

**TITLE:** Leadership Practices of Used by Online Instructors in Higher Education

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**OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the leadership practices college and university instructors use when teaching online classes.

**METHODOLOGY:** The sample consisted of 158 online instructors from colleges and universities throughout the United States (18% response rate). Participants completed the Student version of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), and those who ranked in the high range (N=18) qualified for a telephone interview. There were 8 men and 10 women interviewees and their average age was 47 years. Fifty percent had doctorates and eight others had master's degrees and their experience with online teaching ranged from two semesters to 16 years. The structured questions were designed to illicit and allow instructors to share their experiences regarding how they practiced transformational leadership behaviors in online classrooms.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The author concludes that the “study of these 18 exceptional instructors revealed experiences that could provide significant guidance into specifically ‘how’ transformational leadership could be practiced in the online classroom” (p. 111). Exceptional online instructors demonstrate transformational leadership by (1) trusting their students first, which results in reciprocal trust from the online student; (2) developing personal relationships online, which facilitates online coaching and mentoring; (3) creating group collaboration by assigning interdependent group projects; (4) building rapport with students, which enhances the transformational leadership practices of role-modeling, providing meaningful feedback, mentoring, coaching, motivating, dialoging, building shared goals, and creating trust; and, (5) challenging and motivating students through lessons and assignments that incorporate real-life experiences and emphasize meaningful application.

The author concludes, “this study established that transformational leadership can be practiced in the online environment and how it is practiced” (p. 123).