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# Developing a Leadership Consortium

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# STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY

## *Developing a Leadership Consortium*

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### **Introduction**

Although the term “leadership” did not appear until approximately the 1850s, leadership can be viewed as an ancient art (Bass, 1990). However, it was not until 1976 that the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Commission IV developed a leadership task force to investigate leadership programs in higher education and clearly defined the differences between leadership development, leadership training, and leadership education (Roberts & Ullom, 1990). The field of leadership progressed over the years by examining various components such as trait theory, behavioral theories, situational theories, and, most recently, leadership identity development theories. Since then, information regarding definitions of leadership, descriptions of leadership theories and models, the impact of leadership development on students, and how leadership styles vary based on ethnicity and sex have become prevalent in the literature.

Even though leadership has been broadly recognized as an academic discipline, it lacks common standards and definitions, making it difficult for leadership educators and practitioners to further develop it as a

field. As a result, a variety of professional leadership associations, including the Student Leadership Programs Knowledge Community (SLPKC), have been created to provide support and resources to those who work within the field of leadership to help develop a framework. The question then becomes, “What is the overlap between these professional associations, and how can they work together to help develop the field?”

First, we will describe the various leadership associations, including the ACPA Commission for Student Involvement, the Association of Leadership Educators (ALE), the International Leadership Association (ILA), the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs (NCLP), and the SLPKC. Then, we will describe the collaborative efforts underway to create a leadership consortium among these organizations to strengthen the leadership field.

### **Professional Leadership Organizations**

NASPA’s SLPKC is designed for student affairs professionals working with student leaders. The SLPKC mission states that it will “share best practices, provide critical evaluation of the field, examine standards for leadership programs, support national and regional efforts to develop student leadership programs, make contributions to literature, recognize exemplary programs, and cultivate a forum for the presentation of new ideas” (SLPKC, n.d.). The knowledge community utilizes webinars, electronic mailing lists, and web resources to share information, trends, and research in student leadership programs. ►



The ACPA Commission for Student Involvement offers an opportunity for those in 10 functional areas of the field to engage professional and socially. There is an emphasis on technology, discussions, electronic mailing lists, interactive dialogue, professional development, and publishing opportunities. The commission is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It offers resources including electronic mailing list subscriptions, best/powerful practices, comprehensive leadership programs and general assessment, and leadership book reviews.

The ALE has existed for 20 years with a mission to “strengthen and sustain the expertise of professional leadership educators” (ALE, n.d.). The association provides a broader focus, including not only higher education professionals but also youth development organizations, military trainers, community development educators, and private consultants.

The association coordinates the peer-reviewed *Journal of Leadership Educators* and hosts a conference each year.

The ILA states that it is “the global network for all those who practice, study and teach leadership. The ILA promotes a deeper understanding of leadership knowledge and practices for the greater good of individuals and communities worldwide” (ILA, n.d.). The ILA coordinates several leadership publications, including the *Journal of Leadership Studies*; hosts an annual conference; and offers a variety of online resources. Members can participate in four different types of communities. The association is housed at the University of Maryland in the School of Public Policy.

The NCLP has served leadership scholars and practitioners since 1990. Its mission is to serve as a centralized source for

resources and professional development, along with promoting collaboration, networking, and information sharing among leadership educators. “NCLP believes that leadership educators should contribute to the scholarship of leadership, help to advance the field of leadership studies, enhance effective pedagogies to develop leadership, and improve standards of practice” (NCLP, n.d.). The NCLP is overseen by leadership professionals from the University of Maryland.

### Leadership Consortium

We hope to continue this mutually beneficial collaboration to support collegiality and encourage networking among those interested in and invested in leadership. This collaboration is of particular salience during the financial crises that many campuses currently face. As professional development funds are dwindling and positions are being eliminated or merged, it is critical that we continue to provide resources and avenues for leadership educators to learn from one another’s best practices.

To achieve that mission, it is necessary to build a coalition of those interested in leadership through collaboration. The leadership consortium of the organizations described above established the following goals to help coordinate efforts for all professionals involved in leadership development, training, and education:

1. Coordinate program calendars to minimize duplication and maximize professional participation.
2. Track trends and voids in professional programs, services, and recourses.
3. Promote each other’s programs through electronic mailing lists, publications, and other means.
4. Partner on pre-conferences sessions, general conference sessions, and other professional development activities as appropriate.
5. Collaborate on local, national, and international research projects.
6. Facilitate resource sharing and general communication through regularly scheduled conference calls and in-person meetings at partnering organizations’ conferences and meetings. ■

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