

**NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY
LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER
WHITE PAPER**

Vision

The Leadership and Community Development Cluster (LCDC) is an interdisciplinary effort that brings together faculty and staff from all academic units at North Carolina A&T State University to engage in research activities that focus on building and strengthening the community. Lead departments include Business Administration, Construction Management and Occupational Safety, Human Development and Services, Human Environment and Family Services, Journalism and Mass Communications, Political Science; the School of Education; and Cooperative Extension.

The vision of the LCDC is to design, plan, conduct, and implement research that leads to improvements in the viability of the communities that NC A&T serves. Building communities and developing leadership capacity require encompassing all segments of the community. Therefore the LCDC will partner with representatives of government, education (including higher education), economic development agencies, government extension agencies, churches/heritage institutions, civic groups, foundations, public/private entities, local media, and families. The work of the LCDC will be collaborative in nature, combining expertise of the various academic disciplines and the experiences and backgrounds of community organizations and individuals, to identify research needs with a goal towards educating citizens to become leaders in their communities.

To fulfill this vision the cluster will (1) involve multiple institutions and social structures; (2) partner equitably with communities; (3) include all constituencies, and (4) develop local leadership to create the sense of efficacy, empowerment, self-determination, and hope that is essential to developing vital communities.

Definition

Leadership is by its very nature an interdisciplinary field. This cluster will explore the interdisciplinary roots of leadership by drawing on various perspectives and methodologies from more than one discipline. The LCDC will build on the expertise of researchers in the areas of social science, business, housing, education, communications, cultural studies, human development, human environments, positive psychology, organizational studies and service distribution.

Community development is the process of improving the social, economic and cultural conditions of one's community. It involves conception, planning and implementation of projects or activities to ensure improvement of the community, for example improving the living standards of its members.

Leadership and community development, as an interdisciplinary research focus, are inextricably linked and will require bringing together interdisciplinary and cross-

disciplinary teams representing a variety of stakeholders (higher education, public education, faith-based groups, grassroots community groups, civic groups, etc.) to achieve the goals of developing leaders and strengthening the community.

Research focus areas fall into three main categories: (1) **capacity building**, (2) **policy**, and (3) **educational research** and interdisciplinary approaches. The focus of **capacity building** will be school and community development. Much has been written about the potential role of schools in the economic life of rural communities and of schools as centers for community development. However, little research documents these interrelationships. A research agenda on the role of school/community linkages might include:

- strengthening educational achievement and improving schools,
- helping youth become more resilient and adaptive,
- fostering lifelong learning,
- enriching community capacity building,
- revitalizing and developing communities (Hobbs, 1987; 1989),
- increasing educational expectations for all children,
- creating new paradigms that encourage young people to stay in and "grow" their communities.

Developing **policies** for local leadership requires research. The studies on building community-based leadership in various capacities might include:

- democratizing relationships, building trust, addressing inequities in power structures, and involving all constituencies in decision making;
- supporting parents as agents of change for children;
- developing new avenues for civic engagement (for example, grassroots access to media);
- identifying and building on cultural, historic, and economic assets;
- identifying and supporting technology use, including new and emerging technology as well as extant forms of technology;
- identifying reasonable targets of opportunity for capacity building (for example, creating school-based adult training programs in computer applications or other needed skills);
- understanding strategic economic activities, including how to "grow" good jobs; and
- providing education that keeps young adults in the community, trains people for new jobs, and capitalizes on community skills and assets.

New **educational research** involving multiple institutions and social structures will show the way to communicate in the "local language," develop local leadership, cope with the realities of globalization, and take advantage of e-commerce. The end result will be creation of a sense of efficacy, empowerment, self-determination, and hope in citizens that is essential to developing vital communities.

Impact

Research conducted by the LCDC to support the development, improvement and/or expansion of resources that produce and promote leadership will empower organized community groups in addressing issues that impact their communities.

The long term goals of LCDC are to

- facilitate development of citizens who are educated about the decision-making process
- facilitate development of community leaders
- establish entrepreneurial programs and partnerships that foster opportunities for long-term funding initiatives
- provide access to technical job training and employment opportunities
- promote higher literacy and greater personal enrichment
- encourage active use of available community resources
- help marginalized citizens become productive in community life
- secure more than adequate local health and service delivery

New technologies show promise for changing power dynamics and providing new opportunities in distressed communities. The LCDC will impact communities by (1) increasing access to distance learning, telecommuting, and e-commerce; (2) studying the impact of telecommunications technologies on communities and schools, on social structures, and on power relationships; (3) constructing case studies of communities where both new technologies and appropriate technologies have been used; and (4) conducting research on planning for and the use of tomorrow's technologies in distressed communities.

The LCDC will also provide education and research opportunities for undergraduates and for students enrolled in the interdisciplinary PhD Leadership Program.

In addition, cluster projects will enhance current research and education activities and contribute to the University's development as a premier research institution in leadership and community development with particular focus on underserved and underrepresented populations.

Background

In the 1930's social scientists began to examine leadership. Through these studies, it was determined that leadership is something people do, and therefore the premise was developed that it is something that people can learn to do. Generally, leadership requires establishing a vision, communicating that vision to those in the organization, and providing the tools and knowledge necessary to accomplish the vision. It includes influencing and directing the performance of others towards achieving the organization's goals. There is an opportunity for additional research to advance knowledge in the field of leadership.

Negative economic factors, political depravity, social marginalization and globalization of the marketplace have left many communities facing a decline in their quality of life and feeling a sense of disenfranchisement among their members. Additionally, social services, including schools, have been regionalized or consolidated as cost-cutting measures. The impact of this milieu has been an increase in unemployment (particularly in manufacturing and skilled labor jobs), a decrease in political engagement, business closings, and the flight of many young and well-educated citizens from these communities. There is a need for research to understand the reasons and solutions for uneven development and unequal educational opportunities, particularly focusing on race and tribal issues.

Righting the disenfranchisement of individuals and communities will require policy changes, as well as skilled leadership. There is a need for research on policy bias and how to develop appropriate policies for communities with disenfranchised groups.

The LCDC can:

- compare government spending on rural programs with that of previous years and with that of urban/suburban programs;
- investigate the ways that political inequalities influence learning and opportunities to learn;
- conduct studies of government devolution, demographic shifts, and ways to harness the underground economy, and
- investigate policies that evaluate and fund dissemination of successful ideas.

Research Challenge

Many community advocates believe a promising direction for the revitalization and survival of today's communities lies in creating and sustaining collaborative partnerships among academe, schools and community organizations. However, building strong community-campus partnerships is not easy. To do this past experiences, perceptions, and issues that tend to divide academe and the community must be resolved. The LCDC must create a sense of confidence that research data will be used fairly and objectively for making decisions.

Disenfranchisement and disengagement in the community can pose obstacles to a successful research program. To overcome these obstacles, the LCDC will make its research participatory, owned by those affected by it, and grounded in community priorities.

Successfully translating empowerment into community action calls for a much larger role for research than ever before. It requires a shared vision about the importance of

community building and educational institutions' roles in supporting empowerment and long-term communitywide change.

Assets

Current Community Partnerships

Research assets available to the LCDC include current collaborations and partnerships in the schools and colleges that engage the community such as the Agricultural Extension Agency of the Technology Training Center. Positive aspects of such collaborations include: 1) NCA&T's willingness to bring community members into research studies as partners, as well as subjects; 2) use of knowledge of the community to understand problems and to design activities to make improvements (interventions); 3) direct involvement of community members in how the research is done and what comes out of it; 4) provision of immediate benefits resulting from research to community participants in the studies and promotion of the research and its use.

The LCDC will partner with such academic institutions, community agencies and services as the Family Service of the Piedmont; the Guilford, Forsyth, Burlington Alamance County Schools and the Thomasville and Lexington City Schools; Bennett College, Greensboro College, North Carolina Central University and UNCG; Moses Cone Health System; the Legacy Foundation; faith-based groups, and other agencies that support initiatives in which leadership and community development are central.

Current NCA&T Sponsor Relationships

The LCDC can leverage relationships of current sponsors of related activities such as:

- National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
- NASA
- UNC Office of the President
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- US Department of Education
- National Science Foundation
- USDA
- HUD
- Moses Cone Foundation

University Resources

The distinctiveness of the university/college setting benefits interdisciplinary, collaborative research programs involving faculty, students and community partners. All the centers and institutes on the campus that provide support for students in the schools and colleges are resources for educating and developing leadership in the community. Some of the expertise that will enable the LCDC to develop the infrastructure required for its research, education and community development programs include

- research design and conduct methodologies
- information systems/technology
- database/spread sheet knowledge

- analysis skills
- graphing and reporting capability
- assessment expertise
- evaluation expertise

Lastly, the Leadership & Community Development Cluster will also benefit from NCA&T's new interdisciplinary PhD. Program in Leadership that focuses on expanding the knowledge base of concepts and theories of leadership through application of research and experiences.

Cluster Co-Leads:

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