

Empowering Community Members for Civic Leadership: The Institute for Community Leadership

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Abstract

Leaders emerge from some very unlikely situations. They come in all ages, sizes, shapes, and from both genders. In this paper we discuss the relationship between the theoretic and practical applications evidenced by the Institute for Community Leadership's (ICL) efforts to prepare people for civic leadership. We present background information about ICL including the Institute's purposes and goals, an examination of its past achievements, current activities, and future projections, and we conclude with a discussion of "conditions for success in collaborative public ventures" (Hackman & Johnson, 2009, p. 293) as it relates to the Institute's efforts to prepare people for community leadership.

Rationale and Background: Institute for Community Leadership

"The ICL program opened my eyes to the idea of community leadership. I was unsure at the beginning of the program what it meant to be a 'community leader' and how I was able to take part in my community by serving on a board. One interesting thing that I learned from the program is that it does not matter what your life experiences are or how old you are. You can take an active role in your

community and join a board. Due to the things that I have learned in this program I would love to join a community board in order to better my community.”

Mr. Chris Coats, Institute for Community Leadership, Class 4 (2007-2008)

Leaders emerge from some very unlikely situations, and they often need help honing their skills and encouragement to identify service opportunities. Leaders come in all ages, sizes, shapes, and from both genders.

It is true that you can identify a leader by how well the followers perform; however, a truly superior leader is one who recognizes the responsibility of empowering others to lead. According to Maxwell (1993), “The one who influences others to follow only is a leader with certain limitations. The one who influences others to lead others is a leader without limitations” (p. 113). Covey (1991) points out that “real leadership power comes from an honorable character and from the exercise of certain power tools and principles” (p. 101).

It was out of an awareness of the importance of empowering others to assume leadership roles within the community that the Institute for Community Leadership (ICL) was created and established in Fayetteville, North Carolina. “Informed citizens are a valuable resource for a community. They also make the local government’s job easier. To inform citizens and to attract and train future community leaders, communities throughout the country are establishing citizen academies” (IQ Report, 2001).

In this paper we provide background information concerning ICL including the Institute’s purposes and goals, an examination of its past achievements, current activities, and future projections. We conclude with a discussion of Hackman and Johnson’s (2009) “conditions for success in collaborative public ventures” (p. 293) as they relate to the Institute’s efforts to prepare people for community leadership.

Relationship between Theoretic and Practical Applications

The authors and concepts of leadership examined in this section provide the theoretical rationale for the development of the Institute for Community Leadership.

Leadership is a topic of historical and contemporary interest. “Over the last century, there has been a plethora of research and scholarship devoted to the leader agency in the leadership process” (Bratton, Grint, & Nelson, 2005, p. 87). Some argue the importance of leadership is overstated. “Yet, we remain convinced that leaders do make a difference” (Hackman & Johnson, 2009, p. 2).

Northouse (2007) indicates that leadership is a subject with universal appeal. A considerable amount has been said and written about leadership “in the popular press and academic research literature” (p. 12). To that end, “academic institutions throughout the country are creating programs in leadership studies” (p. 1).

People from all walks in life have sought to clarify what leadership is and identify the skill sets that allow an individual to lead effectively. Woyach (1993) confirms this attempt noting some “350 different definitions of leadership” (p. 3) exist.

In addition to defining leadership, it is important to consider issues concerning the nature and dynamics of leadership. Bennis (1959) noted that “probably more has been written and less known about leadership than any other topic in the behavioral sciences” (pp. 259-260). Yet, most of us can agree on what we want from our leaders. Woyach (1993) states “our ideas of leadership usually reflect our experience. Leadership is what the ‘good leaders’ in our lives have done, or the opposite of what the ‘bad leaders’ have done” (p. 2).

According to Woyach (1993), the concept of a leader comes from a Middle English word meaning *to guide*. This conceptual position is consistent with the view that “we want them to be credible, and we want them to have a sense of direction...and we must be able to believe that they have the ability to take us there” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 29).

Still, connecting theory to practice is complicated. This is so because of the many varied traditions, experiences, and ways of thinking about leadership. Scholars, educators, and practitioners sometimes do not see eye-to-eye on this subject. We come to our understanding of leadership from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and cultures. So, it is a challenge.

Conger (1992) has concluded “that the development of leadership ability is a very complex process” (p. 33). He suggests leadership actually starts before birth with certain genes favoring intelligence, physical stamina, and other qualities. Then one’s family members, peers, education, sports, and other childhood experiences influence the person’s need for achievement, power, risk taking, and so on. Add to the mix various work experiences and mentors who shape the potential leader through early adulthood by providing essential knowledge and behavioral skills and with an opportunity and some luck the result is a leader.

It has been argued that “the appropriate type of leadership depends upon the circumstances” (Goldhaber, 1993, p. 91). Manz and Neck (1999) indicate that “leadership (the process of influence) can originate from a number of sources” (p. 2).

Of course, “without followers there would be no need for leaders” (Pierce & Newstrom, 2008, p. 257). In recent years “an important new thrust in understanding leadership is to regard it as a long-term relationship, or partnership, between leaders and group members” (DuBrin, 1995, p. 2).

Kouzes and Posner (1995) note that “strategies, tactics, skills, and practices are empty unless we understand the fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders and constituents” (p. 1). They point out that leadership is a relationship between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow – a reciprocal process. Leaders need to connect with and communicate to followers “with a range of expertise from the layperson or nonexpert to the technical or highly specialized individual” (Barrett, 2008, p. 37).

Due to this reciprocal relationship it is essential that leaders “get everyone pointed in the same direction. If we don’t know where we are going, then we will all be headed in different directions. We will never be successful” (Warner & Evans, 2006, p. 107). This is one of the biggest challenges of leadership – to identify and stimulate individual’s unique “pulse points” (p. 37) which will move the individual to action.

Being successful in achieving goals is not the only matter of importance in determining effective leadership. We contend that there is an ethical dimension to effective, successful leadership. Johnson (2005) describes a common dilemma facing leaders of all types – the ethical arena. He suggests that “when we function as leaders, we take on a unique set of ethical challenges in addition to a set of expectations and tasks” (p. 10). This dilemma “involves issues of power, privilege, deceit, consistency, loyalty, and responsibility” (p. 10). How leaders handle the challenges of such issues is a major determinant of the quality of leadership they provide to their followers.

Throughout the 20th century there was an evolution in our understanding of group leadership. By the 1990s many organizational development specialists focused on team-based leadership. This leadership could be performed by the designated leader or shared with team members. Given the pervasive use of teams in our culture today, it is “essential to understand the role of leadership within teams to ensure team success and to avoid team failure” (Northhouse, 2007, p. 208). He contends that leaders have a “special responsibility” (p. 209) to function in such a manner as to help the group achieve effectiveness.

Given the fact there are so many definitions of leadership, it is often tied to a specific situation and a particular individual, and the existence of so many varying theories of what a leader is, the ultimate big question for us is, “Can a

person learn to be a leader.” It is our contention that the answer to this question is a resounding, “Yes.”

The fact leadership research is so broad and diverse does not mean that leadership cannot be learned. Woyach (1993) claims that “exercising leadership effectively means using appropriate skills...to meet the specific needs of your group” (p. 9). His point is that leadership involves skills. And, as he states, “People learn skills. They learn them through study – including the observation of others who have those skills. Ultimately they learn through practice – by trying to apply what they know about the skills in real leadership situations” (pp. 9-10).

In their discussion of the background of the Leadership Studies program at Kansas State University, Shoop and Scott (1999) point out that the program is based on four beliefs. First, they note that people are not leaders if they can only “do” leadership with people just like themselves. Second, they indicate that leadership is a collaborative activity. Third, they contend that leadership is not a matter of position or title, but it is a process. Finally, they make the claim that **“leadership can be taught and learned [emphasis added]”** (p. xxiii).

Hackman and Johnson (2009) have identified 10 conditions necessary for collaborative public ventures. Their list includes “(1) good timing and a clear need; (2) strong stakeholder groups; (3) broad-based involvement; (4) a credible and open process; (5) committed, high-level, visible community leaders; (6) formal support; (7) an ability to overcome mistrust and skepticism; (8) strong leadership of the process; (9) celebration of ongoing achievement; and (10) shift to broader concerns” (p. 293).

The Institute for Community Leadership

What we have done with the ICL program is to make a sincere effort to educate the participants while giving them opportunities to pick the brains of some of the most effective leaders in our community. “Some people catch a vision for leadership just from the enthusiasm of others” (Samples, 1999, p. 4). We have sought to empower them so they may “give more of themselves to the people around them, more to their organization, and more to the project at hand” (Warner & Evans, p. 2006, p. 1).

Then we have taken it one more step by connecting them with actual opportunities to practice what they have learned. Hackman and Johnson (2000) indicate that “the most useful experiences...are those that put you in the leader role. Since leadership experience is so vital, seek out chances to act as a leader. Volunteer” (p. 362). The ICL staff works diligently to ensure that participants are given the opportunity to serve on private and public boards and commissions.

As a grassroots effort, ICL provides clear evidence that civic leadership is not the sole prerogative of the rich and famous, or the powerful in our communities. The Institute's goal to reach out to those who have not held leadership positions not only benefits these *new found* leaders, but "when local leaders take initiative, they encourage higher-level leaders to do the same" (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 266).

Social change leadership "focuses on the concepts of change, collaboration, and civic responsibility" (Crawford, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2005, p. 111). A foundational point supporting the thinking behind ICL and its efforts is the conviction concerning the importance of these elements, especially the concept of civic responsibility. ICL identifies, educates, trains, and then encourages its participants to be good citizen leaders who work to effect needed changes in the community through their efforts with public and private agencies and organizations.

ICL attempts to ensure that its graduates are practicing and participating in leadership for the good of the community. According to Crawford et al. (2005), "social change leadership argues that individuals must ask themselves and others to believe in something larger than personal self-interest as they become active players in the leadership process" (p. 113). Such a civic-minded theme is exactly what is sought by those who sponsor and staff the Institute for Community Leadership.

Historical Background

For many years former city manager, Roger Stancil, and, a local civic activist, Dr. Loleta Foster, had held numerous discussions about the need for a mechanism to identify and train community volunteers for civic leadership.

During efforts in 2001 to achieve recognition as an "All America City" there were troubling rumblings coming from some areas of our community. It was suggested by some citizens that the city did not deserve such a designation. One reason cited for opposition to the city's efforts was that many, especially minority groups, in our city felt disenfranchised. They believed they had little opportunity to assume leadership roles, let alone have any voice in local government. As an aside, in the fall of 2001 the city of Fayetteville was designated as an "All America City."

As a response to this perceived lack of leadership opportunities, an initial effort was made to create and develop a citizens' leadership academy. Discussions were held with a variety of leaders in higher education, the city manager's office, and with the Chamber of Commerce. The assistant to the city manager wrote, "Your suggestion of a substantive, joint City-County Leadership Development

Academy sounds very encouraging and I would like to be involved in whatever capacity I could best be used” (letter, July 11, 2001). These initial efforts to establish a community leadership academy failed to gain a consensus from community leaders and the effort died.

But, City Manager Stancil and Dr. Foster continued to explore the concept for the next couple of years. With the arrival of Dr. T. J. Bryan, Chancellor, Fayetteville State University, in 2003, discussions broadened to include the city along with the institutions of higher education to develop a leadership program. The county and the county school system later joined with the others in this initiative.

Their intent was to identify people for the “development of community leaders....leaders may be candidates for appointment to our boards and commissions, community organization leaders or those who fill other vital leadership roles in our churches and civic organizations” (memorandum, May 19, 2004). Underscoring this intent was the desire to prepare “authentic leaders...who constantly try to balance personal, group, and community interests so that all three are better off” (Woyach, 1993, p. 11).

Initially this effort was undertaken as a result of the interest of the Greater Fayetteville Futures and Fayetteville United. These grassroots programs identified a desire to have a leadership program that reached “out to those who have not previously been involved” (memorandum, May 19, 2004). Their work resulted in the formation of the Institute for Community Leadership.

ICL Vision and Mission

The Institute is a joint community effort designed to provide local citizens the opportunity to participate in activities leading to community leadership and membership on boards and commissions as well as work with civic and religious entities. This is clear in ICL’s Vision Statement. It states that the purpose and goal is “To identify, develop, and empower community members, especially those not previously identified, who are able and willing to commit to leadership roles in addressing issues of the Fayetteville/Cumberland County” (ICL, 2004).

ICL seeks to empower community members for civic leadership. According to Ziegler, “The intent is to reach...people who are not currently involved in the community, but who sincerely desire to serve in some way” (speech to the City Council, May 24, 2004).

The Institute sponsors include the City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, Cumberland County Public Schools, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville Technical Community College, Methodist University, and an at-large community Volunteer Representative. Each of the six sponsoring agencies pays an annual

membership fee to fund the Institute's budget. To generate steam to move the project forward, in its first year ICL received a grant from the Cumberland Community Foundation. Although it is not a sponsor agency, the Arts Council participates in the ICL project by hosting one of the training sessions.

The Institute is a unique partnership between community members, government, and educational institutions in our community. According to the former Chancellor of Fayetteville State University, Dr. T. J. Bryan, ICL "reflects our community's steadfast commitment to improving the quality of life for residents of Fayetteville and Cumberland County" (April 2006).

Past Achievements

ICL has been recognized for its contributions to the community. It has been noted that the organization has been doing a commendable job developing and empowering community leaders to serve "on government and volunteer boards" (*The Weekly Wrap*, May 29, 2004). The hope is that the program will encourage people living in Cumberland County, North Carolina, who have been shy about getting involved in local leadership situations to gain confidence to use their skills to the benefit of all in the community. "The program defines itself as a 'recruitment and training program for grassroots leaders'" (*Garden of Leadin'*, June 28, 2004).

The six sponsoring entities provide invaluable resources and assist in the achievement of the vision of ICL. In turn they host the Institute's events as well as provide trainers and panelists. In addition, they oversee the participant nomination and selection process. Essentially what they do is provide leadership oversight and ensure legitimacy to sustain the ICL program.

Citizen led efforts serve as spark plugs for growth and development. Recognizing the centrality of such efforts to the quality of life in Cumberland County, the sponsors have been willing to step forward and show responsibility for leadership development. As such they have been able to identify and involve numerous individuals who otherwise may not have become active in community leadership positions.

For the past four years the Institute has provided programming designed to reach the grassroots leaders in our community. Of Class 2 former Chancellor Bryan (2006) wrote, "A class of leaders armed with the skills and tools to serve this great community that many of us call home" graduated on April 16 from the ICL program. Evidence of her claim concerning the effectiveness of ICL is reflected in the following examples taken from the success stories of its graduates.

For example, Debra Patillo, Class 3 (2006-2007), has been appointed to the Fayetteville Planning Commission. Her classmate, Nancy Shakir, is a member of the *Fayetteville Observer* Community Advisory Board and works as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity as well as the Peace with Justice Project.

Several members of Class 2 (2005-2006) have involved themselves in a variety of community activities. Lyn Green is serving on the Fayetteville Urban Ministry. She also is the vice chair of the Cumberland County Department of Social Services Board. James Ingram finds himself serving on the Council of Aging (Adult Care) and the County Board of Adjustment while volunteering as a Guardian *ad Litem* with the County Court system. Jaunita Heyward serves on the Board of Directors for the Fascinate U Children's Museum. Not to be outdone, Angela Vann has established a local Oprah Book Club and volunteers with the Cape Fear High School Alumni Association. Kim Sublett was elected to the Hope Mills Youth Association Board. She also serves as secretary for the *Fayetteville Observer* Credit Union Board. And, George Matthews is practicing his leadership skills as he serves on the Board of Advisors of the Fayetteville Area Habitat for Humanity.

From Class 1 (2004-2005) we find several graduates involving themselves in numerous leadership roles in the community. For example, Floyd Johnson has been appointed to the North Carolina Council of Community Programs. He also serves on the Cumberland County Area Mental Health Board and is a past member of the *Fayetteville Observer* Community Advisory Board. From July 2006 through June 2007, Leonard Covington was the chair of the Board of Directors for the Highlands Chapter of the American Red Cross. Lotonya Hankins is a board member with the Cumberland County Communicare, Inc., and she chairs the Board for Magby and Associates, Inc. Another member of the first class, Loletha Porter, serves as the chair of the Administrative Council of Harry Hosier United Methodist Church. Wendy Vonnegut serves on the boards of the Child Advocacy Center of Cumberland County, the Cumberland County Legal Aid, and the Small Business Center of Fayetteville Technical Community College. A major civic leader helping to "green up" the community is Dan Geiger who serves as the chair of Fayetteville's Recycling Task Force program.

While many past members of the ICL classes are obviously involved leaders who are positively affecting the community, a tragic automobile collision took the life of one of the community's promising leaders, Mr. Tom Parent. He was a member of the Charter Class (2004-2005). Monica F. Smith said of him, "Monday's accident...took a great man...from this community....he cared about the Fayetteville, Cumberland County, and Fort Bragg community....he was made out of the stuff that only great leaders are made of." According to the Rev. Dr. Floyd W. Johnson, Jr., "I remember him as quite a pleasant and dynamic individual and someone I thought would benefit our society in whatever role he decided to

pursue. His tragic and sudden death is not only a loss to his family and friends but to the Fayetteville community at large. He will certainly be missed by many.”

People like those mentioned above and others to follow from future ICL classes will rise to the challenge laid down by Mr. Parent. They will excel in their leadership activities because they are committed to the well being of their community. They will do the best they can for the people of Fayetteville and Cumberland County.

The results have been an ever expanding pool of citizen leaders who are willing and qualified to serve in a variety of leadership positions in our community.

Current Activities

ICL hosts training sessions focusing on leadership enhancement activities and discussions with some of Fayetteville’s and Cumberland County’s most effective and dynamic leaders. Topics covered include, but are not limited to, skills training, community issues, and service opportunities on a variety of commissions and voluntary boards. Each session focuses on one area for community involvement including such aspects as arts and culture, city and county government, education, and not-for-profit human services.

The ICL schedule includes seven monthly training sessions. As previously noted, each session features leadership enhancement activities and panel discussions with local leaders. The monthly sessions run from September to April, excluding December.

Each monthly session is conducted at the location of the sponsor agency providing the training. These locations include City Hall, the county Courthouse, campuses of the three institutions of higher education, and the Arts Council. This feature of ICL brings citizens into places and facilities they may have no experience with, thus broadening their exposure to community life.

Sessions include an introductory meeting, discussion about community issues, and opportunities for service on boards serving various not-for-profit service agencies, city and county government, arts and culture boards, and schools, colleges, and universities. Because participants learn about opportunities for volunteer service, they are better able to decide where their abilities and interests fit best.

Session six includes an “Opportunity Fair” at which over 30 local organizations and agencies participate. Each one has a table with materials and displays to inform and encourage ICL participants to sign up on the spot for volunteer service.

The current programming consists of the aforementioned seven sessions (see Table 1). A graduation dinner honoring participants completes the program in April. Following graduation participants receive mentoring by the staff of the partner agencies. Mentors assist graduates in the application process for membership on various boards and commissions.

Table 1
ICL Programs

Session Number	Training Topic	Panel Topic
1	Getting to Know You	Not-for-Profit Services and Organizations
2	Leadership Style	County Boards and Issues
3	Communication	City Boards and Issues
4	Teamwork	Higher Education Boards and Issues
5	Board Member Toolbox	Public Education and Issues
6	Arts and Cultural Organizations	Making the Connection Opportunity Fair
7	Graduation Dinner	None

ICL is supported not only philosophically, but also monetarily by the sponsoring agencies. As noted earlier, in the initial year ICL received a significant operational grant from the Cumberland Community Foundation.

Persons who are interested in completing the program must complete an application form. Applicants are then evaluated and selected by a committee of ICL staffers. Participants must be registered to vote in Cumberland County. Each candidate must demonstrate in a written essay a sincere commitment to serve the community and agree to attend each session of the Institute. Additionally, they must indicate a willingness to pursue an appointment to a governmental or community board or commission, or to some other community leadership role. There is no charge to the participants for the ICL program.

Participants receive many benefits. First, they develop opportunities to participate in key community decisions. Second, they participate in discussions concerning

local issues and solutions with community leaders. Third, they find volunteer leadership positions that best fit their skills, talents, and interests. Fourth, they build relationships with others who are committed to self- and community-betterment. And, finally, they are able to polish their leadership skills and abilities.

Future Projections

It is the vision of ICL to continue to offer grassroots leadership development to educate and train civic leaders for membership on private and public boards and commissions. In order to accomplish that vision, the sponsors have committed to continued funding and the provision of an executive director to coordinate the work of the Institute.

In its initial year the sponsors of ICL hired an executive director. This was necessary to ensure that the program was well established including development of the curriculum, identification of trainers and panelists, identification and selection of participants, advertising, public relations, creation of a brochure, and a website (www.leadership4us.org). ICL sponsors were able to make the hire based in part on a significant grant from the Cumberland Community Foundation.

In the second and third years, one of the sponsoring agencies agreed to house and to provide an executive director. During the third year many discussions were held among the six sponsors about the continued viability of ICL without a permanent solution for housing and providing for an executive director.

Given the commitment level of all the sponsors, eventually they determined that each of the sponsoring agencies would house and provide the executive director for a two-year period. This responsibility would rotate among the sponsors so that the need could be met without putting undue strain on any one of the sponsors. Each sponsor was given the freedom to determine how and who would serve as executive director when its shift comes around.

This rotational directorship has the added benefit of ensuring ICL does not become overly identified with one sponsor. By sharing in the leadership, the sponsors continued their collaborative vision.

At this time we have graduated four cohorts (N = 119). Class 5 (2008-2009) starts in September with 30 participants. With curriculum, funding, and leadership issues set, it appears ICL is ready to continue providing development for civic leadership in our community.

Table 2
Participation

Class #	Year	Number of Participants
1	2004-2005	41
2	2005-2006	28
3	2006-2007	26
4	2007-2008	24
5	2008-2009	30

As ICL matures over the next several years, it is possible the program will develop more expansive mentoring for its participants. Maxwell suggests that “at some point we need to end the lecture and send them out to try what they have learned” (p. 1163).

Further, it is even possible that this collaboration among private and public entities may evolve to include a “community think tank” to create opportunities for those involved in community leadership to come together to learn about and discuss common interests.

At this time ICL has a bright future. It appears the Institute will be able to continue to empower community members for civic leadership positions, thus improving the quality of life in our community.

Observations

As we noted earlier, Hackman and Johnson (2009) identified 10 necessary conditions for success in collaborative public ventures. At this time we will explore these conditions as an assessment of the ICL project.

First, let us consider “*good timing and a clear need*” (p. 293). The initial concept of the Institute grew out of talks among various community and university leaders. The community’s desire to achieve national recognition as an All America City further heightened interest in the project, but the timing was not

right until a local state university hired a new chancellor. Eventually, when the time was right, the Greater Fayetteville Futures and Fayetteville United provided supplied early grassroots support for a leadership program. It was at this point the time that efforts were made to develop a community-wide leadership development program.

“*Strong stakeholder groups*” (p. 293) provide the foundation for ICL. Local entities including government, not-for-profit groups, and schools are engaged in the project.

“*Broad-based involvement*” (p. 293) in the project can be clearly seen in that the City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, Cumberland County School System, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville Technical Community College, and Methodist University are sponsor agencies. And, the local Arts Council is also actively engaged in the training program.

“*Involvement*” is not limited to those who provide the programming. The fact is that a number of individuals have completed the program, are currently involved in this year’s cohort, or are on a waiting list for Class 6 (2009-2010).

In Table 3 we offer a breakdown of the participants based on gender. Benchmark data comparing the cohorts to recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) and the Fayetteville Planning Department is provided.

Table 3
Class Comparisons by Gender

Characteristic	Countywide Data %	Class 1 ('04-'05)	Class 2 ('05-06)	Class 3 ('06-07)	Class 4 ('07-'08)	Class 5 ('08-'09)
SEX						
Males	50.6	42.5	35.7	42.3	21.8	30
Females	49.4	57.5	64.3	57.3	78.2	70

Class 1 N = 41
 Class 2 N = 28
 Class 3 N = 26
 Class 4 N = 24
 Class 5 N = 30

The difference in the size of classes is based on the intentional decisions of the ICL Board. The first year participation was set for 40, although the final count

was 41 because there was a total of 41 applicants. It did not seem necessary to exclude one viable candidate. During that year it seemed difficult to meet the goals of ICL with 40 plus participants, therefore the Board limited enrollment to a maximum of 30 participants during the next two years, and subsequently dropping to 25 in the fourth year. Based on the first four years experience, the Board consequently decided to set the class limit at 30 participants.

The following table offers a comparative demographic comparison of the first class (2004-2005), most recently completed class (2007-2008), and the current class (2008-2009). In addition to the comparison of the classes, we have also included benchmark data comparing the three cohorts to U.S. Census Bureau (2000) and the Fayetteville Planning Department data (2000).

Table 4
Selected Class Demographic Comparisons

Characteristic	Countywide	Class 1 (‘04-‘05)	Class 4 (‘07-‘08)	Class 5 (‘08-‘09)
RACE				
Asian	1.9	-0-	-0-	-0-
Black	34.9	45	56.5	56.5
Indian	1.5	2.5	-0-	-0-
White	55.2	50	43.5	43.5
EDUCATION				
High School/GED	28.4	-0-	21.7	17.2
Associate Degree	27.7	13.5	26.1	27.6
Bachelor Degree	13.1	35.1	30.4	27.6
Masters +	5.9	51.4	21.7	27.6
AGE				
Retired	9.5	5	13	-0-

Class 1 N = 41
 Class 4 N = 24
 Class 5 N = 30

As evidenced in the above statements concerning ICL, it is clear the Institute is a “credible and open process” (p. 293). Its early history involved a wide ranging

grassroots effort to establish a leadership program to reach those who have not previously been involved in local activities. The Institute has received recognition for its contributions to the community because of the commendable job it does in developing and empowering community leaders to serve on government and volunteer boards. The program is open and offered free of charge to any registered voter living in Cumberland County, North Carolina. This offer has been extended to those shy or reluctant about getting involved in local leadership situations. It is hoped that participants will gain confidence in their abilities and use their skills to the benefit the community. ICL seeks to empower community members for civic leadership.

“Committed, high-level, visible community leaders” (p. 293) sit on the ICL Board of Directors. They include the presidents and chancellor of our three local institutions of higher education, county school superintendent, city and county managers, and the director of the Arts Council. In addition, the Board staff consists of various local government, school, and civic leaders. The training session leaders and panelists are among some of the best trained and effective leaders in our community.

“Formal support” (p. 293) for ICL is substantiated by the fact that the sponsoring groups have made a long term commitment to support ICL with an executive director, office, funding, staffing, and training spaces for the seminars.

ICL has enjoyed from its very beginning a high degree of credibility. We have been able to avoid or *“overcome mistrust and skepticism”* (p. 293) because of the broad-based foundations of ICL. It began and continues to be a collaborative civic project that is open in its interactions and communications with the community. We believe this is a major reason we have not experienced mistrust or skepticism about the program.

Evidence of *“strong leadership of the process”* (p. 293) can be found through its Board of Directors and its staff; however, perhaps a major example of the strength of ICL’s leadership can be seen in the individuals who have served as the Executive Director. In its first year the Institute hired a retired university professor and former member of the City Council to serve as its director. Since then the executive director has been designated from one of the sponsoring units (years two and three from Fayetteville State University; years four and five from Methodist University). The current agreement is that on a rotating basis each sponsoring agency will designate a person to serve as the executive director for a two-year term.

The efforts and successes of ICL are openly shared throughout the community. *“Celebration of ongoing achievement”* (p. 293) is marked in a number of ways starting with the graduation and awards banquet held each year. In addition,

plans have been made to expand the “celebration” through more alumni events. The Institute and its graduates have been recognized before the City Council. There have been numerous newspaper editorials written about the activities and successes of ICL. Staff members have appeared on local television and spoken on radio about who we are and what we are doing to better our community. And, we have an excellent website (www.leadership4us.org).

Even as we celebrate our past, we are looking at various ways to “*shift to broader concerns*” (p. 293). ICL has done an outstanding job reaching out to minority populations in the community such as women in general, but African-American women, specifically. It is a goal of the Institute to reach an even more diverse population of potential leaders, including Hispanic and Native American groups in our community. Another possibility for broadening the impact of the ICL project involves the possibility that a collaboration now exists among private and public entities to develop a “community think tank” to bring community leadership together to learn about and discuss common interests.

Conclusion

In closing, we would like to point out that while the ICL program is still quite young, the benefits of the programming are many. As more and more emergent, civic-minded leaders graduate from the program, the community will achieve positive tangible results. The institutions and organizations, both public and private, that the ICL graduates serve will see improvement in solving the issues and problems they face. These empowered leaders are likely to motivate others to achieve great successes. And, with ICL training the participants will be able to change the way traditional leaders and their followers solve public and private problems.

Our optimism for the ICL program is embodied in the following statement by Mr. Michael Murray who was a member of Class 2 (2005-2006):

“Concerning the Institute for Community Leadership, I would have to say that it was very enlightening. Going into it, I had the mindset that I wanted to put every social and scholarly interaction under my belt to prepare me to be the world changer I was meant to be. This course opened my eyes to the inner workings of committee and city board service. There was so much I did not know that went into this much needed community service. The most important lesson I learned from ICL was that a successful community does not just happen; it is birthed from the ideas and dedication of individuals who are willing to give of themselves and their time. Finally, ICL did wonders in educating me as to the financial and legal workings of city board service.”

At this time it appears that indeed the ICL program has a bright future in Fayetteville, Cumberland County, North Carolina. It appears the Institute will be able to provide programming that empowers community members for civic leadership positions, thus improving the quality of life in our community.

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