

Participant responses:

- Leadership skills have benefited my department as a whole
- Incorporating the Myers Briggs personality inventory may be helpful for future programming efforts

Quote: I am grateful for the opportunity. I have benefited. My department has seen changes in me. My leadership skills have benefited the department as a whole.

Summary and Suggestions

All participants indicated being satisfied with the program and that they benefited from participating in it. The experience overall was a very positive one for all participants. Participants cited the timing of events as being convenient and the personal, one-on-one time with the project leader as being the most valuable. Experiences with the project leader allowed participants to reflect on their personal abilities and skills and highlighted areas in leadership they could improve in.

While all participants indicated that their leadership skills and confidence to pursue leadership opportunities increased, none of the participants expressed a desire in the near future to pursue leadership positions. This decision was mostly due to advice given about promotion within faculty ranks. Participants felt that it would be more beneficial to be promoted within their current position before entertaining an administrative leadership position. There also appeared to be a little disillusionment about administrative roles being more involved than originally imagined. All participants did indicate the possibility of pursuing leadership roles in the future. It is important to note that leadership in other forms was pursued by two participants. While not administrative, taking on leadership within a department by developing a new policy or serving as a principal investigator for a grant was indeed attributed to the skills developed by participating in the program.

To increase collegiality and networking opportunities between current cohort participants and previous cohort participants, respondents suggested more structured meetings for interaction and information sharing. Participants seemed to express a need for interacting with, supporting, and encouraging fellow participants and learning from previous cohort members.

Overall, the impact of the *AdvanceVT* Leadership program is beneficial to faculty members involved. In addition, the leadership of the program is instrumental in the program's success as noted by current participants. Suggestions for future program efforts might include more interactive (both formal and informal) sessions with current and previous cohort participants. This would encourage continued networking and support for program participants.

Considering the concern of participants to delay pursuing administrative leadership positions early or mid-ways in their faculty career, there may be a need to revise the

leadership program focus. For example, the program could focus more broadly on leadership development to include more areas (and examples) of how participants can pursue leadership in addition to their current teaching and research roles.