

## **A One-Week, Unique, and Authentic Leadership Development Camp for Undergraduate Students**

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*Annually, students from the Department of Kinesiology attend a 1-week residential leadership camp. Prior to attending the camp, students complete a self-evaluation of perceived leadership skills. Students are in small teams in which they lead their peers through a series of problem solving activities. For this study, students (N=314) completed the survey again at the end of the 1-week leadership development camp. Paired t-test statistical analysis revealed a significant change in 14 out of the 20 dimensions ( $p < .001$ ). Findings of this study suggest students perceive an increase in their leadership skills following a 1-week leadership development camp.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As Astin and Astin (2000) noted nearly 20 years ago, higher education has made undergraduate leadership training a ubiquitous characteristic due to the demand from the job market. Over the past 10 years, this focus on leadership and teamwork has remained in the top tier of skills desired by entry-level employers. In fact, the 2018 National Association of Colleges & Employers survey found both leadership and teamwork to be among the top five valued skills in college graduates (NACE, 2018). However, a survey in 2015 found that 60% of surveyed students currently hold, anticipate holding, or recently held a leadership position while in college, yet, only 32.5% of the students had taken a leadership course (Bettis, Christian, and Allen, 2015). Unsurprisingly, many employers have reported that new college graduates are still lacking in soft skills, such as leadership (Association of American College and Universities, 2015).

A surveillance of the current scholarship on how higher education is attempting to boost student engagement in formal leadership development training reveals a host of configurations. For instance,

leadership training in some institutions is delivered throughout an entire 4-year program (Dunn, Ho, Odom, and Perdue, 2016). While other universities focus on an episodic and time intensive (i.e., 5 day) programs (Boettcher and Gansemer-Topf, 2015); and still others focus on a more moderate 6-month experience (Fields, 2010). Furthermore, some are situating their leadership program in a residential camp setting. Moreover, as Lien and Goldenberg (2012) highlight, these off-campus programs lead to a deeper learning experience.

Similarly, the use of experiential education through challenge and problem-solving activities fosters an environment that pushes students beyond their comfort zone into their learning zone (Panicucci, 2008). More importantly, these experiences are considered as a *high-impact practice* (Kuh, 2008). It appears that regardless of the scope and scale of the training, if the experience is intentional and meaningful, then development of leadership attributes and qualities comes to fruition.

### **The Camp Brosius Model**

Camp Brosius is a unique, authentic, and off-campus residential experience for students. Students travel six hours away from a large urban campus to a rural-residential camp setting. This 7-day experience provides multiple opportunities for growth in the areas of leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, innovation, and professionalism. Recently, the Department of Kinesiology collaborated with the Military Science Department to adopt and modify the Army ROTC's Leadership Development Program to align with the Department of Kinesiology's student learning outcomes. As a graduation requirement, all undergraduate students in the Department of Kinesiology and students studying Sports Management are required to attend a 1-week residential and peer-based leadership development camp. At this camp, students are placed into teams and work with this team throughout the week in a series of leadership and team building challenges. The leadership development program utilized experiential education via a series of both physically and intellectually challenging problem-solving activities to focus on developing leadership and teamwork skills in students (Panicucci, 2008). As important, this experiential learning is centered on frequent peer-interactions (and evaluation) which has been shown to be the single most important determinant in social and intellectual development for college students (Astin, 1996; Day & Lance, 2004; Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Camp Brosius has been part of the curriculum in the Department of Kinesiology since 1921. The camp is owned and operated by school, and is located in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Over the years, the focus of Camp Brosius has shifted from the preparation of physical education teachers to an outdoor recreation and individual sports camp, and currently into a leadership and teamwork development camp. After a school-wide strategic plan was developed in 2011, Camp Brosius was completely redesigned to align with the newly identified student learning outcomes of leadership and teamwork development. During the summer, Camp Brosius is operated as a family vacation resort <http://brosius.iu.edu/>. Two weeks in May and one week in August, Camp Brosius is utilized for the Leadership Development Program.

At Camp Brosius, leadership development is defined as a continuous process of training, assessment, and feedback with the goal of instilling and enhancing desirable behavior. The purpose of Camp Brosius is to provide an individual-focused training process designed to develop leadership skills in a variety of environments. The mission of the leadership camp is to train students, evaluate their skills, and develop their leadership. Leadership at Camp Brosius is defined as influencing people – by providing purpose, direction, and motivation – while operating to accomplish a goal and improve the team. Leadership behavior is described as being a leader, knowing what to do in a leadership position, and properly demonstrating the skills while leading. These three components highlight the 3-prong philosophy of the leadership camp: be, know, and do. These three behaviors fall into the following four categories of leadership: values, presence, intellectual capacity, and core leader competencies (see figure 1). Within these categories are 20 specific leadership dimensions (see table 1).

On the first evening of the leadership camp, students are placed into small teams (families) and work with this team throughout the week. A leadership counselor, who is an upperclassman that previously demonstrated excellence while at camp as a student facilitates each team. The leadership counselors

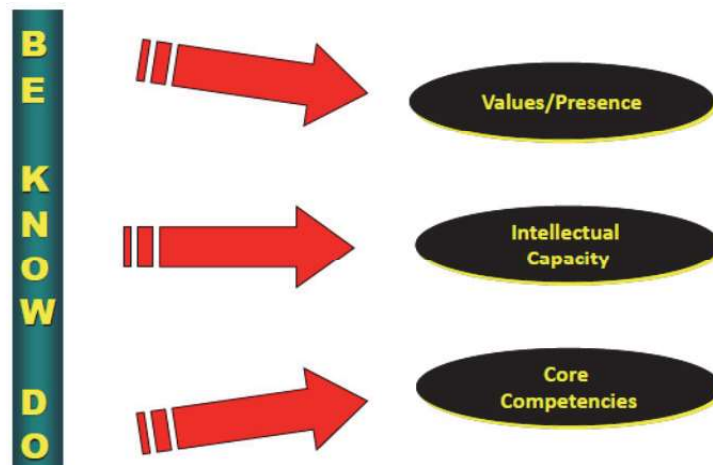
complete extensive training prior to facilitating a team, and are enrolled in an advanced 1-credit hour leadership course while in the role of leadership counselor.

As stated above, experiential education via challenge and problem-solving activities are used throughout the weeklong leadership camp. The specific sequence begins with ice breaker/de-inhibitor activities followed by trust building activities, which are led by the leadership counselor. Twenty-minute cooperation/communication activities are then led by each student while the counselor evaluates leadership behavior. After feedback from the team and a 1:1 debriefing session with the leadership counselor, students lead for a second time attempting to complete a 30-minute challenge/problem solving activity. Following this sequence of adventure-based challenge education allows students to build comradery and trust with their fellow teammates, while allowing students to demonstrate leadership skills in a nonthreatening, fun environment. (Project Adventure, 1995).

Students at camp are evaluated using a rubric (3-point Likert scale) on the 20 leadership dimensions using an ongoing 360-degree approach: feedback from a leadership counselor, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation from teammates. Additionally, students complete daily journals that allows for qualitative assessment of leadership and personal growth throughout the weeklong experience. For the last journal entry, students write a letter to future campers. Below is an excerpt from exemplar example letter:

*“Brosius Campers, Whatever things you’re dreading, disliking, or just plain not looking forward to this next week at camp...I suggest you get ready to forget all of that! “WOW.” Camp Brosius blew my expectations away...and then some. You’ll probably learn more about yourself in this week at camp than you have the last two semesters combined. You’ll be pushed well out of your comfort zone, whether it be socially, as a leader, a listener, mentally, physically, or in the adrenaline-rushing activities of the high-ropes course. Camp Brosius challenged me to be a better delegator, and better at developing others instead of imposing my ideas. It was awesome learning so many techniques to inspire group effort and achievement. I’m leaving tomorrow wishing that I could have just a little more time with these previously complete strangers.”*

**FIGURE 1**  
**CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR**



**TABLE 1**  
**CAMP BROSIUS LEADERSHIP CATEGORIES & DIMENSIONS**

<b>Leadership Category Leadership Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Values</b>	<b>Reflection of the leader's sense of obligation to and attitudes about other people and morals.</b>
<i>Work Ethic</i>	<i>A set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence.</i>
<i>Respect</i>	<i>Creating a positive climate and projecting cultural tolerance.</i>
<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Conducting one's self according to the difference between right and wrong.</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>The leader is truthful and upright at all times.</i>
<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Identification with the thoughts, feelings, or attitudes of another.</i>
<b>Presence</b>	<b>Impression that a leader makes on others contributing to the success in them.</b>
<i>Physically Fit</i>	<i>Having sound health, strength, and endurance</i>
<i>Confident</i>	<i>Projecting self-confidence and certainty</i>
<i>Resilient</i>	<i>Showing a tendency to recover quickly while maintaining focus</i>
<b>Intellectual Capacity</b>	<b>A leader's ability to draw on the mental tendencies and resources that shape conceptual abilities.</b>
<i>Mental Agility</i>	<i>Flexibility of mind, a tendency to anticipate or adapt</i>
<i>Sound Judgment</i>	<i>The capacity to assess a situation and draw feasible conclusions</i>
<i>Innovative</i>	<i>Ability to introduce something creative, different, and new</i>
<i>Interpersonal Tact</i>	<i>Effectively interacting with others in a respectful manner</i>
<i>Time Management</i>	<i>Ability to stay on task and accomplish a goal in a timely manner</i>
<b>Core Leader Competencies - Leads</b>	<b>Application of character, presence, intellect and abilities while guiding others toward a common goal.</b>
<i>Leads Others</i>	<i>Influencing team members in a positive manner</i>
<i>Leads by Example</i>	<i>Providing an example that others consider and use in what they do</i>
<i>Communicates</i>	<i>Conveys a clear understanding of what needs to be done while actively listening</i>
<b>Core Leader Competencies - Develops</b>	<b>Providing an environment that fosters teamwork and acceptance of responsibility.</b>
<i>Creates a Positive Environment</i>	<i>Creates a positive cultural and ethical environment</i>
<i>Prepares Self</i>	<i>Self-study, self-development and becoming well-rounded; ensures they are prepared to lead</i>
<i>Develops Others</i>	<i>Growing others into competent and confident leaders</i>
<b>Core Leader Competencies - Achieves</b>	<b>Consistently accomplishing goals by providing direction and sound leadership.</b>
<i>Gets Results</i>	<i>Developing and executing plans while providing direction, guidance and clear priorities</i>

## METHODS

At Camp Brosius, students are evaluated on 20 leadership dimensions using a 360-degree approach. First, students self-evaluate themselves before and after the 1-week camp experience as well as after each time they lead an activity. Second, the students are evaluated by a leadership counselor (an upper-level Kinesiology student who has already attended camp), and finally by each of their teammates. For this study, the pre- and post-camp self-evaluations were analyzed.

Six relatively recent cohorts of students in the Department of Kinesiology (N=314) attended the 1-week residential leadership development camp. The six cohorts of students spanned two summers and each cohort ranged from 41 – 66 students. Table 2 reveals the demographics of the combined data set.

The leadership development program focused on a total of 20 leadership dimensions. Prior to attending the out-of-state Camp Brosius Leadership experience, each enrolled student completed the leadership dimension pre-test, utilizing a rubric. This 6-category and 20-item survey was scored on a 3 point Likert-type scale. More particularly, a 1 equals *excellent*, a 2 equals *satisfactory*, and a 3 equals *needs improvement*. Then, upon completion of the one-week leadership program (on the last day), the students again completed the survey as a post-test. Students were put into small teams (families) generally between 7 and 8 students are in a team. Each week varies in enrollment leading there to be 7, 8, or 9 teams (families) each given week. During their time, each student in the team leads their peers through a series of communication, cooperation, challenge, and problem solving activities, and each day they participated in multiple tasks and challenges.

**TABLE 2**  
**DEMOGRAPHICS OF DATA SET (N=314)**

<b>Gender</b>		
	Females	151 (48%)
	Males	163 (52%)
<b>Class Level</b>		
	Fr	0 (0%)
	So	20 (6%)
	Jr	100 (32%)
	Sr	194 (62%)
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>		
	Latino	6 (2%)
	Native American	3 (1%)
	Asian American	5 (1.6%)
	Black or African American	20 (6.4%)
	White	275 (88%)
<b>Age</b>		
	18-24	274 (87%)
	25-29	27 (8.6%)
	30-34	10 (3.2%)
	34-49	0 (0%)
	40-49	3 (1%)
	50+	0 (0%)

## RESULTS

Table 3 illustrates the paired t-test statistical analysis of all 20 leadership dimensions. The paired t-tests revealed, overall, a significant change in perception regarding 14 out of the 20 leadership dimensions ( $p < .001$ ). Some of the changes were numerically positive, where the reported scores decreased (i.e. improvement in the leadership dimension). While some of the changes were numerically negative, where the reported scores increased (i.e. decline in the leadership dimension). At first glance, this seems a bit inconsistent, however upon closer review these changes make sense. For example, the scores that increased all were aligned with attributes of leadership under the categories *Values* and *Presence*. For Kinesiology majors at IUPUI this is unsurprising. First, the campus has a principle of undergraduate learning that features one's ability to value (difference, diversity, art, cultural, social and environmental) so their experience and exposure to this attribute is strong and consistent. Second, the category of *Presence* contains attributes such as confidence, physical fitness, and resilience; all of which are prominently found in students with an academic and personal interest in the science of movement, exercise, and physical activity. Therefore, due to the camp experience, as the week went by, students felt more competent on these leadership dimensions and could more effectively identify with the values and presence of being a leader.

Regarding the scores that went down, those were aligned with the attributes of leadership under the category of *Intellectual Capacity*, specifically, the statistically significant elements were *Mental Agility* and *Time Management*. Mental agility is a fairly novel characteristic in and of itself, and perhaps imply a level of mental acuity not often considered by college-age students. As such, it appears, based on the camp experience that the students became more aware, each day, of the various elements that consist of being a leader such as time management. Moreover, they were able to calibrate themselves against their peers and the leadership counselors and better understood potential areas of improvement in becoming an effective leader.

Further analysis revealed that when various demographic information is controlled for (i.e., major, gender, race) and the large group is sorted into smaller more demographically similar groups, differences in perceived leadership dimensions are greatly reduced from the one-week intensive programming. Conversely, when various demographic information was not contained, and the data set represented the most heterogenous profile possible, differences in perceived leadership were more visible and statistically significantly.

**TABLE 3**  
**PAIRED T-TEST ANALYSIS OF PRE- AND POST-CAMP SELF-EVALUATIONS**

LEADERSHIP DIMENSION	PRE		POST		t	p
	M	sd	M	sd		
WORK ETHIC	1.615	.6885	1.462	.5983	3.585	.000
RESPECT	1.594	.6136	1.262	.4617	9.126	.000
ETHICAL	1.489	.5724	1.313	.4713	4.866	.000
INTEGRITY	1.615	.6310	1.394	.5454	5.828	.000
EMPATHY	1.571	.6066	1.346	.5277	6.031	.000
PHYSICALLY FIT	1.654	.6228	1.426	.5329	6.104	.000
CONFIDENT	1.885	.6259	1.587	.5884	7.600	.000
RESILIENT	1.642	.5668	1.339	.4941	8.377	.000
MENTAL AGILITY	1.421	.5385	1.550	.5539	-3.274	.000
SOUND JUDGEMENT	1.447	.5644	1.505	.5554	-1.482	.139
INNOVATION	1.484	.6118	1.581	.5958	-2.238	.026
INTERPERSONAL TACT	1.395	.5519	1.437	.5466	-.972	.332
TIME MANAGEMENT	1.575	.6539	1.740	.6284	-3.460	.001
LEADS OTHERS	1.583	.5735	1.410	.5310	4.507	.000
LEADS BY EXAMPLE	1.545	.5660	1.377	.5051	4.167	.000
COMMUNICATES	1.520	.6016	1.536	.5953	-.382	.703
CREATES A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT	1.529	.5555	1.279	.4706	6.697	.000
PREPARES SELF	1.571	.5804	1.516	.5382	1.359	.175
DEVELOPS OTHERS	1.708	.5978	1.627	.5476	1.955	.051
GETS RESULTS	1.545	.5304	1.403	.4978	3.799	.000

## CONCLUSION

Camp Brosius Leadership Development Camp is a unique and authentic experience for college students in that it takes students off campus to another state for seven days/six nights. Students are intentionally placed into multiple teams throughout the week (i.e. cabin mates, leadership teams (families), various program committees, and dining tablemates) with the goal of working with a diverse group of people on various tasks. Students are individually assessed on their leadership, assessed as a team during a leadership program, and assessed individually through self-evaluations and journal entries. At the end of the week, students leave Camp Brosius having identified their personal leadership style and a plan for future leadership development.

According to the results, a 1-week intensive leadership development camp does significantly impact self-reported perceived leadership skills on 14 of the 20 dimensions. Tentatively, this project introduces the thought that heterogeneity in leadership training may be a stark advantage and lead to significant change in leadership dimensions, based on a one-week intensive program. Alternately, homogenous groups may not realize as pronounced differences in leadership dimensions from a similar program. This indicates that group characteristics influence the extent to which changes in leadership dimensions can occur. Overall, these findings have implications in curricular development amongst college students, as

leadership and teamwork are two skills sought in entry-level employees. Curriculum should be evaluated to explore the option of adding leadership development courses among a varied student population.

However, it is premature to completely generalize findings from this study to another leadership training program. In particular, a notable limitation of this project is the self-evaluation component. Self-evaluation is a relatively novel assessment tool and not thoroughly investigated, it is a technique that gets better with experience which many college-age students may not possess. Moreover, as Ross (2006) suggests, there is the common concern of *overestimation* that may lead, over time, to apathy if others' (peers, team leaders, etc.) evaluations do match with their own.

The findings of this study strongly support the generally held notions of teamwork, communication, and success as illustrated in Boettcher and Gansemer-Topf (2015). They consistently found that students notice and value how communication and teamwork contribute to the development of leadership skills. This becomes even more magnified when doing so using outdoor experiences in the "backcountry" or in traditional outdoor situations similar to this leadership camp.

Moving forward, a qualitative analysis of each participant's daily journal will be completed to uncover new themes or find common elements to the results of this current project. This will help clarify the extent to which the self-evaluations accurately reflected the experiences of the students in the leadership training program. Additionally, future studies will be longitudinal in nature to determine sustainability of the leadership development camp. Future research should also examine, more deeply, the relationship that demographic information has on leadership training programs to see if one can estimate the magnitude or effect size or determine if any positive interactions exist.



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