

LEADERSHIP: A CSI POSITION PAPER

By

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Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) is an organization of many facets. As a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to recognizing those studying to be or those now serving as counselors, CSI honors achievement and the pursuit of personal and organizational excellence. CSI also empowers counselors to serve as advocates for the availability and the quality of counseling, mentors CSI chapters associated with Counselor Education programs in universities across the United States and internationally, and identifies and inducts new members into its membership. In all that it does, CSI maintains its commitment to service, wellness, and outreach of chapters and individual members to needs in the larger society.

With the comprehensive mission that CSI executes, effective leadership is an essential component of our continued success. Leadership occurs at both the chapter level and the national level. Effectiveness rests upon distributed leadership that happens both at the chapter level and in committees and task forces that function at the national level. CSI provides opportunities for our members to learn leadership skills at the chapter level and nurtures members who aspire to serve at the national level in elected offices and on the Executive Council of CSI.

As members of CSI participate in the various distributed leadership roles that maintain and advance the organization, leadership for the future is a critical role and one that needs to be discussed and reaffirmed. Often, leadership "just happens" or is thought of as a singular person or process that will provide the direction and the authority to move the organization forward. Often those who recruit leaders do not act on or, perhaps, do not think about persons who aspire to be leaders as having different styles, values, skills, motivations, and purposes. It is likely however that each of these leadership characteristics can be identified and placed on a spectrum of possible approaches to leadership.

For example, at one end of the spectrum one leader in discussing his or her style may emphasize expectations for power and authority, and have an agenda to promote and

move forward in the organization. At the other end of the spectrum, a leader may embrace a non-directive, laissez faire approach to leadership, essentially letting the organization run itself without specific goals or directions. Given the many leadership styles and values between these two extremes, one or another of the many approaches to leadership may fit the needs of one organization but not a different organization.

In short, one leadership style does not fit all organizations. In some cases, the different models of leadership that are practiced by those who are identified as leaders by their peers or constituents are not congruent with the organizational aims or the individuals' values who make up the persons who are to be led. Assessing the match between a potential leader's style, the values and vision that guide the organization, and the purposes for which a new leader is recruited or nominated are critical tasks for an Executive Committee or search committee to validate.

Although the focus here is on those who aspire to or actually lead, it is important to note that there are also differences among persons who are led. While some members embrace the will of the leader without negative feelings or reservations about the experience, others try to remain independent followers maintaining control over who they are and who they want to be. On balance, however, in leadership, most persons in organizations that seek to serve humankind in one fashion or another also seek from their leader the qualities of insight, decisiveness, and a commitment to the organization and its values.

Most organizations do not seek leadership that is power-driven, manipulative, or committed to building a monument to the leaders and their achievements. In that sense, leadership is sought from those whose motivation is to serve, not to acquire accolades and rewards. Such leaders act to leave a legacy,

Within this context, leadership in CSI is seen as requiring a mix of pragmatism and idealism, an ability to reach out to members and constituents to empower them to seek personal excellence as they seek organizational excellence, to respect and value scholarship and clinical skills, and to find pathways between CSI chapters and the larger community in which each member can serve. In sum, those who directly or indirectly choose or elect leaders seek perspectives that give them hope, direction, and confidence.

Given the complex dynamics of leadership as we have briefly discussed them, until about the 1970s, leadership as a process critical to the welfare of organizations was rarely studied. Indeed, leadership was thought to be interchangeable with administration and management. While there are many occasions when these three processes overlap, contemporary scholars tend to seek out the elements that

differentiate leadership, administration and management (Herr, Heitzmann & Rayman, 2006).

For example, Covey (1997) argued that leadership is different from management and administration in the following perspective: "Leadership focuses on doing the right things; management focuses on doing things right". Other scholars see the responsibilities of leaders as making sure that the individuals or groups making up a particular organization understand the goals of the organization and are committed to them.

Some scholars would argue that what leaders do is move groups of people toward some objective in a non-coercive manner. One can also turn to reference books and dictionaries to find key words that frequently appear to describe leadership, including "management" or "administration". The terms associated with administrator or manager likely include one who governs, rules or controls people and processes. Definitions of leadership, however, tend to deemphasize command and control and, instead, to emphasize that leadership involves being a "guide". The leader as "guide" accents the importance of having vision, of seeing the big picture, being able to create a plan and direction for an organization to move forward and to motivate or inspire people to carry the plan forward.

While CSI has provided leadership development, enunciated its strategic objectives, and spoken of its commitment to excellence, both in individual and organizational terms, we have not reviewed the type of leadership that most effectively fits our purposes and values as we look to the future. One model of leadership that is inherent in CSI's many successes and that seems to be embraced and promoted is what has been entitled "The Servant As Leader."

The phrase "Servant Leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in the "Servant as Leader", an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, he said: "The Servant Leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. "

Greenleaf continues: "The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants: and, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they

benefit or at least not be further deprived?”

The author's hope is that this brief analysis of leadership is helpful to CSI members as they ponder whether they want to seek chapter or national appointed or elective office in CSI. Hopefully, there is sufficient stimulus here to motivate potential leaders in CSI to think carefully about their leadership style. Each member is encouraged to consider and reflect on this question: Am I a leader-first or servant-first or something in between?

References

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