

LeaderShape Helps Students Explore Leadership Skills

This March, 60 students from UNC and NC State temporarily set rivalries aside and came together for a week of leadership development. Hosted and organized by the Carolina Union's office of Student Life & Leadership, The LeaderShape Institute was an intensive and energizing six-day program with a mission to transform the world by increasing the number of people who lead with integrity and a healthy disregard for the impossible.

Held from March 7-12 in Black Mountain, NC, LeaderShape was a joint session with 30 students selected from UNC-CH and 30 from NC State. Students who attended said the program uncovered lessons and insights about leadership, inclusiveness and self-awareness that they will bring back to their respective schools and communities.

"If one can take any lesson away from LeaderShape, it is that leaders come in all shapes and sizes and there is no set standard for who can be a leader," said Reghan Flores, a first year student at UNC. "The diverse, inclusive community fostered by LeaderShape taught me this and gave me a new perspective going back to UNC and the world beyond. Every person has a unique set of qualities and ideas that can be brought to the table, and it is important to recognize that someone's weakness in one area is another's strength; however, both are equally valuable. With this thought in mind, I plan to advocate for inclusivity amongst the UNC organizations I am involved with and the campus as a whole, taking action to make sure everyone's voice is heard. I understand, through the knowledge I gained as part of the LeaderShape program, that I don't need to force myself to accomplish everything at once, but I can break down my vision into manageable and reach goals, setting a timeline for the smaller steps I want to accomplish first before building my way up to the complete picture. There are different ways of leading as well, whether that be in a titled position or simply reaching out a helping hand as a general member, and leading doesn't mean standing alone on your path towards an overarching vision. Wherever I may be, whatever the circumstances may be, I will do my utmost to stay true to the goals I have put forth with a firm understanding of my values and passions as well as the qualities of a leader gained through my time in the LeaderShape program."

"Leadershape reinforced that the leadership style I tend to use is valuable in its own way, and helped me see both the strengths and vulnerabilities in the leadership style that I tend to envy," said Amy Wright, who is pursuing a master's in Social Work. "I

needed that validation because being a leader is important to me and my less dominant leadership style is less frequently valued and recognized in U.S. society. I also learned from experience that I am capable of stretching and adapting my leadership style to be more take-charge when the situation calls for it; I just have to set my mind to pushing myself outside my comfort zone!"

"I am interested in international relations, especially Middle Eastern affairs," said Tracey Spaugh, a Global Studies major. "I will take what I learned from Leadershape with me no matter where I go. I will be aware of my positionality as a cisgender, heterosexual, American male working with other communities. I will be aware of the power that I have, but I will also be cognizant of the inequities in the world. My focus as an international relations specialist must be to work with diverse communities and work to make sure that everyone involved feels like they are wanted and are able to work in the global processes to deal with our major challenges such as LGBTQ discrimination, women's rights, poverty, global pandemics, and climate change."

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