
THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

research

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

- TITLE** Dietetics Students Perceive Themselves as Leaders and Report They Demonstrate Leadership in a Variety of Contexts
- RESEARCHER** Susan W. Arendt and Mary B. Gregoire
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2005, Vol. 105, No. 8, pp. 1289-1294
- OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this study was to identify leadership behaviors, actions and practices of dietetics students, determine how these students perceive themselves as leaders and examine whether leadership practices differ on the basis of demographic characteristics.
- METHODOLOGY** A sample of 283 students completed the Student version of the Leadership Practices Inventory. They were from eight college campuses, either taking a freshman or senior level course in a dietetics program. The typical respondent was female (89%), under 25 years of age (88%), senior-level (60%), with supervisory experience at work (70%), and holding an elected or appointed leadership position (60%). Internal reliabilities for the leadership practices were: Challenging .55; Enabling .62; Modeling .67; Encouraging .73; and, Inspiring .76.
- KEY FINDINGS** Enabling was the leadership practice with the highest average score, followed by Modeling, Encouraging, Inspiring and Challenging. Neither year-in-school (freshman-sophomore versus junior-senior) nor supervisor experience made a significant difference in leadership practice scores. Those reporting that they had academic leadership preparation had significantly higher scores

than those without for Inspiring, Challenging and Encouraging. Older students had significantly higher scores than younger students for Challenging.

In the context of class, students who saw themselves as leaders compared to those who did not had higher scores in Modeling, Inspiring, Challenging and Encouraging. Students having held a leadership position had significantly higher scores for Modeling than those who had not. Students who reported that they reflected on their actions in the class context had significantly higher scores on Challenging and Enabling than those students who did not. When asked if they reflected on their actions and made changes based on these reflections, 86 to 95 percent reported that they did so in all context areas.

The authors conclude that “educators should look for ways to integrate leadership into the classroom, assist students in identifying current leadership behaviors, and encourage the practice of new leadership behaviors” (p. 1293).