



## LEADERSHIP SCHOLARLY INSIGHTS - QUICK TIPS

*Leading well is not easy. Leaders influence groups and societies, for good or for ill. They may derive power through formal appointments or informally through expertise, personality, or initiative. Leadership is a complex process that unfolds over time through interactions with those around you. These tips are reminders of some evidence-based leadership basics. This is not a complete “how to,” nor does it cover all aspects of the complexity of leadership.*

### *Know yourself; develop yourself; show yourself*

- Those that lead well engage in a continuing process of conscious development and preparation.
- Self-knowledge and the thoughtful processing of relationships and interactions are essential practices for developing and maintaining a healthy work unit.
- The research literature suggests that the best leaders are calm, conscientious, and principled, that they do not overreact to stressful situations, and that they are open to opposing information and viewpoints.
- Academic leaders intellectually stimulate unit members by being outgoing, approachable, inventive, curious, and open to new experiences and ideas.
- Unit members appreciate a leader whose behavior they can predict, who is authentic, and who is not manipulative.

#### EVERYONE HAS WEAKNESSES.

The good news is that you can develop skills and habits to improve your effectiveness as a leader.

### *Know your people and know the situation*

- When in uncomfortable situations, leaders may experience stress and anxiety, which can then reduce coping skills, resulting in poorer decisions and more problems with members of the unit. Leaders should watch for signs that their resilience is being affected.

#### LEADERS VARY AND FACE VARIABLE CIRCUMSTANCES.

You will not be universally effective in all situations.

- Unit members have idiosyncratic expectations for what a “good leader” says and does. Getting to know the faculty and staff of a unit as individuals can help the leader become aware of these expectations, and help the leader to manage them—especially in situations when he or she cannot or will not be fulfilling them.
- Different people in a unit will have different developmental levels of competence and commitment. Understanding this and seeking to play to the strengths of each one will help them develop, and is a key indicator of a successful leader.
- Leaders naturally form closer relationships with some members of their units than with others, especially if the unit is large. This can cause questions of fairness and equity if not managed carefully and with thoughtfulness, because stronger relationships with the leader can come with both tangible and intangible benefits. Transparency is key to managing the differences in different relationships.

### *Leaders set an example—whether they want to or not*

- Societies all have expectations for behavior considered proper within them. Within academia, honesty and integrity are core to the mission.



- Unit members do not and will not respect leaders who do not live up to their expectations. Through getting to know the faculty and staff of a unit as individuals, leaders can become aware of these expectations and even begin to manage them.
- Through social modeling, a unit will follow its leader on many dimensions of work culture. If the leader's conduct is transparent and principled, that type of culture will be reinforced or created within the unit. If the leader cuts corners, tolerates or rewards bad conduct, or puts his or her own interests first, then others will tend to follow suit, and the dominant culture in the unit will move in those directions.

**LOOK OUT FOR THESE PATTERNS.**  
If you focus on your own skill and growth in these areas, it will help you achieve more of your goals.

### *Be helpful*

- Skilled leaders exhibit task-oriented behaviors and focus on relationships: there is more to leadership than just getting the job done.
  - Strong and successful leaders tend to focus on relationships—and on developing the capabilities of others.
  - Research indicates that academic leaders who struggle to succeed suffer from common patterns of behavior that can harm a unit: Those who struggle often lack skills in negotiation and persuasion, managerial skills, planning and execution skills, and skills for developing and motivating others. They tend to struggle with managing interpersonal conflict, avoiding favoritism, and inconsistency.
- Change and the unknown are ubiquitous in academia; good academic leaders help their unit members confront and manage them.
  - When leaders solve as many administrative, technical and logistical issues for their unit members as they can, unit members can focus on the work that only they can do.
  - Leaders must monitor and take action regarding internal work unit dynamics (for both tasks and interpersonal relationships), as well as external issues that affect the unit and the productivity and creativity of its members.

**YOUR EFFECT IS AMPLIFIED.**  
Your behaviors and attitudes, positive or negative, will ripple through your unit.

