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The Jepson School: Liberal Arts as Leadership Studies

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> Thus some appear to seek in knowledge a couch for a searching spirit; others, a walk for a wandering mind; others, a tower of state; others, a fort, or commanding ground; and others, a shop for profit or sale... (Francis Bacon, 1605: 23)

Around twenty years ago, I joined the faculty of the University of Richmond to help design the Jepson School of Leadership Studies. The easiest way to understand Jepson is as a liberal arts school with an explicit focus on the study of leadership. Our students take courses in history, philosophy, psychology, political science, and so on. These courses draw on the methodology and content of a discipline to understand leadership as a phenomenon and a practice. So as a school, we are multidisciplinary and some of our classes are interdisciplinary. By taking a liberal arts approach to leadership studies, the Jepson School is not doing anything new, but rather reapplying the original intent of liberal arts education, which was not to learn a craft or useful skill, but to acquire knowledge that is good in itself and to educate citizens to live and make choices in a free society (Jaeger, 1986). Hence, the Jepson School is as much about the liberal arts as it is about leadership studies. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the place of leadership studies in the liberal arts and then go on to describe the development of the Jepson School and how, from its inception to today, it grapples with the practical and philosophical challenges of being a liberal arts school of leadership studies.

People often think of a leadership school as some sort of training program. Yet when you think of it, the very idea of leadership *training* is an oxymoron. Training implies development of a skill in conformity to certain practices and procedures. Leadership would seem to be the opposite of this. While leadership requires certain skills, I am not so sure that leadership itself is a skill. If anything, leadership is more about initiative, perspective, imagination, morality, and the ability to think well and understand people and the world around us. Ideally, a liberal arts education provides the foundation for leadership and life in human society.

THE LIBERAL ARTS

In the ancient world, scholars considered the liberal arts to be those needed for free people to seek a good life (Artistotle, 1984). For Aristotle, our real work in life is the work of being human. The ultimate end of life is happiness. Self-sufficiency and freedom from fear, material needs, and commitments allow us the liberty to develop ourselves as human beings. The word "school" comes from the Greek word for leisure "scholé", which meant to stop and have quiet or peace (DeGrazia, 1962). Education and war, not work, provide people with virtues such as temperance and discipline needed for free time, or the time away from working for the necessities of life. The liberal arts also free the mind so that it is not ruled by the passions, ignorance or prejudice. Aristotle believed that education for free time, not work, would teach people how to engage in activities that are good in themselves, because it is these activities that make humans unique from animals. In a similar vein, the Roman Cicero said that education should separate the truths needed for life's necessary cares from knowledge that is pursued for its own sake. It is ironic that most students today pursue a liberal arts education so they can get a job, when ideally it was meant to teach them how to use their freedom or discretionary time.

Aristotle believed that education should cultivate five virtues of thought: *technê* – craft or technical knowledge; *epistêmê* – descriptive knowledge of the world; *sophia* – wisdom or thought about universal ideas; and *nous* – the higher mind, soul or intellect. The fifth is *phronêsis*, or practical wisdom about how to act or bring about change or a particular end. It is also associated with prudence. Education should cultivate all of these virtues, but *phronêsis* is of particular importance for leadership. Aristotle writes:

> Practical wisdom is the only virtue peculiar to the ruler: it would seem that all other excellences must equally belong to ruler and subject. The excellence of the subject is certainly not wisdom, but only true opinion; he may be compared to the maker of a flute, while his master is like the flute player. (Aristotle, 1984: 2027)

Both Plato and Aristotle started schools. They both understood the idea of educating young people to reason and see the world in different ways by exposing them to a variety of subjects. For example, Plato believed that everyone, especially rulers, needed to study geometry (see Ciulla, 2004a; see also Ciulla, 2004b). Aristotle suggests that at a minimum, students should study reading, writing, drawing, physical training and music (Aristotle, 1984: 2121–28). From the Greek and subsequent Roman tradition, medieval scholars such as St Augustine depicted the liberal arts as resting on seven pillars. The imagery of the seven pillars came from Proverbs 9.1 in the Old Testament: "Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars". The first

three, or the *trivium*, are the verbal arts of logic, grammar and rhetoric. The second four, or the *quadrivium*, are mathematics, geometry, music and astronomy. These two divisions later evolved into what we call the arts and sciences.

If you read the mission statements of liberal arts schools, most of them say something about developing future leaders. So you might wonder, if the liberal arts already educate people for leadership, then why do we need a leadership school or leadership programs? I think that there are several things to consider in answering this question. First, a liberal arts education does not magically produce leaders. Before college education was easily accessible to students from a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds and there were as many liberal arts colleges as there are today, most of the people who received a liberal arts education were from well-off families or members of the elite. It is not surprising that places like Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale produced leaders, because their students were often in line to take over the family business, or well positioned to go into politics, for example. Elite universities produced leaders in a large part because students came from elite families or well connected families. Students who did not come from elite families learned from their classmates and made connections to elite networks while at school. In a sense, many of these students, by virtue of their lot in life, were born to take on leadership roles, whether they were good at them or not. The same was certainly true in Aristotle's time.

As higher education became democratized, universities enrolled students from all sorts of families. While students from wealthy, poor or modest means benefited from the liberal arts, the connection between liberal arts education and leadership may not have been as evident to people who had not grown up in families of influence or who were not surrounded by people from families of influence. As more people became better educated, there were also changes in the way that people ran businesses and government organizations. The command and control, centralized system of scientific management was geared towards an uneducated, industrial work force. By the mid-twentieth century, it began to give way to more decentralized ways of working in organizations, which resulted in more roles for leaders. This is one reason why, in the latter half of the twentieth century, writers such as James MacGregor Burns (1978), John W. Gardner (1989), and Warren Bennis (1989), wrote about the urgent need for more people who had the ability to take on leadership roles. All of these writers indicated that the higher educational system needed to offer something more than the traditional liberal arts.

Another reason for a leadership school or program is because liberal arts schools have changed. Students increasingly go to university to study business or get credentials for a job. One might argue that, in Aristotle's terms, universities are becoming more like centers for the servile arts (workers) than the liberal arts (free citizens). For instance, undergraduate students who major in

business often take fewer courses in the liberal arts school than other students. They learn many useful things, but they may not get the full benefit of the liberal arts. They could miss out on what is perhaps the most important insight of the liberal arts tradition – we can only understand what knowledge is useful if it is based on knowledge of the good. The good is not just what is good for the individual, but what is good for the individual in the context of some greater good that usually includes a good for society as well. Aquinas writes:

> In order that man may make good use of the art he has, he needs a good will, which is perfected by moral virtue; and for this reason the Philosopher says that there is a virtue of art; namely, a moral virtue, in so far as the good use of art requires a moral virtue. (Aquinas, 1947: Q.57 article 3, Reply Objection 2)

The courses that teach students about the good tend to be in the humanities. When parents or students regard universities as trade schools that prepare them for the job market, they seek only the instrumental goods of education, sometimes at the expense of learning things that are intrinsically good. By making liberal arts universities more like trade schools (what Aristotle would call teaching the servile arts), we may be educating students to be workers, but not leaders.

When we designed the Jepson School in 1991, distinguished researchers lamented the lack of progress in leadership studies, despite the growing number of studies and articles on the subject. After reading some of the leadership literature, I could see why they were concerned. Most of what was then called leadership studies came from researchers in psychology and management. Hardly any of the literature was from the humanities. The humanities help us understand the context and values that shape the relationship of leaders and followers and the phenomenon of leadership itself. Without the humanities, leadership studies was a little like watching a movie without the sound. The research showed us things, but we could not hear what they meant. It is against this backdrop that my colleagues and I set out to design the Jepson School of Leadership Studies. Our task was to reinvent a liberal arts school around the study of leadership and to expand and enrich the field of leadership studies.

THE JEPSON SCHOOL

Let me start the story of the Jepson School at the beginning. The school was born in May 1987 when Alice and Robert S. Jepson gave the university of Richmond a $20 million challenge gift to develop a school for leadership education. The Jepson gift funded a school – not a center or a program. The

Jepsons also seemed to know that if you want to build an institution, you need bricks. In 1992, they donated an additional $5 million to complete the building that houses the Jepson School. The story behind the founding of the school is important because it explains why the school was able to make an impact on leadership education and leadership studies. As a separate school housed in a building with its name on it, the Jepson School was built to last. It also started with three endowed chairs and funds for a full-time faculty, who would get tenure and promotions based on their teaching and scholarship in leadership studies. These elements provided a stable environment for innovation, curriculum development, and teaching that was conducive to cross-disciplinary cooperation and research.

Before the Jepson School was built and the faculty hired, a university committee had put together the basic plan for it. In the draft proposal, they articulated the mission of the school in the following way: "The primary task of the school is to provide a rigorous and disciplined education with a focus upon ethical and responsible leadership."[1] The committee then went on to describe the purpose of the school:

> The school's degree programs must be focused on producing in students the knowledge, experience, and abilities needed to be effective and constructive leaders in a variety of contexts. A solid foundation in the liberal arts and sciences, coupled with the study and preparation for leadership, holds the potential to prepare men and women who will approach leadership opportunities with a measure of skill, compassion, integrity, ability, and breadth of understanding that is sorely needed in our nation and world.

This statement was later translated into the mission of the school, which was to educate students "*for* leadership and *about* leadership."

In July 1991, I left The Wharton School for what I felt was one of the greatest opportunities in higher education – designing a new kind of institution from the ground up. The University of Richmond had already hired the Dean, Howard Prince, and the Associate Dean, Stephanie Micas. James MacGregor Burns had also signed on as a Senior Fellow. I was the first tenure track faculty hired as an endowed chair in leadership and ethics (my graduate and undergraduate degrees are in philosophy). My three colleagues soon followed – Richard Couto (political science), Karen Klenke (industrial psychology), and William Howe (education). The Dean was a behavioral psychologist and the Associate Dean's background was in women's studies. From July 1991 until the beginning of the spring semester of 1992, the faculty and two Deans developed all aspects of the school from admission procedures, to curriculum, to the introductory course.

This was an exciting but, at times, a very difficult process. It entailed seemingly endless conversations about what the school should look like. The first

and most difficult stumbling block was unpacking what "for and about leadership" meant. As academics, the "about leadership" part was easy, but the "for leadership" part was not. Most of us did not think that the school should be doing leadership "training". My colleagues discussed what we wanted our students to be like when they graduated. In addition to leaving with a strong liberal arts education, we wanted them to be the sorts of people who took responsibility for the world around them. Not all of our students would be presidents or CEOs, but at a minimum they would be the good citizens – the kind who, rather than complain about a pothole, would gather their neighbors together to do something about it. We hoped that the difference between our students and students in a regular liberal arts program would be that our students would not only feel responsible for the world around them, but they would have explicitly learned from the liberal arts how leaders influence and work with others. After this discussion, I captured our thoughts in the mission and philosophy statement. We stated the mission of the school this way: "The Jepson School develops people who understand the moral responsibilities of leadership and who are prepared to exercise leadership in service to society."[2]

The "for and about leadership" was also tied to questions about how we selected our students. Were we supposed to be picking students based on leadership potential? (Our students apply to the Jepson School during their sophomore year at the university.) We did not want to be in the business of picking out who would be a leader. This was offensive to some of us on a few levels. First, because it seemed presumptuous and second, because both trait research and history show that there is no written-in-stone criteria for predicting who will be a leader. Even if there were, then such "born leaders" would, in theory, not need to take our program. The task of identifying future leaders is especially difficult, given how much students can change and mature in the last two years of college. Finally, the idea of selecting leaders based on their leadership potential precluded letting students in who were interested in studying leadership. In the end, we accepted students based on their grades and their essays about why they wanted to join the school. We decided that it would be best to have students with a variety of interests, backgrounds, and personalities in our classes. This scatter shot approach has served us well. To this day, I am often surprised by which of our graduates actually end up in significant leadership positions years after they graduate.

In the end, we found some very acceptable solutions to the "for" question. Service learning, action research, speakers, and leaders in residence would provide students with hands-on and practical knowledge *for* leadership. We also pledged to experiment with pedagogy. Small interactive classes and the cohort effect created by having a selection process would allow us to create an active learning community in the school. Students would learn the skills and practical parts of leadership through doing things and interacting with leaders

that we brought into the program. Today, one or more of these elements can be found in most leadership programs. The one simple reason why a liberal arts school of leadership studies may produce more leaders than a regular liberal arts program is because when students study a subject, they often want to practice it – art students want to be artists, psychology students want to be psychologists, chemistry students want to be chemists, and so on. In the same vein, when students study leadership, they frequently become interested in taking on leadership roles. Over the years, our students have consistently held key leadership positions on campus – during some years they have held almost all of those positions. In part, this is the result of self-selection, but I do not think it accounts for all of it.

DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM

When it came to developing the curriculum, there was some tension between the disciplines of the various faculty and Deans, but we were actually able to design the curriculum in one day. We first agreed to have an introductory course called The Foundations of Leadership Studies. Next, we formulated the core courses starting with critical thinking and ethics and leadership. We had an extended debate over history as a core course. I was the only person from the humanities in the group. I really thought a core course in history was essential. Instead, we ended up with what we later learned was a bad compromise – a course called The History and Theories of Leadership.

The discussion about critical thinking exemplified the challenge of a multidisciplinary program. I envisioned a course that focused on epistemology, informal logic, and philosophy of science as a means of developing critical reading, writing, listening, and argumentation skills. The social scientists wanted a research methods course. I thought that the study of knowledge itself would be a better all-purpose tool for our students. I was rightly outvoted on this. We then had to grapple with the question: which discipline's method should we teach? Our students would be taking courses and reading literature from a variety of disciplines. Critical Thinking was supposed to help our students critically read and discuss materials from all of the liberal arts. Again, we made an easy but problematic compromise and decided to have the course address research methods in all disciplines from psychology to literary theory. We ended up with a course called Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry. The fourth core course, Leading Groups, was not controversial.

The core curriculum consisted of Critical Thinking, History and Theories of Leadership, Leading Groups, and Ethics and Leadership, which later became Leadership Ethics. Experiential learning formed the last element of the core. Since a founding idea of the school was moral leadership, we wanted

to make sure that ethics was not just a course in the curriculum, but a part of other courses and experiences in the school. Hence, we required all of our majors to engage in community service and take a service learning class. The course was mainly a forum for discussing students' on-site experiences. We later increased the number of credits for this class and created a regular academic course to go with service learning called Justice and Civil Society. In addition to this class, majors were required to do an internship. During the first six years of the school, all students were required to do a senior project. We later changed this requirement to a series of senior seminars and, since the ethics course touched on many aspects of the program, it became de facto the capstone course.

After formulating the core courses, we moved on to the electives. These were grounded in two broad variables in leadership studies – the context of leadership and competencies of leadership (or things leaders need to know about). The context courses included community leadership, international leadership, political leadership, leadership in social movements, and leadership in formal organizations. The basic competency electives were also easy to identify: conflict resolution, decision-making, motivation, organizational communication, leading individuals, and leading change, to name a few. Today we have a very wide range of electives that still fall into these general categories such as: Leadership in Historical Contexts; Statesmanship; Leadership and Religious Values; Gender and Leadership; Leaders and Artists; Reason, Rhetoric and Leadership; Psychology of Good and Evil and so on. We have since abandoned the context and competency categories, but I still think they are helpful ways to think about a leadership curriculum. Any leadership program or comprehensive study of leadership needs to take a balanced look at what leaders know and do and the influence of the contexts in which they operate.

Designing the curriculum was a piece of cake compared with our effort to design the first Foundations of Leadership Studies course. Through years of teaching and research, established disciplines like psychology or philosophy have forged a general consensus about what students need to know in an intro course. This was not the case in leadership studies in general and definitely not the case for a liberal arts approach to the topic in 1991. There were some textbooks on leadership, such as Gary Yukl's *Leadership in Organizations* (1989), but they tended to offer a limited view of leadership studies that was mostly based on research in management and psychology. There was also a massive amount of literature in the popular press that was not really appropriate for this program.

Our first Foundations of Leadership Studies course was a disaster for all who taught it and took it. Out of what were sometimes heated debates, we put together 600 pages of readings and a syllabus that really did not hang together.

Around mid-semester, our students called us to a meeting and demanded that something be done with the course because we were driving them crazy. Despite our failure to put together a very coherent course, we were rather pleased with the way that our students intervened and offered constructive criticism. That was exactly the sort of behavior we hoped to see in them. Many of the students from that course stayed on and joined the first class of the Jepson School, which was formally inaugurated in the fall of 1992.

I think the biggest problem we had with that course is that none of us really knew what the foundations of leadership studies were and I am still not sure that our faculty or colleagues in the field would agree on what they are today. As Thomas Kuhn (1970) notes, one indication that a field of study is mature is when there are standard textbooks in it. There are some good leadership textbooks out there today, but I do not think that they represent a consensus of what one should learn in an introduction to leadership studies course (for example, see Northouse, 1997 and later edition, 2009). Three years after the first course, my colleague Tom Wren carved down and organized the 600 pages of reading from the original Foundations of Leadership Studies course into a reader called *The Leader's Companion* (1995). This helped reshape the course into something more manageable and it also offered the first model of a liberal arts leadership studies reader.

THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM

It is rare that any program gets the curriculum right from the start, and we were no exception. Because we are a liberal arts school, we have a multidisciplinary faculty teaching a curriculum that consists of a number of interdisciplinary courses. This creates some unique challenges. It is one thing to devise a list of new courses and quite another to actually teach them and find faculty to teach them. For example, I taught Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry. As a philosopher, the critical thinking part was easy. There are plenty of good textbooks in this area – logic is still logic, and the same is true for epistemology and philosophy of science. All I did was insert examples and exercises that would apply to leadership. My problem was with research methods. I knew something about research methods in history, literature, philosophy, and the natural sciences but I did not know much about the social sciences. We had similar problems with History and Theories of Leadership. This course required knowledge in both history and the social sciences. Since we did not have enough faculty to team-teach these courses, the content of them was sometimes a bit lopsided. Depending on who taught it, students either got a strong dose of history or a strong dose of the social science theories of leader-

ship. After teaching it for a while, some faculty managed to master both sides of the course.

Interdisciplinary courses raise a number of questions about the level of expertise needed in the various disciplines for a course to meet the same level of academic rigor as single-discipline courses. Professors sometimes make the mistake of trying to put too many things into an interdisciplinary course. This allows them to skate with ease through material from a number of disciplines, but such courses run the risk of fragmentation and failure to treat subjects with sufficient depth. Our Foundations of Leadership Studies course had a related problem. It was supposed to be a survey course, but our faculty did not like teaching things they did not know well or find interesting. They solved the problem of fragmentation and depth by teaching what they knew best. As a result of this, we eventually got rid of the Foundations of Leadership Studies Course by splitting it into two required courses – Leadership and the Social Sciences, and Leadership and the Humanities. This makes practical sense, but it raises the question of how knowledge of the humanities and social sciences complement, reinforce, and enrich our understanding of leadership. The old foundations course also served the function of teaching new faculty about the various areas of leadership research. One concern is that faculty who do not have a good sense of the whole field will be unable to tie what they do in their courses to the rest of the curriculum.

We later divided Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry into two courses – Critical Thinking, and Research Methods. Research Methods focuses on method in the social sciences. We still struggle with what to do about these two courses. We recently made them into two half-semester courses taught by different professors. Undergraduates in any program need to have a course that develops critical skills and skills that aid in the organized collection of information. The half semester of each short-changes both courses, but this may be adequate for an undergraduate program. In graduate education, however, an in-depth focus on method is fundamental for future research and a student's development as a teacher and scholar.

The ideal solution for interdisciplinary courses is to have them team-taught. This is a costly solution that few schools and departments can sustain over time. We have team-taught a number of courses at Jepson with faculty from other parts of the university. These courses have covered leadership in art, science, literature and economics. We funded several of these courses with a Keck Foundation Grant that Jepson, Claremont McKenna, and Loyola Marymount received in 2005. Team-teaching is a great way for faculty to learn new subject areas but faculty need to teach a course more than once to develop it and refine their knowledge of a subject. Leadership courses require time to experiment, make mistakes, and refine the material. Some of us at the Jepson School published textbooks after we felt we had got a course right. For example, I

published my book *The Ethics of Leadership* (Ciulla, 2003) after getting the kinks out of my leadership ethics course and Gill Hickman published *Leading Organizations* (1998) based on her experience teaching Leadership in Formal Organizations.

HIRING AND DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP STUDIES FACULTY

Hiring faculty for a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary program is challenging. The Jepson School started out with four faculty members and hired two more the second year – Tom Wren (history) and Gill Hickman (public administration). In the early years, our job advertisements were usually for people in leadership studies. We received hundreds of applications from people with Ph.D.s, many of whom were practitioners such as retired generals, consultants, business people, and a myriad of others who wanted to share their personal knowledge and leadership experiences with our students. We often invite such practitioners into our classes or to give talks, or to serve as our Leader in Residence. At this time, we do not have positions for "professors of practice". We soon discovered that the best way to advertise for a position in our school was to search for people who, first and foremost, had a strong disciplinary background in a liberal arts discipline.

One hallmark of a discipline is an implicit or explicit method of research. At this time, leadership studies is not itself a discipline – it is a field that includes many disciplines. We get a number of job applicants who have Ph.D.s in leadership studies, but we have noticed that their research does not always rest on a solid foundation in one or more of the liberal arts. The danger of interdisciplinary graduate programs is that students can end up without a discipline. We then look at the candidates' research and background to see if they are able to connect what they know and have done to future teaching and research in leadership studies. Job candidates from specific disciplines can also present problems. While Ph.D. work in interdisciplinary programs sometimes lacks depth and rigor, single-discipline candidates are sometimes so narrowly focused that it is difficult to see how they could teach our courses or, for that matter, many courses in their own discipline. At this time, the disciplinary make-up of the Jepson School faculty looks like this: we have two faculty members from philosophy, two from religion, three from political science, three from social psychology, one from history, one from public administration, one from international studies, and we will soon have another faculty member from one of the humanities. Our Dean is an economist.

FINDING BOUNDARIES AND KEEPING FOCUSED

As we have added faculty, we have added many new courses and research on leadership. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of a leadership studies curriculum is finding a balance between what needs to be taught and what the available faculty can and will teach. You can make just about any subject into a leadership course. The difficulty is drawing the line between what is really about leadership and what is about something that has only a thin connection to leadership. This issue is conceptually difficult and – as one might imagine – politically volatile. Yet, if a liberal arts approach to leadership studies is about anything and everything, then it is no longer a leadership program. It is the worst sort of interdisciplinary program – a collection of courses that lack a coherent connection to each other.

When we designed the curriculum, we were concerned about the danger of fragmentation so we decided that our courses should be carefully sequenced. By having students take courses in a certain order, we hoped to have the core courses build on each other. The course sequence also reinforced the cohort effect, which is very useful in a program where most classes are largely discussion, and group assignments are quite common. In addition to tight sequencing, we began to offer students the option of taking a leadership concentration. Before we started the school, the university had stipulated that all of our students were required to have a minor or second major. They thought that a second major or minor would answer the "Leadership for what?" question. We soon discovered that a number of our students were taking two or sometimes three majors or minors on their own. Usually the major or minor complemented their work in leadership studies. We decided to get rid of the major or minor requirement and introduce leadership studies concentrations. Now, if students are interested in areas such as international leadership, law and leadership, political leadership, religious leadership, and so on, we help them put together a program of courses from Jepson and in other departments in the university. This allows them to follow their interests without having to cobble together several minors or another major. Students who take a concentration have a faculty supervisor and they write a thesis in their senior year.

LIBERAL ARTS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Ever since the day that The Jepson School opened its doors, we have received requests to give training programs for business, government and community groups. We turned down most of them because we were too busy teaching and doing our own research. During the first year, I was approached by the Virginia Foundation of Police Executives to develop a program for police chiefs and

other senior officers from around the state. Since the mission of our school included the idea of service to society, I thought that we should do something for this important group of public servants, but only if that "something" was what we were already doing in our classes. I outlined a proposal that I thought the Virginia Foundation of Police Executives would reject. It was a miniature version of our undergraduate liberal arts program. This meant that participants would take everything from Critical Thinking to Leadership and Literature. The foundation liked the idea and so did the people who eventually attended the program. My colleagues did a wonderful job delivering short versions of their regular courses. The program ran as a Jepson program for over ten years.

The police executive program was a useful learning experience because the original plan for the Jepson School included the development of a master's degree program. We did indeed design one in 2002. I drafted the following description of the program:

> The Jepson School's executive Masters of Leadership Studies (MLS) is a selective and intellectually rigorous liberal arts leadership program for mid-career professionals. The MLS curriculum rests on three assumptions about leadership. The first and central assumption is that leaders must have a broad perspective on the world and the place of organization and work in it. There is no better vehicle for doing this than the liberal arts. Insights from areas such as history, anthropology, international studies, sociology, and literature help participants expand their worldviews and gain new insights into their organizations and themselves. Second, leadership is about anticipating, analyzing and solving problems within complex systems. Courses in this program focus on developing analytical ability and imagination to create viable strategies for creating, implementing and foreseeing change in organizations and society. The MLS program offers intensive work in logic, critical thinking, systems thinking, creativity and change. Third, perhaps the most difficult part of leadership is relationships with people. The people issues permeate all parts of this program, but are specifically addressed in sessions on ethics, groups, and organizations. These sessions are taught using literature from philosophy, religion, and the best social science on individual and group behavior.

We faced a number of practical challenges implementing this program, such as cost – it would be quite expensive because we only wanted about 20 students in the class. The size of the potential pool of applicants in the Richmond metropolitan area was a concern because the university did not have a hotel facility, so most students would have to commute or make their own hotel arrangements. Staffing was problematic since some faculty did not want to teach in the program. In a small program, we also hoped for an interesting group of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences from both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Despite these challenges, we were able to get a pool of applicants for the first class – and then we had a revelation. We had required all of our applicants to take the GREs (Graduate Record Exam). At the meeting to select our first class, we discovered that many of the applicants'

scores were fairly low, except for one applicant who got an 800. Some of the lower scores were interesting people with years of experience who had been out of school for a long time. While we wanted these people in the program, we wondered if some of them could pass our courses. What would we do if they could not? This was designed as an academic master's degree program, analogous to one in a topic like history or psychology, so we did not want to lower our standards. We began to think about what failure of a course would mean to someone whose employer was paying for the program, or for someone who would be attending on a scholarship. Despite the fact that we were very clear about the program as a liberal arts program, I think that there was still the perception that it was a training program. At the selection meeting we made the difficult decision not to go forward with the program. In retrospect, I think it was the right choice. We had not sufficiently worked through the conceptual and practical challenges of such a program. Today the good graduate programs in leadership studies are not liberal arts programs. They tend to focus more on leadership practice and be grounded in the study of business, psychology, strategy, and so on.

This is not to say that liberal arts programs should not be done, but rather that it is often difficult to explain to employers the value added of taking impractical courses such as literature for leadership development. Having taught leadership seminars for a number of business and government groups over the years, I am not alone in noticing the powerful ways in which working adults translate lessons from areas such as philosophy and literature into practical applications regarding leadership and their work. For example, in the 1950s, executives at the Bell Telephone Company were concerned about how to develop leadership talent within the company. Many of the up-and-coming managers were good at their jobs, but did not have a college education. They believed that "A well trained man knows how to answer questions; an educated man knows what questions are worth asking."[3] The company sent promising managers through a ten-month liberal arts program at the University of Pennsylvania. There they took short courses on everything from James Joyce's *Ulysses* to the *Bhagavad Gita*. The company carried out a survey of the participants and found that they read more widely, were more curious about the world, and they tended to see more than one facet to any given argument after going through the program. In short, managers developed two very important leadership qualities. They had widened their perspective on the world and improved their critical thinking skills. The company considered the institute a success, except for one problem. The managers who participated in the program were more intellectually engaged and confident, but they were also less inclined to put the company's bottom line ahead of the interests of other stakeholders such as the community and their families. While the company wanted to develop competent, intellectually engaged leaders, they were not

very comfortable with leaders who might put the interests of other stakeholders ahead of the company's bottom line. In short, these managers internalized the most important lessons of the liberal arts – knowledge is only useful if it is for some greater good, and the ultimate end of knowledge is happiness and the good life. Perhaps this is the main reason why leadership studies should be a liberal and not a servile art.

LEADERSHIP STUDIES AS THE LIBERAL ARTS

The liberal arts approach provides a foundation of knowledge needed for life. A liberal arts leadership studies program uses the study of leaders and leadership as a focal point for that foundation. The study of leadership will never be complete without the arts and the sciences. The humanities supply a rich foundation for understanding the context of leadership and they offer a gigantic repository of information about morality and human behavior that spans over time and across cultures. In an ideal field of leadership studies, social scientists would test the results of their research against what we know from subjects such as history, literature, philosophy and religion, and scholars from those fields would test their observations and interpretations against research carried out by social scientists in the laboratory and the field.

As I argued earlier, undergraduate students who choose to study leadership are probably more likely to want to be leaders than liberal arts students in general. Jepson School graduates rarely aspire to get graduate degrees in leadership studies. They move on to jobs in business, public service or non-profits, or they study law, medicine, public administration, education, religion, or some other academic discipline. In short, a liberal arts leadership studies degree is not something one takes to prepare for graduate work in leadership studies or to be a leader. It serves as an intellectual and moral foundation for doing whatever it is that students choose to do or study in life. Nonetheless, by adding a leadership focus to the liberal arts, we hope that our students will be more inclined to take on the moral responsibilities of leadership and citizenship and know more about what it takes to do it well.

NOTES

1. Draft 4: "Proposal for the Jepson School of Leadership Studies", University of Richmond Faculty Committee, 1989.
2. Draft of the Jepson School Philosophy Statement from 3 September 1991.
3. The description of this program is from Davis (2010).

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