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TITLE Leading in the College Union: A Study of Senior Level Professional's Leadership Practices

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OBJECTIVE The article provides an overview of effective leadership practices of senior college union professionals.

METHODOLOGY

Participants in the Senior Manager Professionals Program (SMPP), facilitated at the 2007 annual conference of the Association of College Unions International, were invited to complete the Leadership Practices Inventory and to seek similar completion from their supervisors, subordinates, and institutional peers. Seventy-one individuals who registered in advance for the SMPP were requested to participate in this study and 55 provided usable data (77% response rate). The sample was equally split between male and female respondents, with three quarters holding an advanced educational degree. A strong majority of participants were tenured in the field and at their institution.

KEY FINDINGS

The leadership scores of participants and their observers were relatively similar. Supervisors scored the senior leaders higher in all leadership practices with the exception of Inspiring, with institutional peers generally having the second highest scores, followed by direct reports.

Enabling was the only leadership practice to have all six statements in the top portion of the 30-item ranking of statements while Challenging had all of its statements in the bottom half of the list. A majority of statements relating to Inspiring fell into the lower portion of the ranking and the statements for Encouraging fell across the rankings.

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The author asserts: "Findings of the SMPP study indicate that senior college union professionals, in general, are ranked comparatively to others in regard to their leadership practices. With a majority of scores relatively close to the normative means, senior professionals were perceived to be reasonably effective leaders; however, they do have opportunity to improve their leadership practices. Similar to any focused effort at developmental growth, senior leaders should continue to reinforce good leadership practices and consciously strive to improve leadership practices perceived to be weaker" (p. 27). "Recognition and reinforcement of Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices will help senior college union professionals enhance success for the future" (p. 28).