

Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program

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Abstract

UW-Stout established a Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program to meet employees' needs for leadership training and the university's need for solutions to specific challenges.

The Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program is a series of eight on-campus sessions offered to UW-Stout support staff, supervisors, managers and directors. The classroom portion is designed to develop leadership competencies through dynamic and interactive sessions that are based on current and emerging issues.

Upon graduation from the classroom portion, teams of graduates go on to research a single problematic issue facing the university. The team is tasked with proposing ways to address or solve the issue based on many of the principles learned in the classroom. They present their final recommendations to the Chancellor's Advisory Council who may then delegate implementation.

This training model readily integrates into other institutions' programs. It is an excellent way to capitalize on the pre-existing leadership training by assigning teams of trainees to develop recommendations regarding real-life institutional challenges.

Introduction of Organization

The University of Wisconsin-Stout (*UW-Stout*) is one of the 13 publicly supported universities in the University of Wisconsin System (*11 comprehensive institutions plus UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee*). The UW System designates UW-Stout as a special mission institution, forged from the heritage of its founder, Senator James Huff Stout, a Wisconsin industrialist. Stout believed that people needed advanced education to prepare them for America's developing industrial society. To implement this vision, Mr. Stout founded a private institution called the Stout Manual Training School in 1891. In 1911, the training school became a public institution named Stout Institute and received teacher-training accreditation in 1928 with programs centered on industrial arts and home economics. In 1932, Stout was accredited as a college and received Master's degree accreditation in 1948. In 1971, UW-Stout became part of the UW System when a State of Wisconsin law combined its two public university systems under one Board of Regents.

Now, 116 years since it was founded, UW-Stout's 8,416 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in the College of Human Development; the College of Technology, Engineering and Management; the College of Arts and Sciences; or the School of Education. UW-Stout offers a distinctive array of 30 undergraduate and 18 graduate degree programs which, taken as a whole, are unique in the country. UW-Stout offers the smallest number of undergraduate programs within the UW System. Approximately half of these programs are offered at no other campus in the UW System, and several are unique in the nation. Even degree programs appearing to be similar to programs elsewhere are unique in the extent of applied focus.

Statement (Restatement) of the Problem/Initiative

All institutions have a need for staff with leadership, interpersonal communication and conflict management skills. In the last few years this has been especially true for UW-Stout as we have had to manage a series of budget cuts and an increasing number of retirements. The university needed a way to help all levels of management deal with the effects of budget cuts on workloads and the work environment. The university also needed to compensate for the high number of retirements by growing a culture of positive leadership from within the organization.

Design

The Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program is offered to UW-Stout support staff, supervisors, managers and directors. It spans approximately two years and includes a classroom portion followed by a team project.

Classroom

The classroom portion consists of eight, six hour sessions. The university worked with a leadership training consultant to develop a relevant curriculum targeting issues specific to our campus. Each session develops leadership competencies through activities and discussions based on our current and emerging issues. The eight on-campus sessions include:

1. Self-Leadership for UW-Stout's Future
2. Leadership During Times of Change
3. Working Together Effectively
4. Communication & Personal Effectiveness

5. Understanding & Managing Conflict
6. Creating & Sustaining a Customer-Centered Program
7. Decision Making & Problem Solving for Quality Results
8. Next Steps for UW-Stout Leadership

Team Projects

At the conclusion of the classroom portion, a variety of issues facing the university are compiled with input from senior leadership and class participants. Each issue is defined as a team project with a background description, team charge and a sponsor from senior leadership. The class divides into three or four teams. Each team meets periodically over the next several months to research their chosen issue and develop possible solutions.

Finally, the teams present the results of their studies and provide recommendations to the Chancellor's Advisory Council. If appropriate, the Chancellor will assign implementation of some or all of the teams' recommendations to the proper departments.

Budget

In 2005-2006 the leadership training consulting services totaled \$1,600. This fee included facilitation of classroom sessions, travel expenses and duplication of training materials. It did not include the cost of classroom refreshments or the award luncheon. With 19 attendees in 2005-2006 the training cost per individual was \$84. We found this program to be more cost effective and have greater benefits than sending individuals off campus to conferences or other training programs.

Implementation

UW-Stout brought in leadership training consultant, Jeff Russell, of Russell Consulting, Inc, to teach the Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program. Local coordination, including enrollment, facilities, records, certification, team projects and trainer contracts are handled by the UW-Stout Human Resources Department.

Benefits

Qualitative and quantitative benefits of the Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program:

Relationship Building

The classroom interaction and team projects provide an opportunity to build collaborative relationships across departments. In participant surveys, graduates noted “networking with other staff,” as a major benefit of the program and others confirmed “collaboration and communication are key to successfully producing change.”

Examples of team Project Outcomes

- The “Employee Relationships During Troubling Times” team was tasked with finding ways to create positive relationships among employees at all levels and among departments. One of the team’s recommendations was to create a recognition and reward system. As a result, the popular Classified Employee of the Month program was developed. Each month since September 2005, the Chancellor has presented the award to a classified employee who is nominated by his or her peers and recommended by the Classified Advisory Council.

- The “Employee Relationships During Troubling Times” team also recommended that the university establish a clearinghouse for all internal campus surveys to insure that all rules, policies, criteria and confidentiality issues are met; to reduce repetitive surveying; and to communicate what actions are taken following survey results. In response to the team’s recommendation, the Budget, Planning & Analysis office began marketing its campus surveying services and expertise through word of mouth, the *Stout Community News* (the weekly campus e-newsletter) and announcements in meetings. The office also established a clearinghouse for all university-wide surveys and posts some of those surveys on their website at <http://www.uwstout.edu/bpa/ir/surveylist.htm>.
- The “Business Community” team was tasked with identifying ways that UW-Stout adds value to the state economy and business community. As a result of one of the team’s recommendations, the university launched a community website linked from UW-Stout’s home page. This website can be found at <http://www.uwstout.edu/community/>.
- The “Internal Marketing” team was tasked with increasing employee retention and attracting more applications for vacant classified positions. Following the team’s recommendations, most vacant classified positions are now advertised through a daily campus email service reaching all staff.
- The “Ethics Statement” team was tasked with proposing a university ethics statement. The ethics statement was to provide a broad, umbrella statement of the university’s ethics, generally covering moral conduct, duty and judgment. The team researched other institutional ethics statements and drafted a statement

specific to UW-Stout's views on honesty, accountability and respect. As a result, the university's first proposed ethics statement was forwarded for review by the student, faculty and academic staff senates.

Participant Surveys

Participant satisfaction ratings are high. The 2005-2006 classroom evaluations revealed the following ratings by Leadership & Professional Development Certificate Program graduates:

	Scale	Average Response
How likely are you to apply what you've learned in this program?	1=less likely, 10=more likely	7.9
The Information presented was worthwhile.	1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree	3.6

Retrospect

While the course has been well received by almost all staff and supervisors, some in upper level management were reluctant to attend. They misperceived the leadership course to be remedial training. In retrospect, it may have been beneficial to offer a semi-annual occurring course open to only upper level management. This could have avoided the incorrect assumption that the course had little to offer those already serving in leadership positions.