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## Leadership and the ATHE

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# LEADERSHIP AND THE ATHE

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## *Abstract<sup>1</sup>*

In today's increasingly globalized, competitive, and fiscally-afflicted, higher-education environment, academic leaders are regularly expected to serve as both "visionaries" and "managers" adept in all forms of political, economic, and social engagement. Likewise, performing arts leaders share a similar fate, as they need to be versatile tacticians skilled equally in both business and art. Given these realities, for higher education performing arts programs, the challenges are greater. These programs — and their parent institutions — require leadership and leaders capable of handling both immediate complexity and long-term transformation. As such, leadership development critical to this mission is a priority. This article explores the intricacies of higher education and the performing arts, and discusses the correlative characteristics of leadership, management, mentoring, coaching, and networking. Additionally, it provides in-depth description and critical analysis of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education Leadership Institute — as the institute is a unique leadership initiative specifically designed to address this enigmatic niche subset of higher education.

Effectual leadership is an essential element in any organization. It is the element that organizations rely on to translate goals and objectives into accomplishments (Rowley & Sherman, 2003; Simon, 1976). Equally as important is the need to develop leaders surefooted in handling the complex challenges and problems often associated with great responsibility. Further still, developing leaders must also be cognizant of the human factor inherent in organizational structures, as this often requires them to deliver otherwise seamless fluidity in their treatment of socialized activities. Therefore, the successful development of effective leadership is critical for both performance and accomplishment. This is not just true of commercial organizations, but also of academic agencies (Bensimon & Neumann, 1992; Braun, Nazlic, Weisweiler, Pawlowska, Peus, & Frey, 2009; Rowley & Sherman, 2003). Arsenault (2007) states, "Universities are definitely not immune to this need for effective leadership as they face similar challenges as any other organizations" (p. 14). In these settings, academic leaders must conjointly serve as both a "visionary" and a "manager" adept in all forms of political, economic, and social engagement. Comparably,

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the performing arts too face similar challenges and dilemmas, as leaders in the arts need to be versatile tacticians skilled equally in both business and art (Parrish, as cited in Volz, 2007). Given these realities, it is fair to say that higher education performing arts programs are rife with unfathomable expectations and imposing tests of fortitude, wherein those leading the charge must do the seemingly impossible.

Consequently, this raises several critical questions. First, what exactly is leadership, and what do leaders do? Second, what tribulations regarding leadership surround both the arts and higher education? Third, why is leadership development crucial to these fields — particularly when they are in concert? Lastly, where can one look to for leadership development facilitation in higher education performing arts programs, and how are developing leaders aided in embracing and executing challenges?

## Literature Review

### *Leadership, Management, or Both?*

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. — John Quincy Adams*

In *The Special Challenges of Academic Leadership*, Rowley & Sherman (2003) posit that, “leadership is an essential ingredient of positions with supervisory responsibilities in any organization” (p. 1058). While this sentiment indeed is sincere, it is important to define leadership to understand why it is indispensable to organizational success. According to Northouse (2016), leadership can be defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). Delving deeper into this description, Astin & Astin (2000) characterize leadership as follows:

*Leadership is a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change. In contrast to the notion of “management,” which suggests preservation or maintenance, “leadership” implies a process where there is movement — from wherever we are now to some future place or condition that is different. Leadership also implies intentionality, in the sense that the implied change is not random — “change for change’s sake” — but is rather directed toward some future end or condition which is desired or valued. Accordingly, leadership is a purposive process which is inherently value-based (p. 8).*

In other words, leadership is fundamentally preoccupied with purpose, transformation, and collective accord, wherein a leader could be considered a change agent or social architect, a visionary, and a diplomat committed to organizational, institutional, and societal values (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Northouse, 2016; Winston & Patterson, 2006).

As Astin & Astin (2000) make mention of the term “management” in their definition of leadership, it is important to bear in mind that management and leadership are often interrelated, as most organizational leaders today are regularly involved in both practices — markedly so in higher education and the performing arts.

Katz (1955) defines management as exercising direction of a group or organization through executive, administrative, and supervisory positions (Algahtani, 2014). Further, Katz (1955) suggests that management responsibilities are task-oriented. Meaning, managers are accountable for duties such as staff development, mentoring, and conflict resolution (Algahtani, 2014; Katz, 1955).

Likewise, Kotter (2001) proposes that management is about contending with complexity in order to bring balance and consistency to otherwise chaotic enterprises. As such, Kotter (2001) suggests that managers focus on formal direction and fulfillment of all planning, organizing, budgeting, coordinating, and monitoring activities. By doing so, organizations will more concisely – and smoothly – achieve their goals. Whence, according to Katz (1955) and Kotter (1990), leadership and management essentially go hand-in-hand and are necessary for success.

Further still, Dessler (2002) proposes the notion that a leader is someone with managerial and personal power who can influence others to willingly perform actions and achieve goals beyond what the followers could achieve on their own (Duncan, 2011). Expanding on this, Winston and Patterson (2006) offer a more long-winded definition of a leader stating:

*A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives (p. 7).*

In this regard, it is clear that Dessler (2002), as well as Winston and Patterson (2006) both support the view that leadership and management intertwine, and that the functions of leaders and managers are often interchangeable.

Considering these three perspectives, it is reasonable for one to derive that leadership and management are undoubtedly interrelated and vital to organizational success. As Duncan (2011) asserts, “effective leaders need to be good managers and effective managers need to be good leaders” (para. 1). This is unequivocally true of the higher education and performing arts fields. For example, in recent years the higher education landscape has changed considerably. It has become increasingly globalized; “for-profit” colleges and universities are on the rise and competing with traditional institutions; and acute cuts in public funding have become routine (Black, 2015). Likewise, the performing arts, too, face comparable crises. Volz (2007) underscores this actuality summing:

*Managing theatres has proven a perilous path for many would-be theatre leaders as natural disasters (Katrina), unnatural disasters (9/11), economic recession, “surprise” deficits, aging audiences, fundraising fiascos, board politics, and “human resource burn out” plague the profession (p. 1).*

In consequence, the need for leaders, adept in traditional leadership functions, as well as in managerial functions, has taken priority. However, both fields are plagued with systemic ritualism and anomalistic precedents, thereby thwarting attainment of effective leadership.

## Higher Education

*Given the consumer-pleasing politics of today's universities, I have, in effect, seventy new bosses each semester; they're sitting at the desk in front of me. — Maureen Corrigan*

From an organizational context, the role of a leader — as well as the concept of leadership — in higher education could be considered aberrational as the composition and strategic layout of higher education differs greatly from that of its traditional counterparts (i.e. corporations, small businesses, government agencies, etc.). For instance, executive roles,

such as that of a Chancellor, President, or Vice-President, are mostly analogous to roles found in other sectors. Whereas academic leadership roles, such as those of deans and chairs, are relatively unusual, they bring with them complications that further confound the nature of those positions (Black, 2015). The same is true of faculty positions, as they too contain an array of complexities all their own.

For example, deans occupy a unique place in the continuum of academic administrators, as they are the facilitating link between department chairpersons and school directors, faculty, staff, students, and upper administration (“Responsibilities, Roles, and Authority,” 2012). As such, deans straddle the line that separates administration from academics, as they are concerned with both entities. However, their role is typically fashioned more toward that of an executor than that of an academician. Chairs, on the other hand, further complicate matters as their responsibilities are almost akin to those of a dean, but are more representative of a faculty member. Meaning, leadership in academic departments requires a concern for both administrative and scholarly functions, wherein a chairperson is obliged to serve in both capacities — as an executor and as an academician (Rowley & Sherman, 2003). Faculty positions further add to the obfuscation as they typically combine the role of teacher, scholar, researcher, and institutional citizen into one — to which all have leadership responsibility in some form or another (Astin & Astin, 2000; Black, 2015). It is also quite common for deans, chairs, and faculty to assume leadership roles external to their home institutions, as they are often involved with research projects, engaged in professional development, or have affiliation with other discipline-specific organizations and/or enterprises (Black, 2015).

Another anomalous feature of higher education leadership is the manner in which leadership positions are typically filled. Quite often, faculty are appointed to a senior rank based upon their deep subject knowledge, experience, and scientific accomplishment (e.g., number of publications in international journals) — not based on leadership skills (Braun et al., 2009). In some situations, such as those associated with turnover or rotational terms, academic leaders may find themselves in the rather difficult — and often awkward — position of simply being a transitory role-holder (Black, 2015; Kubler & Sayers, 2010; Rowley & Sherman, 2003). In many instances, there may be a reluctance to assume leadership, as many academics do not see leadership as a priority, nor do they think of themselves as management material (Kubler & Sayers, 2010; Rowley & Sherman, 2003).

As a result of these two anomalous considerations, many faculty members wind up holding leadership positions without adequate preparation or proper training; are subsequently ill-equipped in terms of prior experience and aspiration; and in turn address the resulting workload unsatisfactorily (Braun et al., 2009; Johnson, 2002; Kubler & Sayers, 2010; Rowley & Sherman, 2003).

## **The Performing Arts**

<i>Theatre is a business, and it is an art. — (Green, 1981, p. 1)</i>
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As stated earlier, one of the most daunting obstacles leaders in the arts typically encounter is trade bipolarity, i.e., the nature of the industry often necessitates that leaders be equally proficient and domineering in meeting both the artistic and administrative leadership needs of the organization (Galli, 2011). Performing arts organizations are inherently complex,

wherein leadership and managerial commitments to excellence, artistic integrity, accessibility, audience development, accountability, and cost effectiveness are implicit and essential (Chong, 2000; Galli, 2011). McCann (as cited in Volz, 2007) endorses this certitude pointing out that “the dilemma is that 'managers' do much more than manage, they are responsible for providing leadership to their board, direction to their staff, and partnership with the artists” (para. 36). As such, like any other organization or institution of higher education, performing arts entities must too have a clear mission, a comprehensible strategic plan, and efficacious leadership (Spires, 2015). When inefficient leadership and/or management convolutes the process, and no definitive ambitions or targets are perceivable, institutions become unable to properly manage themselves, and subsequently become incapable of responding to external challenges (Galli, 2011). Against this backdrop, finding individuals adept in both practices can be exceedingly frustrating. That is not to suggest that these individuals do not exist. The industry does in fact employ a bevy of versatile leaders and managers that do not have formal training, or an advanced degree. In most instances, many of these individuals come from other fields, or simply “just fell into it” (Pinholster, 2017). However, for those in pursuit of career stability or advancement in the realm of performing arts leadership, the first real taste of what it entails often begins in the classroom.

Volz (2007), an international arts consultant, and former department chair and director of multiple Arts Administration programs, concedes that “few students wander into faculty offices and declare their passion to work with nonprofit Boards of Trustees and generally under-compensated colleagues to facilitate a theatre's fundraising, audience development, and strategic planning needs” (para. 5). Rather, most students in the performing arts tend to gravitate towards the more commonly acknowledged disciplines of the field, such as acting and directing. Resultantly — as can be expected when only a paltry few persons have proper training in the finer aspects of arts leadership — the field is left devoid of qualified applicants.

Ironically, for an industry rooted in a “the best way to learn is to do” mentality, the “hands-on” experiences, typical of most performing arts programs, are lacking with respect to leadership training (Kaddar, 2009). According to Kaddar (2009), performing arts leadership-training programs tend to be theory-based, and focus more on the art and the acquisition of technical skills, as opposed to emphasizing pragmatic skills fundamental to leadership, such as those pertaining to the socialized nature of the position. McCann (as cited in Volz, 2007) corroborates Kaddar's claims, and suggests that the solution is to “focus more on leadership competencies and less on functional management training — challenge young potential leaders to be creative, intuitive, and open to new ideas” (para. 12). Rhine (as cited in Volz, 2007) agrees, simply stating, “No one trains artistic leaders.... No one really allows students to be producers and artistic directors who can walk in both a management world and an artist's world” (para. 16). Sogunro (2004) furthers the argument for new, more creative training methods as he advocates for change in leadership training pedagogies, believing that traditional training methods—such as those mentioned by Kaddar (2009) — are ineffective. He protests:

*Most leadership workshops today are preoccupied with lectures, reading, writing, and discussion groups.... As leaderships skills and attitudes are generally not easily acquired or changed overnight merely through theory.... direct experience of a learning activity is key to bringing about real understanding and desired change in people (p. 355).*



Given the demand for leaders capable of being renaissance men, alongside a palpable lack of both adequate training options and qualified aspirants, it would seem the performing arts are at an impasse in need of urgent resolution. While there is no quick-fix remedy to this quandary, a rethinking — and revamping — of current development practices in both professional and academic milieus seems imperative, particularly when people with the acumen and aptitude for two very distinct walks of life are so highly coveted.

## **The Need for Leadership Development**

*The most important thing to understand about great leadership development is that it is not a program. Great leadership development is a strategy and culture. — (Freifeld, para. 3)*

Leadership development is considered critical to organizational success in that it defines goals, expectations, competencies, and capabilities for the both the organization and its leaders (Freifeld, 2012). However, to define said goals, expectations, competencies, and capabilities, one must be cognizant of developmental processes and characteristics. For instance, Day (2000) posits a differentiation in terms of developmental approaches, contending that effective leadership actually stems from two components: Leader Development and Leadership Development.

According to Day (2000), leader development is intrapersonal, and focuses on an individual's capacity to participate in leading-following processes. Leader development can be viewed as a “purposeful investment in human capital”; that is to say, the individual's value, worth, and/or cost to their parent organization (Braun et al. 2009; Day, 2000; DeRue & Myers, 2014; Lepak & Snell, 1999). The emphasis of this developmental approach is the presumption that the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities often associated with leadership (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation) will culminate in effective leadership practice (Day, 2000; DeRue & Myers, 2014).

Leadership development, on the other hand, is interpersonal as it is concerned with social capital — the building of networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange (Burt, 1993; Day, 2000). Thereby, leadership development could be defined as the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in organizational roles and processes, thus enabling them to work together in meaningful ways, to anticipate and learn their way out of unforeseen challenges and problems (Day, 2000). Put differently, it is the building of mutual commitments and interpersonal relationships necessary for leading-following processes to unfold effectively within a given social context (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

As alluded to earlier, the contemporary organizational landscape often finds leaders needing to demonstrate both traditional leadership behaviors and managerial ones. As such, it is also important to underline the distinguishing characteristics of both manager development and management development.

As previously mentioned, management is considered to be about coping with complexity, providing direction, and achieving order and balance. In turn, managers concentrate on task-oriented functions such as planning, organizing, and controlling. This suggests that management is performance-oriented, and that management development would then be concerned with education and training applicable to seeing that task-oriented duties are

carried out. Meaning, managers must acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities vital to enhance task performance (Day, 2000). Moreover, as leadership tends to correspond to group processes — wherein organizational members must work as a collective — management processes are often individualistic, and regarded as position and organization specific (Day, 2000; Keys & Wolfe, 1998). Although managers share the same common objectives as leaders — achieving organizational goals and mission fulfillment — the premise of management being position specific implies that a manager's focus is only on immediate concerns, priorities, and select individuals, as opposed to the entire entity. Furthermore, management development differs somewhat from leadership development in that it provides relevant application of proven solutions to known problems (Day, 2000). Whereas leadership may involve conception of solutions and devices necessary for change and goal attainment, managers simply rely on “tried-and-true” methodologies to push forward and maintain momentum.

Delineation of developmental processes regarding leaders and leadership, as well as managers and management, is meaningful as it affects how those in leadership positions are groomed. This holds particularly true when discussing the fields of higher education and the performing arts. Due to the previously described innate complexities of both fields, the development of leaders in both fields must not only entail a great number of job specific criteria, it must also take into account correspondent organizational and field distinctions.

Through highlighting the various idiosyncratic dilemmas faced by the fields of higher education and the performing arts, it could be deduced that the current state of affairs is unenviable, and in desperate need of reform. Seeing that higher education and the performing arts share similar plights — as they both struggle to find and maintain suitable leadership candidates — it would seem that both fields might benefit from implementation of an internalized leadership development plan. Taking into consideration the diverse attributes of both fields, alongside firm leadership and management overlap, one can only imagine the scale of challenges and pressures leaders in higher education performing arts programs must endure. Consequently, these leaders are frequently asked to meet demands that are not plausible, and expectations that are exceedingly high and borderline improbable. For this reason, the call for legitimate — and perhaps singular — leadership development seems needful. In response to this call, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Leadership Institute was founded.

## **The ATHE Leadership Institute**

***The Leadership Institute is built around an explicit philosophy of “lead from where you are.”***  
**— The ATHE Leadership Institute**

The ATHE Leadership Institute has a long-standing tradition of providing professional development opportunities for performing arts faculty, most notably as they prepare for leadership roles in higher education (“ATHE Leadership Institute,” n.d.). Established in 2000 by co-founders Mark Heckler, president of Valparaiso University, and Barbara Korner, dean of the Penn State College of Arts and Architecture, the Leadership Institute (LI) has helped more than 250 academic leaders of higher education theatre and fine arts programs gain the confidence, influence, skills and agency required for effective leadership service within their home institutions. The arts — more specifically, the performing arts — are unfortunately often regarded as marginal. This is particularly true in the field of education, where the arts



are time and again not given much thought and consideration by those extraneous to the discipline(s)—especially when money is tight and there are competing priorities (Cherbo & Wyszomirski, 2000; Kaddar, 2009). Therefore, the arts tend to be undervalued, and educational leadership positions held by artists are seemingly far and few in between. Kaddar (2009) purports “this is assumed to be indicative of the capacities of performing artists to lead outside their field” (p. 57). In attempts to shine a light on this glaring misconception, as well as to afford change in response to existing ideologies, the LI seeks to develop higher education leaders at the upper reaches of administration — such as deans, provosts, and presidents — who come from theatre and performing arts backgrounds. Moreover, as higher education and the performing arts are both undergoing massive — and very similar — shifts in how they sustain viability, it is important to see more imaginative leaders emerge from the arts and end up in those echelons.

The most common and directly targeted layer of leadership for the LI is department chairpersons and theater department directors. In most instances, LI participants tend to be faculty thinking about leadership and leadership roles, or individuals who have recently taken on leadership roles in directorial and/or chairperson capacities. And while the LI is primarily geared toward theatre artisans, it is open to individuals with backgrounds in dance, film, music, and even architecture. Candidates for participation in the LI are chosen through a nomination process. The process requires someone in an administrative role—usually a dean, or chair — to submit an application. The LI asks that all proposals speak directly to a nominee’s leadership interest, potential, or experience. Additionally, the application should also contain ample reasoning as to why the nominee would benefit from participating in the LI. Most nominees are accepted, as the LI tries to encourage leadership across the arts continuum. However, applicants within the first couple of years of their higher education life—particularly those in tenure track positions — are typically discouraged from participating as they are considered too early in their career arc to tackle leadership responsibilities. Once accepted, first time participants can expect help with adjusting to their new positions, and a guided hand through the unfamiliar experience. The LI tends to take on a more profound position for returnees however, as the individual foci become broader and specialized to match each participant’s particular station.

The LI adopts a two-pronged approach to its mission. Annually, participants and institutional leaders converge over a three-day period in which they take part in a series of lectures, workshops, clinics, round-table discussions, focus groups, and engagement sessions. Presentation material and programming covers a wide array of themes and topics applicable to the challenges experienced by leaders in higher education. Subject concentration often covers issues pertaining to labor; equity; inclusion; fund-raising and development; admissions, recruitment and retention; and relationship building amongst departmental faculty. As discussed previously, the performing arts alone present a rather unique set of challenges and obstacles. In an educational context, it is imperative that these challenges work congruously with institutional objectives. Therefore, LI presentation topics also tend to address matters typically encountered by professional artists and managers. Some of the subjects explored include producing, artistic direction, entrepreneurship, stakeholder interest, and effective civic engagement/practice.

Additionally, all LI presenters and speakers — as well as advisory board members — are nationally recognized, higher education and industry leaders, and include a wealth of well-

experienced presidents, provosts, deans, chairs, and other executives who may lend their expertise to the mission.

Appropriately, the annual colloquium begins with a session entitled “A Framework for Values-Based Leadership” (Astin & Astin, 2000; Pinholster, 2017). As discussed earlier, Astin & Astin (2000) propose that leadership is value-laden, particularly in education, where values underlie virtually all educational decisions. More specifically, they explain:

*The value ends of leadership should be to enhance equity, social justice, and the quality of life; to expand access and opportunity; to encourage respect for difference and diversity; to strengthen democracy, civic life, and civic responsibility; and to promote cultural enrichment, creative expression, intellectual honesty, the advancement of knowledge, and personal freedom coupled with social responsibility* (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 11).

As such, LI participants investigate their virtues through in-depth examination of their values in addition to the values of the field/discipline, and the values of their respective programs, departments, and home institutions. This is intended to provide for them a deeper, contextual understanding of leadership from those various paradigms. Simply put, it helps participants think outside the box, see the big picture, and more efficiently pinpoint and outline their leadership goals.

All institutional programming is designed to provide participants the opportunity for social exchange amongst peers and professionals alike. Participants are encouraged to share ideas and best practices, while forming strategic partnerships and building networks.

While round-tables, lectures, and focus groups prove useful, the heart of the LI — the second prong of the approach — is found in the form of a mentoring program. According to Jacob Pinholster (2017), co-director of the LI, the mentoring program is the centerpiece of the LI’s function and mission, as he considers the mentor/mentee relationship to be the most valuable aspect of the program. He explicitly states that the “mentor/mentee matching process is the most important thing we do” (J. Pinholster, personal communication, March 27, 2017). Mentors for the program are selected with regard to a pair of distinct criteria. First, mentors are chosen based upon diversity and inclusion. The LI tries to wield an honorable cross-section of gender balance, cultural backgrounds, and geographic dispersion. Likewise, they also strive for institutional diversity as community colleges, research universities, private colleges, et cetera vary in both structure and administrative operations/policies. Second, the LI strives to match those parameters to participants (mentees) in manners suitable for acquisition of useful perspectives from inside their own context, as well as from within their own identities and histories. Further, as is true of presenters and advisory board members, all mentors for the LI are well-established higher education leaders and administrators holding positions such as that of a president, provost, dean, or chair.

The career development coaching process begins for participants when they meet their mentors on day one of the institute to explore personal mission statements, formularize career objectives, address challenges and opportunities, and develop action plans appropriate to the mentee’s circumstances. Over the course of the three-day assemblage, mentor/mentee dialogue is extended as the duo continues to gather insight and refine their action plans. At the end of convocation, the pair embarks on a yearlong venture in which the

mentor keeps track of the mentees development, often playing the role of both a foil and a confident as they assist the mentee in navigating their way through the rest of the developmental process. However, for many, the bond that is formed between the mentor and mentee lives far beyond the prescribed one-year time span, as the connections that are created are often the most vital aspect of the working relationship.

## **Analysis and Findings**

As previously discussed, the fields of higher education and the performing arts both pose an array of unique challenges singly. However, when combined the effects are further amplified. Acknowledgment of this distinct phenomenon, and otherwise niche subsets, is notable. Likewise, the establishment of a system outfitted to provide support, education, and training for leaders within the more specific subset of higher education performing arts is unique, as the LI brings innovation and opportunity to an often undervalued and overlooked sector. Upon careful examination of the ATHE Leadership Institute and its structure, core values, and organizational mission, it can be concluded that the LI is a significant piece to a most complicated puzzle. Nevertheless, the LI is not perfect and it could raise esteem with minor refinement.

## **Strengths**

**Mentorship.** Above all, the crowning component of the LI is the mentoring program. Research has shown that mentoring is considered to be one of the most effective forms of leadership development available to those in executive positions, as it proposes that both individual and relational lenses are essential to the developmental process (Day, 2000; Giber, Lam, Goldsmith, & Bourke, 2009; Greenberg, 2011). Leadership is said to be a highly complex process of reciprocal interaction between a designated leader and the social/organizational environment in service of accomplishing a collective goal (Astin & Astin, 2000; Day, 2000; DeRue & Myers, 2014; Fiedler, 1996). In that regard, it can be suggested that everyone is a leader, or a potential leader, and that leadership is a group process conceptualized as an effect rather than a cause (Astin & Astin, 2000; Day, 2000; Drath, 1998). Simply put, everyone can contribute to helping others reach their potential and in furthering the cause. Individuals with little-to-no experience often need guidance and a helping hand in building confidence, understanding, and the tools required to perform effectively. Therefore, having a mentor can be extremely valuable, especially to someone entering into a different position. Since mentors are largely well versed and highly experienced people, they can provide mentees with insight, support, wisdom, and advice beneficial to successful career development. Furthermore, a working relationship built on mutual respect, trust, shared values, and sound communication is established (Chopra & Saint, 2017). With a sampling of strategic and social interchange, potential leaders can develop into actual leaders.

However, it is important to note that mentorships are typically established within organizations. Considering this, the LI mentoring program is in many ways more representative of executive coaching, as coaching tends to utilize outside sources. Executive coaching can be understood as a helping relationship formed between a client who has leadership, managerial, or supervisory authority and responsibility in an organization, and a coach who uses a range of cognitive and behavioral techniques in order to help the client achieve a mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving his or her leadership skills, professional performance and satisfaction, and the wellbeing and

effectiveness of the organization (Grant, 2013; Kilburg, 2007; Secore, 2017; Stevenson, n.d.). Once again, the relationship formed between the coach and coachee plays a key role in the leadership development process. Grant (2013) best summarizes this when he postulates:

*The coaching relationship is one in which the coach and coachee form a collaborative working alliance, articulate goals, and develop specific action steps designed to facilitate goal attainment. The coachee's responsibility is to enact the action steps. The coach's role is to help keep the coachee on track, helping them to monitor and evaluate progress over time, as well as providing an intellectual foil for brainstorming and facilitating the process of examining issues from a range of different perspectives (p. 261).*

In other words, an executive coach draws out a positive leadership presence by helping to eliminate barriers for effective performance, while also inspiring individuals to learn for themselves how to set and attain meaningful goals, improve their capabilities, and be accountable for the results (Secore, 2017; Stevenson, n.d.; Tkacyk, 2016).

Regardless of the applied approach to individualized relationship formation within in the LI, the very existence of these relationships is a step in the right direction toward serviceable leadership development. Likewise, Thompson (2010) states, “A mentor’s job is to foster one-to-one relationships that challenge people to rise to higher levels of competence and responsibility” (para. 1). However, Stein (as cited in Volz, 2007) counters, “Managers on-the-job don’t always have the time to give one-on-one training to their subordinates or to each other,” further suggesting that a “multi-level mentoring program will help supplement the training that entry and mid-level managers get on-the-job” (para. 30). In the end, the LI appears to have it covered.

**Transformation.** Historically, one of the most commonly employed leadership styles found in institutions of higher education was the traditional “authority and power/command and control” approach often associated with hierarchy culture (Arsenault, 2007; Astin & Astin, 2000; Black, 2015; Davis, 2012; Greenberg, 2011). This may have been effective in the past as “teacher-centered approaches tend to equate to this top-down, autocratic view of leadership” (Amey, 2006; Black, 2015, p. 56). However, as pointed out earlier, the higher education landscape has experienced a rather dynamic shift in recent years, as globalization, increased competition, and fiscal afflictions have led to a more user-driven environment (Black, 2015). Concurring, Davis (2012) affirms, “effective leadership at the university level often points away from acting as an authoritarian and utilizes more transformational styles that include collaboration and mentorship” (p. 2). To this extent, a compulsory more transformative and fresh leadership model emerged — one that was increasingly student/learner-centered and entrepreneurial in mindset (Amey, 2006; Arsenault, 2007; Astin & Astin, 2000; Black, 2015). At its core, transformational leadership places a spotlight on human interaction, as it is typically concerned with emotions, values, standards, ethics, long-term goals, and long-range thinking (Black, 2015; Kubler & Sayers, 2010; Northouse, 2016). Considering that higher education is rooted in human interaction, it is befitting that the transformational leadership style has become its bailiwick (Astin & Astin, 2000; Black, 2015; Davis, 2012; Greenberg, 2011; Kubler & Sayers, 2010).

Here, the LI mentoring program again comes to the forefront as it ostensibly epitomizes this approach to leadership. In many respects, the LI pulls double duty as it encapsulates a transformative approach to leadership development, while exhibiting and utilizing

transformational leadership characteristics. For example, transformational leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Avolio, 1999). So too are the mentors and leaders of the LI. Further still, transformational leadership raises followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals; gets followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization; and moves followers to address higher-level needs (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2016; Vann, Coleman, & Simpson, 2014). This is not only a key objective of the LI and its mentoring program, it is also an apt description of what those in higher education leadership capacities are often deputed to do. Furthermore, Northouse (2016) asserts, "followers and leaders are inextricably bound together in the transformation process" (p. 162). As much can be said about the LI mentoring program, as mentors and mentees work together over an extended duration to facilitate progress and ensure that individualized professional (and personal) growth has been achieved. Lastly, in addressing a broad range of topics applicable to both leadership and management concerns, the LI provides its participants with a springboard toward building awareness and achieving mastery as they canvass new occupational territories and grow into their positions. In essence, it attempts to equip mentees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for change.

**Networking.** Networks are the patterns of interpersonal relationships among a set of people (Carter, DeChurch, Braun, & Contractor, 2015). Networks are essential to effective leadership development as they help break down barriers that otherwise prevent the flow of communication. By eliminating obstacles and inspiring open discourse, networking enables people to make connections to others to whom they can turn to for information, resources, and problem-solving (Greenberg, 2011). Day (2000) contends that networking is an investment in social capital because it encourages individuals to form commitments with others outside of their own organization. Thereby, exposing them to others' thinking and challenging the basic assumptions about what they think they know (Day, 2000). Hoppe and Reinelt (2010) concisely illustrate networking importance when they state, "Leadership networks provide resources and support for leaders, and increase the scope and scale of impact leaders can have individually and collectively" (p. 600).

From beginning to end, the entire concept of the LI is anchored in networking, as the LI strategically — and advantageously — positions attendees so they can actively participate in networking. More importantly, it provides a framework for network building — and as the network grows, so do the benefits. The interconnected grid affects everyone from the leaders, mentors, board members, and presenters of the LI to the home institutions and organizations of everyone involved, building an impressive investment on social capital.

### **Limitations and Recommendation**

As stated previously, the LI is not perfect. And while the LI boasts numerous positive features, the one area it falls short is in its lack of supporting empirical evidence. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH, 2008), "Good record keeping is necessary for data analysis, publication, collaboration, peer review, and other research activities" (p. 2). Currently, neither the ATHE nor its LI component keeps a formal footprint of institutional results. This lack of record keeping could prove detrimental, as data collection and analysis could be useful to the LI for a variety of reasons.

First, through collection and analysis, both the ATHE and the LI could arrive at currently absent conclusions. Thus, collected information could identify insights critical for improvement and change initiation. Moreover, these conclusions could also predict future outcomes and enhance expectations. However, without this knowledge, the LI risks becoming stale and rote.

Second, the information gathered could be useful for communication and brainstorming amongst the collective unit. That is to say, the institute's leaders, board members, presenters, mentors, and mentees could all use the information to better address and implement institutional objectives. This may open up new doors and possibilities for all involved.

Third, comprehensive data collection and analysis could allow for installation of quality control. By having concrete data and information, the LI could conceivably mitigate any obvious bias in their favor. At present, beyond a number of repeat customers and a handful of testimonials, the LI has no real evidence promoting its efficacy. For this reason, the institute could conceivably become ineffective and misguided. With no practical supporting claims, losing touch with itself, its constituents, and the field(s) in which it serves is a distinct possibility. Therefore, empirical data could help allay stubbornness, clouded judgment, and prejudiced opinion from within the ranks.

Lastly, an empirical showing could be advantageous for growth and expansion, as well as for marketing purposes. As just mentioned, aside from returning participants and a smattering of endorsements, the LI simply has no proof that it works. And while returning participants are undoubtedly a testament to the LI's merit, the LI should still invest in fact-finding and tracking of mentee progresses. Likewise, it should also follow-up on mentor/mentee relationships, as firsthand account is always the best way to obtain information. It is safe to assume that potential mentees, mentors, presenters, and other ATHE affiliates would appreciate having tangible information before committing to the cause. Similarly, it is probably safe to assume that ATHE sponsors and public relations officials would like something definitive to sell. Likewise, it is also acceptable to believe that outside organizations — such as search firms, associations, performing arts entities, institutions of higher education, and other leadership-based bodies — would appreciate knowing the effectiveness of the LI, as they may be interested in nominating candidates, and/or becoming involved with the institute. Success stories of past participants, and documented accounts of formalized action that may have occurred as a direct result of LI participation — such as departmental makeovers and institutional advances — would not only furnish proof of efficaciousness, it would be public-relations gold.

As the LI is currently restricted by its own efforts, it would behoove them to reconsider their outcome strategies. In particular, proper attention should be given to the “pre and post” components of the institute — perhaps in the form of quantitative t-testing, or by way of survey instruments — as the attainment of quality data is likely to come from those two areas. The only way the LI can gauge their own effectiveness, as well as further their agenda and purpose, is to provide empirical data vital to legitimacy and substantiality.

## **Summary, Discussion, and Implications**

Whether in higher education or the performing arts, there is an existent need to have effectual leaders in place. This is especially true for those in higher education performing



arts. However, in a modern, toilsome, and fickle economic, political, and social climate, organizational leaders can no longer simply be appointed in a “first among equals” manner (Black, 2015; Davies, Hides, & Casey, 2001). Amey (2006) implores, “there is little doubt that the leaders who are needed to guide postsecondary institutions in tomorrow’s complex environments have to think about their work differently than did their predecessors” (p. 58). For that reason, leaders must be cultivated to engage in outward thinking to enable them to embrace challenges and provide innovative solutions to unforeseen problems. Rather than asking, “How can I be an effective leader?” one should really be probing, “How can I participate productively in the leadership process?” (Day, 2000, p. 605).

There is no guidebook or list of competencies prescribing an exact means for leadership performance. Nor can one just “do leadership” (Black, 2015). Therefore, the need for effective leadership development conducive to the complexities and complications inherent in these fields has become a priority. Recognizing this, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Leadership Institute (LI) offers a unique opportunity geared toward developing the next generation of higher education arts leaders. Through mentoring, transformation, and networking, the LI is designed with an understanding that the theoretical and practical knowledge requisite for the field should rightly be reflected in the preparation and training it provides (Kaddar, 2009). As Fiedler (1996) posits, “We cannot make leaders more intelligent or more creative, but we can design situations that allow leaders to utilize their intellectual abilities, expertise, and experience more effectively” (p. 249). And for all practical purposes, the LI fulfills this obligation. However, concern exists as the LI does not conduct data collection exercises, nor do they employ an apparatus for self-assessment. Future implementation of such research methodologies and devices could greatly enhance the overall effectiveness and validity of the LI, thus broadening their capabilities and marketability.

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