

Spotlight on ILA Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change.

Spotlight on Batten Leadership Institute: Developing Women Leaders

by Abrina Schnurman-Crook



Walking into the circle of chairs on that first day, I mostly felt afraid and nervous. I don't like talking about my problems and struggle with my patience in listening to others. What did this have to do with leadership? Why was I getting college credit for a therapy session? Little did I know how much I would grow within that circle of chairs and how much I would come to learn about myself, which is worth much more than anything I have learned in my other college classes.... Whether I want to admit it or not, I have been affected by the time spent in the circle of chairs. I am finding that I am slower to judge, no longer think pauses are awkward, and know that I have all the tools to be a helpful person if I want to.—Macy

At the Batten Leadership Institute (BLI), a program housed at Hollins University (a small, all-women's liberal arts university), we work from the basic understanding that reflection is both crucial and costly. Students who self-select into our leadership classes have the opportunity to pause in their pursuit of all the right answers and ask themselves questions with life-long implications. What are my core beliefs and values? How and why do I avoid conflict? Do I trust myself? What do I want to work on? How do I begin the process of changing those things in myself that get in the way of who I want to be? Over and over again our mantra—we can lead others well only when we learn to lead our own lives well—infuses every aspect of our leadership curriculum.

high-impact leadership curriculum with an adaptive core. Senior students in the program mentor first year students in weekly video-taped labs. The BLI model spans three years of classroom experiences which progressively examine awareness of self, self in relation to others in a project situation, interacting with other cultures and values, and refining skills while observing self and others in various roles. Serving as supervisors and mentors, seniors in the program brave beyond their own self-imposed boundaries to define and articulate growth inspiring feedback for their peers and mentees, while working to foster trusting and supportive relationships with each other.

Increasing numbers of students each year assert that the Batten Leadership Institute curriculum was the tipping point in their decision to attend Hollins University. Endowed by the late Frank Batten, Sr., creator of the Weather Channel and former chair of Landmark Media Enterprises, and founded by Katherine Walker, our intensive approach to leadership development is a compelling draw for students open to a dynamic, intrapersonally and interpersonally-

resonant training experience. One of our biggest challenges lies in describing our model in sound bytes. The following testimonials from our students provide a snapshot of the transformative change they have experienced through our program.

The exploration of the various styles of leadership was instructive, but the interactive nature of skills clinic, leadership lab, and communication skills group were the most transformative for me. They were also the most challenging emotionally. They pushed my proverbial buttons and demanded that I go places I would normally avoid.—Rosalie

I learned leaders should take some risks to make a change effectively. Looking back on why it was hard for me to express myself, I discovered I was scared to be someone who was not reliable, and that others would leave me once they knew I am not perfect. Also, I felt insecure to disclose my problems to others because they might betray me and someone might offend me.—Kanako

A point that really hit home with me was the topic of empathy. I like to think of myself as an empathic person, but I wasn't entirely sure how this would be very relevant to leadership. I

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Unique in both design and delivery, BLI pairs a counseling-based wellness model with executive education strategies to develop leadership capacities. Our program—facilitated by trained psychotherapists working from a foundation in leadership theory—is intentionally structured around a

will admit that I was quite mistaken, because for me, now at least, this is the most important trait I can possess as a leader... I feel also that I had mistaken actions I had been making as actually being empathic. Sure, it's one thing for me to say, "Oh I'm sorry to hear that," or, "I bet you are having a rough week," but I realized that my empathy was really very shallow— surface deep. What people really want is to be acknowledged and understood, which is something I expected from others all along, just had missed the mark on displaying myself.—Taylor

Believing lectures rarely inspire sustained change, we rely heavily on experiential opportunities for meaningful, authentic growth and self-awareness. Working from a counseling framework, we dig deep into self development, teaching students to value curiosity even in the most difficult conversations— those where logic often does not provide the answer. As we embrace the ambiguity inherent in the practice of leadership, we encourage our students to let go of the need for competency—a need which can get in the way of risk-taking and therefore stymie personal development. Trust—of self, peer, mentee, and mentor—is often at the heart of our conversations and our curriculum. Thus classroom becomes the ultimate learning lab as students are expected to give and receive meaningful real time feedback, a skill we underscore as vital to competent leadership and a frequent student-identified marker of growth.

I learned how to speak my mind without fear of devastating repercussions. I also was able to learn how to discuss an emotionally driven topic and get my point across without becoming an emotional car wreck myself.—Johanna

I also learned about deep listening, which much like our communication skills clinic,

helped me when communicating with my loved ones. I have become a much better listener.—Danielle

Diversifying and expanding capacity for responding to ourselves and others requires a strong systemic focus or as Heifetz calls it, a *balcony perspective*. Teaching a system to observe itself, engage thoughtfully, and adapt while retaining the core identity values that make each student or organization distinctive, is at the heart of our change process. With this systemic lens in place, our collective work at BLI applies across all domains, resonating at the undergraduate, graduate, and executive/professional levels. Our signature programs foster vital

messages of self-awareness and self-care and promote stronger relational partnering. Deeply personal in its reach, our model stands in contrast to those structured within a business context. We don't teach business leadership skills; we teach life skills, believing opportunities for leadership are everywhere. A clinical and adaptive model at the heart of leadership training and development offers exciting implications for those teaching leadership. The BLI faculty welcomes opportunities to collaborate with others who aspire to learn and share the art and practice of leadership in our own lives, with students and in our communities. Contact me at: aschnurmancrook@hollins.edu.

Community Kiosk

Share your important announcements! Pin your virtual sticky note up on ILA's Community Kiosk. Email Ashley Wollam at ajwollam@ila-net.org to submit.

ILA Members Charles Salter and Phyllis Duncan were recently published in the *Journal of Leadership Studies (JOLS)* with their article "A study of follower's personality, implicit leadership perceptions, and leadership ratings," co-authored with Mark Green, Malcolm Ree, and Meghan Carmody-Bubb (*JOLS*, Winter 2009, p 48-60). Access your complimentary *JOLS* to read the full article!
(ila-net.org > eBenefits > Journal of Leadership Studies)

ILA Members Marcy Levy Shankman and Scott Allen are setting trends with their *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership for Students* program, being published in five parts by Jossey-Bass. As part of this program, Shankman and Allen "outline the three facets of the EILS model, which encompass 21 capacities that define the emotionally intelligent leader: consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others." Visit www.josseybass.com to learn more and use the promotional code **HAE20** to save 20%!

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