

**Exploring the Skills and Competencies Required of Graduates of Master's of Leadership Programs to Succeed in the Workplace's "New Normal"**

By

Gregg W. DiNardo and Jeremy A. Speikes  
Advisor: Dr. Jeanie Forray

Capstone  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Peabody College of Education and Human Development of Vanderbilt University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
in  
Leadership and Learning in Organizations  
July 2023  
Nashville, Tennessee

## **Acknowledgements**

### **Gregg DiNardo's Acknowledgement**

This capstone is the culmination of many years of hard work and sacrifice. I dedicate this project to my family, friends and professional colleagues who have supported me on this academic adventure. To my wife Allison, who without her support and encouragement, I would've not finished and for her picking up the slack at bedtime on countless nights over the past 3 years while I ran to logon to class. To my girls: Elliana, Evelyn, Serafina and Sienna, who continue to tell me, "Dad, you're not a real doctor!" To my parents and brother who had to listen to me stress over workload and complain about how much I have to do. "Just put a period." To Cohort 10 for all the fun and close relationships we've built over the past 3 years as we sat in front of our screens scattered about the globe. To Dr. Davenport for allowing us to partner with you and your team. To Dr. Forray for helping us get across the finish line with your encouragement and positivity. And, lastly, to my partner in crime, Jeremy. I have learned so much from you over the past 3 years and I'm honored to have been able to work on this project with you. Much love.

### **Jeremy Speikes' Acknowledgement**

Thank you, Mom. For every phone call, check-in, and word of encouragement. You are the best person I know! Thank you for letting me complain endlessly about work and school and affirming that I could do everything I wanted and needed! In my book, you are the definition of love. I love you, Mom!

Thank you, Dad, for being the voice in my head that says, "Strive to be the greatest!" Thank you for always being Mom, Jaren, and my protector! I know we don't say it often, but I love you!! To my brother, Jaren! Your love and support is truly appreciated. While you are my little brother, you have always been my biggest protector. Thank you for ALWAYS having my back, no matter the case. I love you!

To my sister, Charo. For being my first role model and being the blueprint of HBCU Advocates! Because of you, I made it to Howard. And because of you, I made it thru Howard! I love you!

Thank you to my extended family and friends for always lending an ear, proofreading a paper, or being a source of encouragement. You all are my village and have helped to raise me up!

To my capstone partner Gregg, we did it, man!! Working with you has truly been a pleasure. We have had personal obstacles these past few months, but we never let them stop us from reaching this final goal. I am happy to have shared this journey with you, My Friend.

Lastly, thank you to my Granny, Annie B. Fox, who passed away this May. Thank you for always being my LOUDEST cheerleader! This degree is for you! I miss you every day, and I love you!

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Organizational Context</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Problem of Practice</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>11</b>
History of Leadership.....	11
Leadership in Higher Education.....	12
"New Normal" and Ethical Leadership .....	13
Skills and Leadership Education .....	15
<b>Conceptual Framework</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Key Conceptualizations</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Research Questions</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Project Design</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Participant Recruitment .....	20
Data Collection .....	22
Focus Groups .....	23
Data Analysis.....	23
Skills and Competencies .....	23
Competitor Programs.....	25
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>26</b>
Finding #1.....	26
Finding #2.....	27
Finding #3.....	27
Finding #4.....	28
Finding #5 – .....	29
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>30</b>
Recommendation #1: Include Skills Model and “new normal” competencies in curriculum .....	30
Recommendation #2: Include practical experiences and immersive course designs.....	31
Recommendation #3: Provide hybrid format to provide greater student flexibility.....	31
Recommendation #4: Create graduate certificate in Leadership .....	32
Recommendation #5: Create pathways to the LLO EdD program .....	33
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>35</b>

**Appendices.....40**  
**Appendix A:.....40**  
**Appendix B: .....41**  
**Appendix C: .....43**  
**Appendix D:.....44**  
**Appendix E: .....45**  
**Appendix F: .....46**  
**Appendix G:.....47**

## Executive Summary

### **Exploring the Skills and Competencies Required of Graduates of Master's of Leadership Programs to Succeed in the Workplace's "New Normal"**

**Organizational Context.** Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education and Human Development in Nashville, TN, serves as the school of education for Vanderbilt University. Peabody College of Education and Human Development sponsors 30 programs offering undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees. The school serves approximately 3,100 students and employs 179 full-time faculty.

The Leadership and Organizational Performance (LOP) Program at Vanderbilt University's (VU) Peabody College is a two-year master's level program designed to advance its students' employability and success. The program is designed to help students gain knowledge in organization development, leadership theory, talent management, and program management through coursework, collaborative projects, and a required internship.

The Leading Organizations (MLO) program was launched in 2021 as an online platform, encompassing roughly 80% of the LOP curriculum and providing the same learning outcomes as the LOP program.

**Problem of Practice.** Peabody College has seen a decline in enrollment and demand in the LOP and MLO programs and is seeking to understand the drivers behind the decline in applications. Program leadership has identified three drivers for these changes: (1) market demands, (2) value gaps within program niches, and (3) differences with key competitors. As Peabody's leadership undertakes a program evaluation, our capstone focuses on a small portion of the overall evaluation.

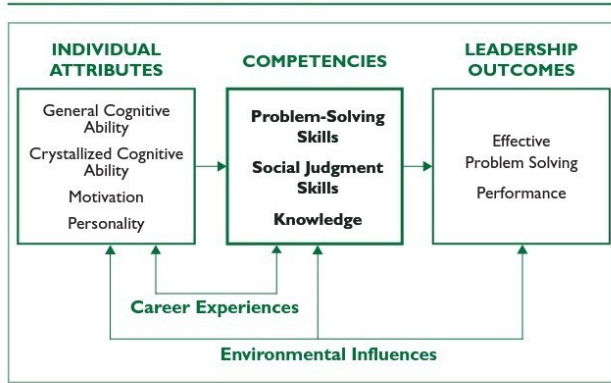
This project seeks to understand the different leadership skills and competencies currently demanded of graduates of master's degree programs in leadership. Since the inception of the LOP in 2011, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns have changed the skills and competencies leaders desire.

As researchers, along with Peabody, we hypothesize that some of the skills and competencies taught are now out of sync with the skills required of today's leaders. For the program to best prepare students for the dynamic, technology-enabled, "New Normal" business environment, Peabody's program evaluation will assess their curriculum and the market's desires for master's level graduates.

Assessing these drivers will help program leadership decipher synergies and develop a plan for the future direction of each program. By understanding the competencies and curricula within these two programs and those of their competitors, Vanderbilt believes it could revolutionize the platform for leadership programs on the master's level. Aligning the "New Normal" competencies with the LOP curriculum will help students secure jobs post-graduation and excel and thrive in those settings.

**Conceptual Framework.** The research explored in our literature review helped us define the relevant concepts and the relationships among these concepts for this project. We reviewed the literature on theories of leadership and leadership skills desired by organizations navigating the "new normal." Stogdill (as cited by Yukl, 1989) claims that every person who has attempted to define leadership has created a different definition for the term. We used the Skills Model of Leadership, developed by Mumford et al. (2000), as our conceptual framework because it relies on the theory that individuals can learn skills and gain knowledge to be successful leaders. The framework relies on three competencies; problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge as the pillars of becoming effective leaders.

**Figure 3.3** Skills Model of Leadership



SOURCE: Adapted from "Leadership Skills for a Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems," by M. D. Mumford, S. J. Zaccaro, F. D. Harding, T. O. Jacobs, and E. A. Fleishman, 2000, *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 23.

**Project Questions**

- 1) What skills and competencies do organizations seek from effective leaders in the "new normal"?
- 2) How are competitor programs designed compared to the LOP and MLO programs?

**Key Findings and Recommendations**

After synthesizing the data collected from 5 focus groups, we determined the following:

**Finding #1** – We confirmed that the 3 skills/competencies in the "Skills Model Framework", problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge, are critical skills to possess in the "new normal."

**Finding #2** – We discovered 3 additional skills/competencies (aka “new normal” competencies) that the market currently seeks as well: Communication/Feedback, Ethical Leadership, and Creating Inclusive Work Environments.

**Recommendation #1** – Ensure that the Skills Model and “new normal” competencies are included in current LOP/MLO curricula.

**Finding #3** – We learned that while concepts and theories are important to teach in leadership programs, hiring managers and HR professionals desire graduates from programs that include experiential learning program design and real-life experience through internships or partner organizations.

**Recommendation #2** – Include experiential program design and immersion learning opportunities in the LOP/MLO curricula.

**Finding #4** – We discovered some key competitor program similarities.

**Finding #5** – We discovered some key competitor program differences.

**Recommendation #3** – Provide a hybrid learning format to greater student flexibility.

**Recommendation #4** – Create a graduate certificate in leadership.

**Recommendation #5** – Create pathways to the LLO EdD program.

## Organizational Context

Our partner organization is Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education and Human Development in Nashville, TN. Serving as the school of education for Vanderbilt University, Peabody College of Education and Human Development sponsors 30 programs offering undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees. The school serves approximately 3,100 students and employs 179 full-time faculty.

The Leadership and Organizational Performance (LOP) Program at Vanderbilt University's (VU) Peabody College is a two-year master's level program designed to advance its students' employability and success. The program is designed to help students gain knowledge in organization development, leadership theory, talent management, and program management through coursework, collaborative projects, and a required internship. The program consists of 36 credit hours (15 hours of core and analytics courses, 18 hours of electives, and 3 hours of an internship or applied experience course), and can be completed in two years if the student registers as full-time.

The Leading Organizations (MLO) program was launched in 2021, encompassing roughly 80% of the LOP curriculum online, and provides the same learning outcomes as the LOP program. The MLO program consists of 30 credit hours (an internship or applied experience course is not required) and can be completed in 18 months. Peabody previously launched the online Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organization program in 2017 through 2U. A market analysis was completed between 2018-2019 to assess if there was a market for an online version of the LOP program, and 2U determined that there was no market. Peabody responded by launching the MLO program on a different platform, initially admitting two students to the program.



The LOP and MLO programs have both seen a decline in enrollment over the past years (see **Appendix D**), causing program leadership to consider a pause on admitting new students to the MLO program for the 2023-2024 academic year. Program leadership has also cited a decrease in years of work experience possessed by students in the program, leading to dissatisfaction with student experience and issues with subject delivery.

### Problem of Practice

Peabody College has seen a decline in enrollment and interest in the LOP and MLO programs and is seeking to understand the drivers behind the decline in applicants. Because of enrollment concerns, a team led by Dr. Kim Davenport, LOP Program Director and Interim MLO Director, is conducting a robust program evaluation comprised of both internal and external analyses. Peabody's study aims to complete the evaluation and make recommendations by the end of August 2023. Any updates to skills, competencies, and curriculum will occur during the academic year of 2023-2024, with full implementation by Fall 2024. Our portion of the evaluation, examining skills and competencies in the "new normal", makes up only a small portion of the overall evaluation in order to scale the project to an appropriate size for a Capstone deliverable. Program leadership has identified three drivers for these changes: (1) market demands, (2) value gaps within program niches, and (3) differences with key competitors. We will explore the leadership skills and competencies currently demanded by the market and critical leadership skills and competencies taught at competitor programs.

As researchers, along with Peabody, we hypothesize that some of the skills and competencies taught are now out of sync with the skills required of today's leaders. For the program to best prepare students for the dynamic, technology-enabled, "New Normal"

(Underwood, 2021) business environment, Peabody’s program evaluation will assess their curriculum and the market's desires for master's level graduates.

The COVID-19 pandemic sent shockwaves through our society, altering how millions of people lived their routines. Specifically, these events harshly impacted U.S. society as millions lost their lives, and many watched as the racial disparities in socioeconomic classes came to the forefront. Just as society witnessed changes to leadership styles and skills over the past century, COVID-19 has given way to another chapter in leadership referred to as the "new normal." This term initially emerged from the business sector when it was used to caution the belief of economists that industrial economies would revert to normal after the recession (El-Erian, n.d.).

This project seeks to understand the different leadership skills and competencies that are currently in demand in the market. Since the inception of the LOP in 2011, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns have changed the skills and competencies leaders desire. This will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review.

Assessing these drivers will help program leadership decipher synergies and develop a plan for the future direction of each program. By understanding the competencies and curricula within these two programs and those of their competitors, Vanderbilt University believes it could revolutionize the platform for leadership programs on the master's level. Aligning the "New Normal" competencies with the LOP curriculum will help students secure jobs post-graduation and excel and thrive in those settings.

The desired state of these programs is to have a growing market share in master's level leadership programs and adequate cohort sizes to maintain the program's financial health. As previously stated, Peabody has seen declining enrollment in the LOP program, as well as a

Commented [JF1]: Vanderbilt believes this to be the case. Vanderbilt believes it could...

Commented [MOU2R1]:

Commented [MOU3R1]:

decrease in demand, only receiving 15 applications as of January 2023. Because of those stats, admission into the MLO program may be paused.

## Literature Review

### History of Leadership

Social scientists have been studying the phenomenon of leadership for decades. Stogdill (as cited by Yukl, 1989) conducted a comprehensive review of over 3,000 studies on leadership and found no one accepted understanding of leadership. Leadership has been defined by individuals' traits, behaviors, interactions with colleagues and subordinates, relationships they build, how they influence others, and skills they possess (Northouse, 2015).

From the 1900s to the 1940s, the definitions of leadership focused heavily on qualities an individual possessed and their ability to control others (Moore, 1927, as cited in Northouse 2016, p. 2), traits (Mann, 1959), and behaviors displayed to influence or direct others (Stodgill as cited by Yukl, 1989). In 1955, Robert L. Katz sought to look past the traits that leaders possessed and identified a set a definitive set of "developable skills" (Katz, 1974). In the 1960s and 1970s, leadership was viewed through the lens of the organization and how an individual could move others in a shared direction (Seeman, 1960) and accomplish organizational goals (Burn, 1978). The 1990s saw a resurgence in research around the skills and abilities that make individuals effective leaders, making the individual the center of the theory (Mumford et al., 2000). Traits theories were viewed as still relevant, but researchers could see the direct correlation between the skills and knowledge an individual possessed on their performance, and the 21 skill-based focuses on how the leader helps others complete their jobs by helping them through challenges.

## Leadership in Higher Education

As universities began to create leadership programs, the curriculum was designed to help students develop the characteristics and abilities highlighted in traits and skills theories, leaving out theories that viewed leadership as a process (Rost & Barker, 2000). Katz's (1974) work was pivotal in developing leadership programs because his research was rooted in the belief that individuals could gain skills that would make them effective leaders. Zaleznik (1981) saw that many scholars viewed management and leadership as the same when asked how to develop leaders. Leadership programs were being developed in schools of business and taught the process of leadership, which was the process of managing people.

In the fall of 2011, the National Leadership of Education Research Agenda (NLERA) was initiated to establish and guide the field of leadership education and develop it as a discipline (Andenoro, 2013). The NLERA has seven priorities, the first priority being teaching, learning, and curriculum development for leadership education. Since then, programs have started to standardize their curricula. In a study published in 2018, researchers analyzed 1,174 U.S. leadership program course offerings and found three types of courses being offered in a majority of masters programs: 1) leadership theory, 2) experiential learning, and 3) communications (Guthrie et al., 2018).

Peabody's MLO and LOP programs are at inflection points in their lifecycle that warrant a high-level program evaluation to continue offering an education that prepares its students to become the best version of themselves. According to Brungardt & Crawford (1996), "effective assessment furthers the academic discipline of leadership education [and] conducted longitudinally as well" (p. 23).

## "New Normal" and Ethical Leadership

Raghavan et al. (2021) define the "new normal" as "a situation where the nature/behavior of organizations/employees has changed in response to the new health, social and economic realities in a post-COVID-19 world." As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the "new normal" has also changed what skills and competencies the workplace demands from its employees. While research on the post-COVID "new normal" is still in its nascent phase, examples of other societal shifts have been studied, providing context for the current "new normal" and what HR professionals and hiring managers seek from the next generation of leaders.

Corpuz (2021) states that the term "new normal" first appeared during the 2008 financial crisis "to refer to the dramatic economic, cultural, and social transformations that caused precariousness and social unrest, impacting collective perceptions and individual lifestyles." For example, on September 11, 2001, the world changed forever as we knew it. 9/11 reshaped our society and altered how citizens lived their daily lives. Shocks such as these are not new to our society; however, each event changes the trajectory of how we do what we do and creates a "new normal."

Post-9/11, leaders began to use different leadership styles and tactics to navigate their "new normal." Leaders led through storytelling; leaders led without having all the facts, the ultimate problem-solving skill. A specific example was shown through a mini-case study of Reuters America, a global communications firm that temporarily shifted from a financial news organization to a family. Reuters was a prime example of effective leadership and effective teamwork. Their mission was clear: take care of their people and get their customers back online. At the heart of Reuters' response was impeccable sensemaking, among other leadership

capabilities. Christianson & Barton (2021) define sensemaking as "a socially constructed process in which individuals interact with their environment and others to create meaning and enable action." The ability to make decisions without complete information has emerged as a powerful skill in the next generation of effective leaders. In Karl Weick's *The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster* (Weick, 2009), he discusses the term cosmology as "the ultimate macro-perspective" and that "everyday cosmologies are subject to disruption" and "when they are severely disrupted [Weick] calls them a cosmology episode." The terrorist attacks on 9/11 were a cosmology episode, the 2008 financial crisis was a cosmology episode, and COVID-19 was a cosmology episode, the commencement of another "new normal."

[With disruption comes ethical and moral challenges for leaders. Brown & Treviño (2006) explore research that "resides at the intersection of ethics and leadership." They say, "Much has been written about ethics and leadership from a normative or philosophical perspective, suggesting what leaders *should* do. However, a more descriptive and predictive social scientific approach to ethics and leadership has remained underdeveloped and fragmented, leaving scholars and practitioners with few answers to the most fundamental questions, such as 'What is ethical leadership?'"

Following recent scandals in government, corporate America, higher education, and medicine, to name a few sectors, many people are beginning to question our leaders' ability to lead effectively. While most would posit that leaders know what they should do, many still wonder why they do not always follow through with what is right. Managers have long believed that integrity is a critical skill for effective leadership, and research has proved that theory to be correct. Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991) studied effective leadership traits in the 1990s and made

this claim about honesty and integrity; "Honesty and integrity are virtues in all individuals, but have special significance for leaders. Without these qualities, leadership is undermined." |

Specifically related to Vanderbilt University, Cahapay (2020) posits that the "new normal" post-COVID-19 period presents an opportunity for rethinking education goals, specifically regarding curriculum development. "One of the goals to make the curriculum relevant, appropriate, and responsive is the development of preparedness in times of disasters, diseases, and emergencies" (p. 2). Teaching the next generation of leaders what is essential today is critical to our future successes and failures.

#### Skills and Leadership Education

The importance of effective leadership in any organization is not a groundbreaking theory in leadership education. In 1955, Robert Katz's article titled "Skills of an effective administrator" became the preeminent piece in this new space and withstood the test of time (which included multiple revisions 20 years later into the 1970s based on more lived experiences and research of Katz). Ultimately, Katz (1974) suggests that effective leaders have "three basic developable skills": technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. He describes technical skills as the skills that require some process, procedure, or technique; human skills as skills that require proficiency to work with [other] people; and conceptual skills as the skill to think about how one's organization fits into the larger enterprise as a whole, i.e., the big picture. Interestingly, while leadership theories have changed through the decades, Katz's model holds up to current-day teachings.

Skills models have not been prevalent in the study of effective leadership, but they have been used for other efforts. Peterson et al. (1999) developed the O\*Net content model to understand what skills were necessary for different occupations for a project with the

Commented [JF4]: Move this up to the earlier discussion of leadership. It doesn't work well here.

Commented [GD5R4]: We decided to keep it here as it ties in the theme of how disruption creates "new normals" and the role of ethical leadership in these situations.

Department of Labor. Ladd & Mize (1983) created a skills model to understand children's lack of social skills. Fleishman & Mumford (2006) developed an ability requirement scale to measure and evaluate one's abilities versus their performance at different stages of learning. The researchers found that as individuals acquired additional skills, their performance improved, prompting Mumford to further this research in leadership.

A study conducted in the 1990s by the U.S. Army and Department of Defense to understand the underlying elements of effective performance helped Mumford et al. (2000) develop the leadership skills model. This model studies the correlation between leaders' knowledge and skills (capabilities) and performance. The underlying belief of the model is that many people have the potential for leadership if they can learn from their experiences.

The Skills Model of Leadership was developed from the works of Mumford et al. (2000) as they sought to understand what factors make a leader effective. Like Katz (1955), the researchers found that while leaders may have specific attributes, three competencies aid in a leader's effectiveness: problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge.

Problem-solving skills are those needed to solve ill-defined and complex problems, usually outside an individual's general knowledge. These problems should not be confused with ones that can be solved with simple and routine solutions but should be understood as ones needing creative solutions, and skills can be acquired from experience and learning from one's job (Mumford et al., p. 17). Examples of these skills include gathering appropriate information to make informed plans that turn into effective decisions. In the Emergent Leader Model, a leader emerges from a leaderless group because they possess specialized knowledge that helps the group solve a complex problem (Guastello, 1995, p. 229-230).



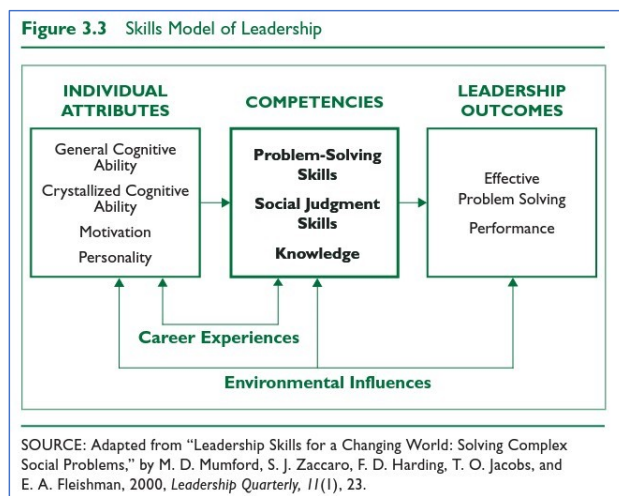
Social judgment skills are the people skills needed to solve complex organizational problems. The Skills Leadership Model understands that leadership performance outcomes lie in motivating individuals to work collectively to accomplish organizational goals. Geiwitz (1996) and Zaccaro et al. (1991) found in their research that effective leaders employ social skills to align the personal and social goals of the subordinate to the organization's goals, creating shared ownership and motivating them to accomplish those goals. Leaders can not only be concerned with solving complex problems, but must also gain support, communicate, and push subordinates to implement the solutions.

Knowledge refers to the application of problem-solving skills and social judgment skills. Knowledge should not be confused with the accumulation of information but should be understood as building a schema of facts, experience, and concepts to inform a process (Fleishman & Mumford, 1989). Effective leaders must use their knowledge to inform when and how to use problem-solving and social judgment skills to implement appropriate solutions. Career experience is an external factor called out in the model. These experiences serve as a form of knowledge because they are the hands-on experiences acquired from working and can further help acquire problem-solving and social judgment skills (Mumford et al., 2000).

Lastly, like career experience, environmental influences are factors that have an impact on the model. Environmental influences are factors outside of the leader's skills, knowledge, and control and can be anything from a lack of resources or natural disasters. When using the model, the environmental influence that helped to guide our research is the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Conceptual Framework

The research we explored in our literature review helped us define the relevant concepts and the relationships among these concepts for this project. We reviewed relevant literature on theories of leadership and leadership skills desired by organizations navigating the "new normal." Stogdill (as cited by Yukl, 1989) claims that every person who has attempted to define leadership has created a different definition for the term. We decided to use the Skills Model of Leadership, developed by Mumford et al. (2000), as our conceptual framework because it relies on the theory that individuals can learn skills and gain knowledge to be successful leaders. As noted above, the framework relies on three competencies; problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge as the pillars of becoming effective leaders. We explored whether there are other competencies and skills employers believe are necessary for effective leadership in the "new normal" higher education market.



**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework*

## Key Conceptualizations

The definitions used to inform our research were adopted by Northouse (2016) and Underwood (2021) to frame what should be taught by a master's degree program in leadership with parameters in the form of a timeframe. Competencies are problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge (Mumford et al., 2000). These competencies are key factors that account for effective performance of leaders (Northouse, 2016). Skills are defined as the ability to use one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives. Leadership skills can be acquired through training and development (Northouse, 2016). New Normal is defined as a situation where the nature/behavior of organizations/employees has changed in response to the new health, social and economic realities in a post-COVID-19 world (Raghavan et al. (2021). The definition of leadership has changed, given different factors and the landscape of the economy during that time. Competencies and skills represent what individuals are taught in leadership programs. The "new normal" concept represents the time frame we are grounding our research.

Commented [JF6]: Narrate the Appendix. You don't need the table, just the concepts/definitions descriptions here.

## Research Questions

Our study explores leadership competencies demanded by the market for leaders navigating the "new normal." By asking human resources professionals and hiring managers what competencies effective leaders employ, we can accumulate a unique record of skills and competencies required of the market. These professionals are on the front lines of hiring future leader and assessing their performance. Explicitly, the project questions are:

Commented [JF7]: Too many commas! Break into 2 sentences.

- **What skills and competencies do organizations seek from effective leaders in the "new normal"?**

- **How are competitor programs designed compared to the LOP and MLO programs?**

## Project Design

This design aims to investigate the skills and competencies desired by hiring managers and HR professionals in the "new normal." This capstone aims to provide Vanderbilt's Peabody LOP and MLO programs with a thorough and contextual understanding of what should be considered in their curricula. The results of this research can be used to help guide Peabody leadership in determining what skills their graduates should gain by enrolling in their Master's programs and how these programs equip their graduates (or not) with the necessary skills to be effective leaders in their professional careers.

We decided to use focus groups as our research is exploratory. Using analysis of descriptive narrative helped illuminate the depth of the topic. While some argue that focus groups are a data collection tool that can be difficult to execute or are too subjective, Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) state that "the analysis and interpretation of focus group data can be as rigorous as that generated by any other method" (p. 109).

We integrated data from five focus groups during the data collection and analysis phase. The focus group participants we targeted were hiring managers, HR professionals, and alums of the LOP Program. Given their roles, we determined that we would gather rich data to analyze and answer our research questions.

## Participant Recruitment

Initially, a recruiting post (see **Appendix A**) was posted to LinkedIn and emailed to potential participants within our networks. Our capstone partner, Dr. Davenport, and LLO

Commented [JF8]: You use these terms interchangeably, which is a problem. Need to be clearer and more transparent. Were there five focus groups? Interviews are generally considered individual (and that is a 'semi-structured interview').

classmates reposted the request on LinkedIn to maximize participation. The post to LinkedIn did not materialize any participants, so other recruitment tactics were used.

Next, our initial outreach was shared with 19 additional thought partners, identified primarily through an LOP alum (who asked not to be named) who was willing to make introductions to other potential thought partners—of those 19 targeted, 6 responded who were willing to participate in one of our focus groups.

Following the outreach to LOP alums, Dr. Davenport shared her network to expand the potential focus group participants list. Dr. Davenport emailed ten high-ranking HR professionals and hiring managers requesting their help with our research. Of those 10, 5 responded that they were willing to participate.

It should be noted that people contacted to participate who could not help offered to extend our invitation to their personal networks. Ultimately, two common non-probability sampling approaches were used to recruit participants: snowball sampling and convenience sampling. Through snowball sampling, following communication with LOP/MLO alumni, some people were willing to share the posting to their networks, creating the "snowball" effect. This method proved effective, especially within smaller populations, allowing us to increase our sample size. Convenience sampling was also a method used to recruit participants. According to Taherdoost (2016), convenience sampling is selecting participants because they are "often readily and easily available" (p. 22). This method also allowed us to conduct our research cheaply and relatively quickly.

In the end, program leadership and their extended networks made introductions to 31 thought leaders, allowing us to host five individual sessions with 2-5 people in each focus group, totaling 18 participants.

Commented [JF9]: Indicate numbers range (of 2-5 people each, for example).

## Data Collection

The first part of our data collection plan was to understand what leadership skills and competencies are in demand from the market and to learn more about the current workplace demands from Master's level students. As stated earlier, we targeted participants well-versed in the "new normal" hiring process, including hiring managers, human resource professionals, and hiring consultants. We determined that using human resources professionals and hiring managers would provide us with rich data because of their unique insight into recruiting and developing talent, understanding an organization's goals and objectives, and developing programs to achieve those goals. In addition, Vanderbilt's MLO/LOP program alums and members of Peabody's career services were also asked to participate.

The second part of our data collection plan studied comparable/competitor programs of Peabody's LLO/MLO programs. Peabody leadership identified a list of competitive programs; those schools included were Cornell University's Master's of Industrial and Labor Relations (MILR), George Washington University's Master's in Organizational Leadership and Learning, Harvard University's Master's in Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship, Northwestern University's Master's in Learning and Organizational Change (MSLOC), and the University of Southern California's Master's of Education in Learning Design and Technology. We analyzed their program design, specifically required credit hours, program length, modality, cost, and special features, and compared those factors to Peabody's two leadership programs. These factors were chosen because they are marketed on the Peabody website to potential students. Next, we visited the websites of the competitor programs to retrieve what publicly available information was presented on their websites and compiled them in a matrix.

## Focus Groups

Initially, we planned to conduct 45 minutes to 1-hour meetings and ask approximately eight questions. After sharing our plan with Dr. Davenport and program leadership, we were advised to limit our scheduled time to 30 minutes to use participants' time more efficiently and to increase our responses from potential focus group members. Further, we were encouraged to reduce the number of questions to three, more concise and targeted questions that answered the research questions.

During the focus groups, we posed open-ended questions inviting participants to respond to questions regarding skills and competencies that leaders seek from graduates of leadership master's programs (see **Appendix C**). We conducted each focus group remotely via Zoom and recorded and transcribed the conversations using Otter.ai. We conducted the focus groups over a 2-week period from April 26, 2023 to May 12, 2023. Each of the five sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes in length.

## Data Analysis

### Skills and Competencies

At the conclusion of each focus group, Otter.ai software created a Word document transcribing the conversations with the participants. We read through the transcripts to identify any major themes from our conceptual model (deductive analysis) and any other significant themes that participants mentioned (inductive analysis). During this process, nine preliminary themes were identified:

1. Learn to act like a leader/lead people;
2. Making decisions with data/"Business Minded"/Financial Acumen;

3. Human skills;
4. Balancing technical, human, and concepts/getting work done and moving work forward;
5. Practical/applicable school work/case study/immersion learning/experiential learning;
6. Communication/Feedback/Facilitation;
7. Inclusion;
8. Trust/Ethics;
9. Skills;

We then assigned a color to each theme and coded each transcript using the legend:

Data Collection & Analysis: Thematic Coding	
Category	Color
Learn to act like a leader/lead people	Yellow
Making decisions with data/"business minded"/financial acumen	Green
Human skills	Aqua
Balance technical and human concepts/getting work done/moving work forward	Red
Practical school work/experiential learning/case studies	Gray
Communication/Feedback/Facilitation	Olive
Inclusion/creating an inclusive work environment	Blue
Trust/ethics	Teal
Skills	Black

**Figure 2**  
*Thematic Coding Legend*

A matrix was created to align the themes we found to the three competencies in the framework; 1) problem-solving skills, 2) social judgment skills, and 3) knowledge. (See Appendix G). In addition, three new competencies were identified outside of those in the Skills Model of Leadership: 1) communication/feedback, 2) ethical leadership, 3) creating inclusive work environments. Lastly, program design that included experiential and immersion learning

Commented [JF10]: The representation of quotes is VERY difficult to read (and not a matrix). Develop an example Table to insert here that gives one quote for each coded concept, then a full Table (Appendix) with counts and quotes. Let's discuss.



was a theme heard throughout. The graph below shows the number of instances of each competency as it appeared in the five focus groups.



**Figure 3**  
*Instances of Findings*

#### Competitor Programs

Program leadership conducted previous research where they identified a list of competitor programs and five programs were selected from that list. To identify the different design attributes of Vanderbilt's LOP and MLO competitor programs, we visited the Peabody College website to generate a list of important program features marketed to potential students. The following features were developed: modality, required credits, cost, scholarships available, internship required, and any other special features available to students. After collecting the data from competitor websites, we compared each program to LOP and MLO to see any differences between the program designs. We created a comparison chart to help analyze key differences between LOP, MLO, and the competitor programs. We noticed some major differences between the modality and special features of the programs, which prompted us to return to the websites to understand further how the programs used different modalities and

special features. The chart below compares key metrics amongst five competitor institutions with Master's programs with a leadership focus. (See Figure 4)

SCHOOL	VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY		NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY	CORNELL UNIVERSITY	GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY	HARVARD UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Program	Leadership and Organizational Performance (LOP)	Leading Organizations (MLO)	Learning & Organizational Change (MSLOC)	Labor Relations (MILR)	Organizational Leadership & Learning	Education Leadership, Organizations & Entrepreneurship	Learning Design and Technology
Degree	Master's of Education	Master's of Education	Master's of Science	Master's of Science	Master's of Arts in Education	Master's of Education	Master's of Education
Admission Term	Fall	Fall	Fall/Spring	Fall/Spring	Summer/Fall	Fall	Fall
Modality	On-Campus	Online	Hybrid	On-Campus	Hybrid	On-Campus	Online
Required Credits	36	30	15 Units	48	30	42	30
Cost	\$2,169/ credit hour	\$2,169/ credit hour	\$5,105/unit	\$20,444/ semester	On-Campus \$1,870/credit hour Online \$1,205/credit hour	\$57,246/ academic year	\$2,244/ credit hour
Scholarships	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internship Required	✓		✓				
Special Features			Graduate Certificate	1- year option		Principal Licensure	Pathway to Doctor of Education in Organizational Change and Leadership Program

**Figure 4**  
*Program comparison*

## Findings

The following findings answer our first research question: What skills and competencies do organizations seek from effective leaders in the "new normal"?

### Finding #1 – Confirmation of the three skills/competencies in the "Skills Model

**Framework": problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge.**

Following our focus group conversations, we confirmed that the skills outlined in the framework are currently aligned with the skills and competencies desired in the market in today's "new normal." Focus group participants were asked three questions (see **Appendix C**), each of which asked some variation of the desired skills and competencies they seek in Master's students of Leadership programs. Of the 157 unique responses to our questions, 107 responses (68%) were attributed to problem-solving skills (51), social-judgment skills (43), and knowledge (13). The number of responses allowed us to confirm that the "Skills Model Framework" still holds in today's "new normal."

**Finding #2 – There are three additional skills/competencies that the market currently seeks: Communication/Feedback, Ethical Leadership, and Creating Inclusive Work Environments.**

In addition to confirming the skills in the Skills Model Framework, we identified three skills that fell outside of the framework: (1) Communication/Feedback, (2) Ethical Leadership, and (3) Creating Inclusive Work Environments. The remainder of the unique responses (32%) fell into one of these buckets.

Brown and Treviño (2006) explore ethical leadership research and suggest that leaders know what they should do but do not always do it. Another theme that emerged from our focus group participants was the importance of creating inclusive work environments and "valuing diversity." While Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) were raised, the theme of inclusion went beyond race and veered towards "meeting people where they are."

**Finding #3 - Leaders desire program design that includes experiential learning.**

Leaders desire curricula that have practical and experiential learning program designs because it allows students to practice the theories they learn in the classroom. When thinking about leadership skills and competencies that make one successful in today's environment, focus group participants thought about how they gained skills while they sought graduate education. A recurring theme in the focus groups was the desire for degree programs to have a practical and immersive learning design. One group participant stated that they appreciated all of the theory they gained from the program, but being able to practice in a real-world setting was a key takeaway. One participant said, "*more practical, less theoretical.*" Others stated that working on case studies and working with partner organizations was an important part of their learnings in leadership.

Commented [JF11]: Move quotes to suggested Table above.

The following findings answer our second research question: How are competitor programs designed compared to the LOP and MLO programs?

Commented [JF12]: Let's talk about how to narrate these so that they are more substantive. Perhaps consider Finding 1: similarities between programs and Finding 2: differences between programs. That would allow you to focus your recommendations on differences (which you're kind of doing in the findings section).

#### Finding #4 – Key Competitor Program Similarities.

When comparing the five competitor programs to Vanderbilt University's LOP and MLO programs, we found many similarities between the design of the programs when comparing admission terms, required credits, and offering scholarships. All of them admit students in the fall, with Northwestern University offering spring admissions and George Washington University offering summer admission. The number of required credits ranged from 30 (Vanderbilt University's MLO, George Washington University, and the University of Southern California) to 48 credits (Cornell University). The MLO program has one of the lighter course loads, but the LOP program fell in the middle of the range, making both programs comparable to the competitors. Lastly, all programs offer scholarships except Vanderbilt University's MLO

program and Northwestern University. The Northwestern University website did not mention why they do not offer scholarships for its Master of Science in Learning and Organizational Change program, so further research would need to be done to understand if the reasoning for this decision is the same as the MLO program.

#### **Finding #5 – Key Competitor Program Differences.**

When comparing the five competitor programs to Vanderbilt University’s LOP and MLO programs, we found three key program differences: 1) hybrid modalities, 2) graduate certificates, 3) and pathways into Ed.D. organizational change and leadership program.

#### **Hybrid modalities**

The LOP program is a full-time on-campus program with an internship required during the summer between years one and two, while the MLO program is a part-time program that is completely virtual. While comparing the design of Peabody's two programs to the designs of the competitors, the program Northwestern University and George Washington University offers their master leadership programs is in a hybrid format, which is defined as combining online and in-person learning (Holst, 2023). This allows the students to decide if they want to take a course in person online.

#### **Graduate certificates**

Northwestern University's Master's in Learning and Organizational Change also has an option for a graduate certificate which consists of four courses in the master's program. Students can enroll in NU to receive the graduate certificate, or they can enroll in the master's program and receive the certificate after completing the four courses. In 2021, Pew Research Lab found

that an overwhelming population of workers who quit their jobs during the pandemic cited a lack of development as the reason for leaving their roles (Parker & Horowitz, n.d.) (Roche, 2022). Having these two options increases the applicant pool because they are able to cater to different types of students; students looking to gain a master's degree, students looking to gain a graduate certificate, and students who are looking to do both.

### **Pathways into Ed.D. Organizational Change and Leadership Program**

The University of Southern California's Doctor of Education in Organizational Change and Entrepreneurship Program is an online program offered through 2U that is a direct competitor to Peabody's Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organization program. USC's Ed.D. program offers two tracks to complete the degree, one that consists of 43 credits and requires a master's degree for entry, and the other with 60 credits that requires a bachelor's degree for entry. The additional 17 credits students take in the 60-credit track are courses in the Master of Education in Learning and Design Technology program, making this program a pathway into the Ed.D. program.

### **Recommendations**

Our five findings provide the foundation for five recommendations for Peabody's LOP/MLO to consider as part of their program review. The first recommendation was informed by Findings #1 and #2. Recommendation #2 is informed by Finding #3. Recommendations #3-#5 were informed based on the comparison data from competitor institutions.

**Recommendation #1: Include Skills Model and "new normal" competencies in curriculum**

Commented [JF13]: modify

As LOP/MLO leadership continues its program evaluation and improvement project, ensure the skills identified in the Skills Model of Leadership are taught in the MLO/LOP curricula. The Skills Model of Leadership says that leaders will have positive performance if they use the three beforementioned competencies. The model also states that the leader can learn these competencies (Mumford et al., 2000). Ensuring that these competencies are being taught in the program's curricula will allow the LOP and MLO programs to produce effective leaders.

The focus group participants also identified three new skills that help a leader be effective in the "new normal:" Communication/Feedback, Ethical Leadership, and Creating Inclusive Work Environments. Like the skills presented in the Skills Model of Leadership, program leadership should ensure that these skills are taught in the curricula.

#### Recommendation #2: Include practical experiences and immersive course designs

As program leadership continues the program evaluation and improvement project, they should consider including practical and immersive class design, allowing students to practice the theories they are learning in the classroom. The LOP program has an immersive requirement with the summer internship between years one and two, but the MLO program does not have the same requirement. The internship requirement could be a problem if program leadership explores recommendation #3 because some students registered in the program will be employed full-time and unable to participate in an internship over the summer.

#### Recommendation #3: Provide hybrid format to provide greater student flexibility

80% of the content of the LOP program makes up the MLO program, meaning there is much overlap between the content of both programs. This overlap allows program leadership to

consider combining the LOP and MLO programs and changing the program's offering to a hybrid format like Northwestern University and George Washington University. A hybrid format will give students the flexibility to decide if they want to take classes in-person, online, or a combination of the two formats, increasing the pool of potential applicants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the e-learning industry had record growth in 2020 and is expected to reach \$465 billion by 2028 (Diaz-Infante et al., 2022) (Holst, 2023). Because of the expected growth in the industry, there is an opportunity for Peabody College to benefit from that growth by changing to a hybrid program. There could be added costs associated with this recommendation with adding additional sections of courses and hiring faculty and/or adjuncts to teach the sections.

#### [Recommendation #4: Create graduate certificate in Leadership](#)

Program leadership should consider creating a Leadership Graduate Certificate program like Northwestern University and the University of Southern California. Both universities use a portion of the courses offered in their master's program as the graduate certificate curriculum. Offering a graduate certificate will allow potential students to decide if they want to earn a graduate certificate, degree, or both. Students could also have the option of starting with a certificate and finishing the master's degree later. Corporations are looking to invest in their employees by offering continuing education to retain them, and Peabody College can share in the investment by creating a leadership program targeted to corporations (Roche, 2022). Suppose program leadership decides to add a graduate certificate option. In that case, there should not be any added cost to creating a curriculum, as the courses are already being offered in the LOP and MLO programs. Like with Recommendation #2, there is the potential to increase the pool of



applicants because of the number of options to gain a credential and because students who complete the graduate certificate may decide to continue to finish the master's program.

#### Recommendation #5: Create pathways to the LLO EdD program

The University of Southern California has a Doctor of Education in Organizational Change and Leadership program, a competitor to Peabody's Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organization (LLO) program. USC has two tracks in its Ed.D. program, the first track is for students who have completed a master's program, and it requires 43 credits for completion. The other is for students who have completed a bachelor's degree. It requires 60 credits for completion. A graduate certificate can also be used as a pathway into the Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations program for students who have not received a master's degree but have the goal of attaining a doctoral degree. In the 60-credit track, the university created a graduate certificate from courses in its Master's in Learning and Design Technology program to fulfill the number of credits to attain a doctoral degree.

LOP and MLO leadership should consider partnering with LLO leadership in creating a pathway for students with a bachelor's degree to take courses in the LOP and MLO program, gain a certificate and gain entry into the LLO program. This new track can potentially increase enrollment by offering students the opportunity of an accelerated track to a doctoral degree. Interest rates on federal student loans are expected to increase to over 5%, and PLUS Loans are expected to increase to around 7.05% (Carrns, 2023). Accelerated pathways to gain a degree could help mitigate the amount students have to borrow by decreasing the number of credits to attain a degree. There could be added cost and coordination with LLO leadership to revamp current courses to fit the requirements of the LLO program.

## Conclusion

Peabody College is making an effort to improve the enrollment and outcomes of its LOP and MLO programs, and this project aims to assist program leadership in a program evaluation and understand the leadership skills and competencies currently in demand in the market. The Skills Model of Leadership became the foundation of our research because it relies on the theory that individuals can learn skills and gain knowledge to be effective leaders. While speaking to the participants in the focus groups, we confirmed the three competencies in the model and found three additional skills being asked of leaders in the market. Moreover, we discovered program design features offered by competitor programs that program leadership should consider implementing to stay competitive.

As a reminder, it should be noted that our research, findings and recommendations only address a small portion of the overall program evaluation. Addressing these recommendations does not mean that enrollment will increase. However, these recommendations coupled with other recommendations of the entire program evaluation may help increase applications and enrollment.

In conclusion, the project provides program leadership with a foundation to make appropriate changes as they continue the program evaluation. The organization will benefit from using the five recommendations presented in the projects as a base for future research and change implementation.

## References

- Andenoro, A. C. (2013). The National Leadership Education Research Agenda: Strategic Priorities and Deepened Perspectives. *Journal of Leadership Education, 12*(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.12806/V12/I3/C1>
- Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly, 17*(6), 595–616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.004>
- Brungardt, C., & Crawford, C. B. (1996). A Comprehensive Approach to Assessing Leadership Students and Programs: Preliminary Findings. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 3*(1), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107179199600300105>
- Burn, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*.
- Cahapay, M. B. (2020). *Rethinking Education in the New Normal Post-COVID-19 Era: A Curriculum Studies Perspective* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3707838). <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3707838>
- Carrns, A. (2023, May 19). Expect Interest Rates on Federal Student Loans to Rise. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/19/your-money/interest-rates-federal-student-loans.html>
- Christianson, M. K., & Barton, M. A. (2021). Sensemaking in the Time of COVID-19. *Journal of Management Studies, 58*(2), 572–576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12658>
- Corpuz, J. C. G. (2021). Adapting to the culture of 'new normal': An emerging response to COVID-19. *Journal of Public Health, 43*(2), e344–e345. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab057>

- Diaz-Infante, N., Lazer, M., Ram, S., & Ray, A. (2022, July 20). *Growth in online education. Are providers ready?* <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/demand-for-online-education-is-growing-are-providers-ready>
- El-Erian, M. A. (n.d.). *Navigating the New Normal in Industrial Countries*.
- Fleishman, E. A., & Mumford, M. D. (2006). EVALUATING CLASSIFICATIONS OF JOB BEHAVIOR: A CONSTRUCT VALIDATION OF THE ABILITY REQUIREMENT SCALES. *Personnel Psychology*, 44(3), 523–575. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1991.tb02403.x>
- Geiwitz, J. (1996). *A Conceptual Model of Metacognitive Skills*. Advanced Scientific Concepts Inc.
- Guastello, S. J. (1995). Facilitative Style, Individual Innovation, and Emergent Leadership in Problem Solving Groups. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 29(4), 225–239. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1995.tb01397.x>
- Guthrie, K. L., Teig, T. S., & Hu, P. (2018). *Academic Leadership Programs in the United States*. <https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A690826/>
- Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press.
- Holst, R. (2023, April 24). *Council Post: Growth Despite A Downturn: Predictions For The Hybrid Learning Industry*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/04/24/growth-despite-a-downturn-predictions-for-the-hybrid-learning-industry/>
- Katz, R. L. (1974). Skills of an effective administrator. *Harvard Business Review*, 52(5), 90–102.

- Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1991). Leadership: Do Traits Matter? *The Executive*, 5(2), 48.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1991.4274679>
- Ladd, G. W., & Mize, J. (1983). A cognitive–social learning model of social-skill training.  
*Psychological Review*, 90(2), 127–157. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.90.2.127>
- Mann, R. D. (1959). A review of the relationships between personality and performance in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 56(4), 241–270. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0044587>
- Mumford, M. D., Zaccaro, S. J., Harding, F. D., Jacobs, T. O., & Fleishman, E. A. (2000). Leadership skills for a changing world. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 11–35.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(99\)00041-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00041-7)
- Northouse, P. G. (2015). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (Seventh Edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Parker, K., & Horowitz, J. M. (n.d.). Majority of workers who quit a job in 2021 cite low pay, no opportunities for advancement, feeling disrespected. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved July 3, 2023, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/>
- Peterson, N. G., Mumford, M. D., Borman, W. C., Jeanneret, P. R., & Fleishman, E. A. (Eds.). (1999). *An occupational information system for the 21st century: The development of O\*NET*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10313-000>
- Raghavan, A., Demircioglu, M. A., & Orazgaliyev, S. (2021). COVID-19 and the New Normal of Organizations and Employees: An Overview. *Sustainability*, 13(21), Article 21.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111942>

- Roche, G. (2022, November 1). *Council Post: Embrace Certificate, Certification And Education Reimbursement To Better Support Talent Development*. Forbes.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/11/01/embrace-certificate-certification-and-education-reimbursement-to-better-support-talent-development/>
- Rost, J. C., & Barker, R. A. (2000). Leadership Education in Colleges: Toward a 21st Century Paradigm. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(1), 3–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190000700102>
- Seeman, M. (1960). *Social status and leadership; the case of the school executive*.
- Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. N. (2014). *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications.
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). *Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3205035).  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035>
- Underwood, K. (2021). Diversity, Leadership, and the "New Normal": An Introduction to the Symposium. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 15(1), 41–44.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21736>
- Van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1228–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
- Weik, K. E. (2009). The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster. *STUDI ORGANIZZATIVI*, 2008/2. <https://doi.org/10.3280/SO2008-002009>
- Yukl, G. (1989). Managerial Leadership: A Review of Theory and Research. *Journal of Management*, 15(2), 251–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920638901500207>

- Zaccaro, S. J., Gilbert, J. A., Thor, K. K., & Mumford, M. D. (1991). Leadership and social intelligence: Linking social perspectiveness and behavioral flexibility to leader effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 2(4), 317–342. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(91\)90018-W](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(91)90018-W)
- Zaleznik, A. (1981). Managers and Leaders: Are They Different? *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, 11(7), 25–31.

## Appendices

### Appendix A:

#### **Recruiting email for focus group participants/Post for LinkedIn**

Invitation to Participate: As doctoral students in the Leadership, Learning in Organizations program at Vanderbilt University, we are inviting hiring managers, human resources professionals, and organizational leaders to participate in a focus group to discuss leadership skills and competencies the market is demanding from students in master level leadership programs. Your participation in this study is extremely important to us and to Vanderbilt University and will assist in driving the future state of two of their Master's programs, Leadership and Organizational Performance and Leading Organizations. Should you agree to participate, we will contact you to set up a zoom focus group with a group or peers, at a time of your convenience. The focus group should take about 45-60 minutes, and will be recorded via Zoom. Participants can choose to be on or off camera. Participation is voluntary and your response will be kept anonymous. You will have the option to not respond to any question that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Vanderbilt University. Agreement to participate will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the Principal Investigators, Gregg DiNardo, via email at [gregg.dinardo@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:gregg.dinardo@vanderbilt.edu), and Jeremy Speikes, via email at [jeremy.a.speikes@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jeremy.a.speikes@vanderbilt.edu). Our faculty advisor, Dr. Jean Forray, PhD, can be reached at [jeanie.m.forray@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jeanie.m.forray@vanderbilt.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, contact the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (615) 322-2918. Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.



Appendix B:

**Questionnaire to Determine Focus Group Schedule**

### Focus Group Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a focus group to discuss leadership skills and competencies the market is demanding from students in master-level leadership programs.

**Name \***  
Short answer text

**Occupation \***  
Short answer text

**Title \***  
Short answer text

**In what Industry are you employed? \***  
Short answer text

Are you an alum of Vanderbilt University's Leadership and Organizational Performance Program or the Leading Organizations Program? \*

Yes

No

Please select the times you are able to meet for an hour. \*

April 24th, 12pm - 1pm EST

April 24th, 6pm - 7pm EST

April 25th, 12pm - 1pm EST

April 25th, 6pm - 7pm EST

April 26th, 12pm - 1pm EST

April 26th, 6pm - 7pm EST

April 27th, 12pm - 1pm EST

April 27th, 6pm - 7pm EST

Appendix C:

**Focus Group Questions**

**Opening Question (Round Robin) - Give definition of "New Normal"**

What did leadership look like to you before the pandemic? What does that look like now? How has that changed?

**Introductory Question**

What do organizations seek when it comes to leadership skills and competencies in the "New Normal"?

After March 2020, what new leadership programs/seminars does your organization offer?

**Transition Questions**

If you were to design a master's level leadership program, what core leadership skills and competencies would you include in the curriculum?

**Key Questions**

What specific leadership skills did you look for before the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020)?

What specific leadership skills do you look for now after the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020)?

What should students contemplating a master's degree from a leadership program seek when it comes to leadership skills and competencies in the "New Normal"?

**Ending Questions**

Of all the things we discussed, what to you is the most important?

Appendix D:

**LOP & MLO**

**Admissions:**

**1/25/2023**

1/23/2023    2/2/2022    2/3/2021    2/12/2020    3/26/2019

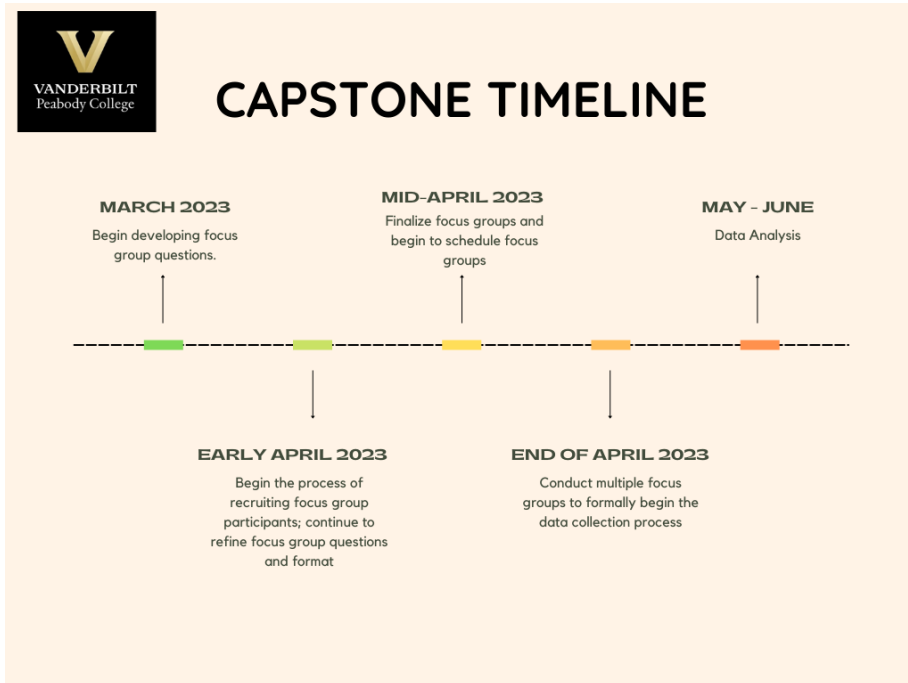
LOP	1/23/2023	2/2/2022	2/3/2021	2/12/2020	3/26/2019
Applications Started	56	79	99	84	85
Submitted Applications	28	50	58	47	55
Admits	18	24	38	30	35
Intend to Matriculate (Fall)	TBD	17	24	29	22
<b>Leading Organizations</b>					
Total Applications Started:	15	16	20	NA	NA
Applications Submitted	6	4	8	NA	NA
Admits	4	0	2	NA	NA
Intend to Matriculate (Fall)	TBD	0	8	NA	NA

Appendix E:

**Key Conceptualizations & Definitions**

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Competencies	In the Skills Model created by Mumford, et al. (2000), competencies are problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. Northouse (2016) goes on to define competencies as the key factors that account for effective performances, which we, the researchers, are working to identify through our focus groups and will define as knowledge and skills.
Knowledge	For the purpose of this research, knowledge is the accumulation of information and the mental structures used to organize that information (Northouse, 2016).
Skill	For the purpose of this research, skills are defined as the ability to use one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives. Leadership skills can be acquired through training and development (Northouse, 2016)
New Normal	For the purpose of this research, "New Normal" will be defined as the period of change after the COVID-19 Pandemic (Underwood, 2021). The "New Normal" also signifies fundamental shifts in operations and behavior of organizations and employees, respectively, due to the sustained nature of the COVID-19 pandemic (Raghavan, 2021).

### Capstone Timeline



Appendix G:

Coded transcriptions by finding

- Learn to act like a leader/Lead people
- Making decisions with data/"business minded"/financial acumen
- Human Skills
- Balance technical, human, and concepts/ Getting work done moving work forward
- Practical/applicable school work/Case study/Immersion learning
- Communication/Feedback/Facilitation
- Inclusion
- Trust/ethics
- Skills

Problem-Solving Skills	Focus Group
Let's look to think about some other causes that I likely forgot, like, how do you design your organization or design your team?	Focus Group 1
If there are conversations going on with people about how do you do things like negotiate for, for a salary or for or for a different kind of work? If you like if you had a place or how do you negotiate your way from an intern to a full-time employee?	Focus Group 1
And at some point, you're going to have to advise others on how to do that, and it's not to not have the person who you have the capability of giving an increase to one who's going to be asking you're gonna have people come and ask you, how do I do this and what do I need to know? And so having a good framework for that can I think it's important?	Focus Group 1
Strategy/Analytic things	Focus Group 1
Leadership applies	Focus Group 2
actually the equity going into to make good high quality decisions without at the same time, knowing how to break down the process of decision making, which I think is just problem making	Focus Group 2
making a lot of complexity and making it more simple	Focus Group 2
making with ambiguity	Focus Group 2
organizations learning how organizations are structured, how to build a healthy organization, what are the components of that?	Focus Group 2
How to use data to drive decision making	Focus Group 2
All how people are using data	Focus Group 2
understanding data and analytics and understanding technology	Focus Group 2
strategic perspective	Focus Group 2
data driven decisions	Focus Group 2

Problem-Solving Skills	Focus Group
agile approach	Focus Group 2
flexible and agile, but I think of agile specifically as kind of this idea of iterating and	Focus Group 2
moving the work forward versus trying to come up with the right answer right then	Focus Group 2
three to five years of business experience at least	Focus Group 2
building business cases to get buy in	Focus Group 2
influence stakeholders both at the executive level as well as down to the different units	Focus Group 2
data driven decisions	Focus Group 2
I'm thinking about healthcare, so I'm coming at it from that side, but I would say really being a learning how to be learning how to be agile	Focus Group 3
AND they that just simply because things are moving faster than we are able to react or adapt to them and so being agile, someone being able to run an organization with some sense of ambiguity, being comfortable, those with ambiguity is going to be key. So it's not that there are an other jump in	Focus Group 3
the just bottom up and top down kind of thing, it's not the person's domain, I would add a couple of things. One, being able to understand someone's data and be able to make sense of data and cope with data	Focus Group 3
building on that, David, I would say storytelling and initiative. So on the data front, if you know, do you know which data to collect in this world so that you can tell a good story?	Focus Group 3
making a business, leader others and making present?	Focus Group 3
to build the work, it's about making others	Focus Group 3
the speed of just technology are what are people's priorities presented as like a that problem solving, which is always something we've looked for, right, it's just identified because you need to have that to be able still to be able to be able to be able to pick up new data stuff	Focus Group 3
learning agility	Focus Group 3

Problem-Solving Skills	Focus Group
analytical skills	Focus Group 3
analytical skills	Focus Group 3
financial acumen I see so many people going back to school because they want something more. And it's the financial acumen piece that most of them are looking when they get there and so that financial acumen and specifically a set of programs that are hands on learning in that and concepts and case studies	Focus Group 4
actually, I would say somewhere between the two. Because I think for most of us, we have a CFO to do that. I need a business leader who can put business cases together and understand that their idea for that group is going to have ramifications on other groups. If they just do one thing and so to the holistic part of the business finance and that starts with the public. I don't but I don't necessarily need a CFO level deep dive into finance and accounting. It's more of an Applied Business One, into finance and accounting.	Focus Group 4
One of those critical skills that like people often people always come out of an MBA program with it, but they don't always come out of a leadership program with that, and I think that's huge.	Focus Group 4
problem solving	Focus Group 4
strategic thinking, strategic planning and operational excellence	Focus Group 4
lifetime learner	Focus Group 4
solid financial knowledge of just how business work for profit business or even not for profit, how it works	Focus Group 5
Ability to work in a matrix environment, ability to influence and convince people who don't report hierarchically to you	Focus Group 5
Agile environments	Focus Group 5
relationships with one key resource, and be able to deal with ambiguity	Focus Group 5
the ability and you know, you know what to be flexible, to be a practical learner	Focus Group 5
strategic decision making	Focus Group 5
managing data	Focus Group 5

Social Judgment Skills	Focus Group
but also develop talent around me? Am I a good collaborator, somebody who fosters network?	Focus Group 1
who can coach others and coach themselves?	Focus Group 1
to how do you coach people who've decided how to coach others to maintain their performance?	Focus Group 1
hey, come here, we'll teach you how to be a great coach	Focus Group 1
the understanding the human-centric nature of leadership	Focus Group 1
because I wanted to learn how to be a coach and I wanted to hear about like, the human dynamic of performance	Focus Group 1
do you understand that like relationships are like it's the backbone of everything that you do	Focus Group 1
like I'm looking for somebody who knows how to connect with people that	Focus Group 1
like, just like integrative connection, so like for the human who understand how to connect with other people, and to do that, like typically and to do that cross culturally	Focus Group 1
And if you can connect with people, then the next level up is like, can you lead people because I kind of especially wanting the leader who can't connect with people that don't end up being that great	Focus Group 1
when there's a disconnect, people who understand the actual connection as part of the ecosystem, we're struggling a little bit with this right now and our own organization we were we've always been a hybrid organization, but connection was a big part of who we were, you know, if you live in a place with a physical office, you were there more often than not, and then the pandemic happened and everybody like figured out and work in my journals for 12 hours a day, and you know, I'm more productive that way, and so what we're adding people to kind of get back to the connectivity because we tried to foster creativity and relationship and the ability to do better, better work. And we're like, we're having some struggle getting leaders to figure out how to lead do that right now. And so like how do you have a very fundamental level, I'll hand all the way back in grad school, help someone to figure out like, connectivity should be part of what you do as a leader	Focus Group 1
come I think in that point, like, like, the sheet code went away like that, you just say like the human one goes as being around each other all the time. We don't have access to that out, so I think that like the skill that leaders need is like how do you build connection with intention	Focus Group 1
How do you think about the small group behaviors and specifically like small group behaviors formed on the virtual teams and cross cultural teams	Focus Group 1
motivational coaching like subject on like one of their masters programs	Focus Group 1
it's coaching, in particular in like like we have some people who are certified coaches, but it's not it's not the primary reason thing that we sell as consultants but more broadly in the universe. You're absolutely right. One that it is a thing today because people need it. We've had in the last coach who's coaching about 80% of our employees	Focus Group 1

Social Judgment Skills	Focus Group
okay, I'll give you three so I listed these things out. So the first one would be in like coaching skills	Focus Group 1
How do you integrate client management and future practices into organizational strategy	Focus Group 1
So integrated talent management strategy	Focus Group 1
that was before people and profit is a very real thing. And we're if the pandemic taught us anything and that taught everyone to think about do I really want to be doing with my life and do I want to be doing work that has purpose and so I'm with it in an organization that values my whole self and like you can't get companies anymore as if all your people are brought to be moved about the base? You have to take that into account	Focus Group 1
self-awareness	Focus Group 2
I think I meet people where they are and treat other everyone differently	Focus Group 2
self-awareness	Focus Group 2
How are you fair and equitable, but in a way that that person needs not giving everyone the same thing	Focus Group 2
self-awareness in general	Focus Group 2
emotional intelligence	Focus Group 2
collaboration of promoting teamwork	Focus Group 2
empathy	Focus Group 2
Yes, how do I create a sense of belonging? How do I do what Carolyn described, but also make it really personal for each person so they have a sense of belonging and it's having to their mental health and they're really being seen.	Focus Group 3
How do you adjust to different people	Focus Group 3
Yeah, so you're talking about the feeling of respect and I feel like there's a lot of culture stuff right now and I feel like that attention to self and growth is so important. And people are wanting to manifest that growth and their self-empowerment at work. So thank you, like, you know, there's something like, I mean, there's a this breeds human centered design	Focus Group 3

Social Judgment Skills	Focus Group
people are looking for you might be more manager but they bringing like the new way right is bringing out the best in people and feedback feed forward is a developmental way, instead of sort of a track and reservation point	Focus Group 3
emotional intelligence	Focus Group 3
To gamma relationship building	Focus Group 3
relationship	Focus Group 3
empathy. When we learned anything about someone's competence, it's the fact that we have to find our way through the struggle.	Focus Group 4
empathy. Not talking about other people are bringing and the differences between what each person is bringing to the team	Focus Group 4
emotional health	Focus Group 4
And that's not looking for leaders that are not setting it going but that are looking for that in the whole person that's on their team, and to support the entire person that's on their team. And that means the bring themselves to work and they're not perfect and they make mistakes and they own their mistakes. So it's in whole person	Focus Group 4
vulnerability	Focus Group 4
Being a <b>flexible leader</b> like humility and being humble as a leader because, you know, the kind of goal setting with acknowledging the whole person and the different people have different strengths and things to contribute and you know, just because you're the one that's the leader or has the knowledge or has the like of the role doesn't mean that you know everything or that the team doesn't have things to contribute in a way that you can't. So I think just having that perspective about yourself as well in light of the team team, you're learning from the team as well and not just everyone learning from you as a leader	Focus Group 4
Just being humble and having some humility and	Focus Group 5
They have a whole different view of work. And the person that connect with their employee, and I think the managers and leaders of tomorrow, I'd have to understand you, I think, you know, it's about to be so much old business and, we wanted that I don't need to prove when I need to work very much like I'm happy to have the job, I am coming here to do my best work, if I do my best work, you will reward me. I have to trust that and and I don't have to all around and necessarily prove myself all the time because I'll just I'll do my best work, my best work will speak for itself and I'll connect to you both ways of the that and you'll give me the rewards that I deserve from putting my head down and doing good work and being loyal to you and all those things that was sort of the contract that I understood.	Focus Group 5
And I think so many leaders need to understand that. And they're people leaders that are coming out that have that mindset, it's like, they have to understand how do I connect with my employees on a whole person level? How do I get to know who they are, what their values are? What do they want their whole work life and approach to work and that means how I want to work, that whole understanding that work is a business, not a show, not a place. That whole thing about hybrid work and where people work. And I think that has different fundamentally, and I don't think it's going to drive that. There are some thoughts	Focus Group 5



Knowledge	Focus Group
am I am I able to focus on results	Focus Group 1
Do I you know, my able to kind of have both the view of the business need and the needs of the individuals and the needs of the clients in mind	Focus Group 1
And often you have to be able to do it with the client as well, whether they've hired you to do that or not. There are lots of opportunities where strong leadership skills are absolutely essential to to executing the client project well and to maintain relationship	Focus Group 1
could be like a nice tie everything together for the program.	Focus Group 1
really good at leading other people	Focus Group 1
And for us, we saw we saw people having to figure it out in different ways. I don't know that that fundamentally should change leadership for the rest of history in the universe. I think it really is about us figuring out what are those fundamental things about being a leader that the cross no matter where you are, if you're standing next to somebody or if you're, you know, working on opposite sides of the globe	Focus Group 1
learn how to have vision and big picture but like be able to manage and change and modify quickly	Focus Group 2
how you can take those skills that you have and apply them and make projects work	Focus Group 2
management skills	Focus Group 2

Knowledge	Focus Group
someone who is able to see interconnectedness between different phenomena within the organization to be able to connect the dots, look at the big picture. And not necessarily just look at the organization from one	Focus Group 3
action	Focus Group 3
executive presence or leadership presence. I think in today's hybrid worlds when we come out of COVID and people may have spent three years you know, living in their house and not talking to people I think that's important. Not only just live and in person, but what does that look like when your virtual process improvement kind of goes along with problem solving. So you know, an element of whether that's process improvement, change management, some kind of combination of those two things.	Focus Group 4
how to look at data and tell a story not just put up charts and pictures	Focus Group 5
so how do you balance the short term versus the long term? Because a lot of times we live so much in the business that we tend to forget more longer-term	Focus Group 5
making decisions under pressure	Focus Group 5
how to drive a high performance culture.	Focus Group 5
realizing that as a leader, it's your job to get work done to other people. It's not about you.	Focus Group 5

Practical/applicable school work/Case study/Immersion learning	Focus Group
doing college and master's work everyone always dreads the group project. I think the group project is a fabulous example of whether you are capable of leading or not	Focus Group 1
And so a program that allows people those opportunities to work in those situations and to work on real world problems is is I think it's super valuable for us.	Focus Group 1
So when we're thinking about where, where people sit in their own growth and development and how they, how they grow through our various different levels, we think about the progression of leading self leading internal teams leading leading projects, leading clients leading at the company level. And so when we're, especially when we're hiring out of master's programs, we look for people who have at least that baseline bent toward leadership	Focus Group 1
which I think would come from like case studies in practice and seeing things like that	Focus Group 2
Like the work ready skills, the theory is very important. As well of course as like your foundation, but just getting a little bit past that and making sure people are	Focus Group 3
Like my graduate program had a client for every class and you know, I did a thing in undergrad that I just oh so memorable Global Leadership Program, where every single time that we had a project, we had a client and we also had a partner overseas. So for example, like we went to Thailand, we partnered with the University of Chiang Mai, we had those students and then we each had a client. So every single time it was highly applied. So I mean, I just think that everybody's like, so hungry for new experiences. So what are those experiences that nobody else is creating	Focus Group 3

Practical/applicable school work/Case study/Immersion learning	Focus Group
John's got a Master's of Science in MD MBA doctorates. And when I started my MBA, and then my MSOP I had worked, I had some work experience and I didn't plan it that way. I was hoping to go straight into that out of undergrad and the timing worked out for me I had a job offer etc, etc. I am so thankful that I didn't go straight into a match program because for me, and having taught at Belmont and other places, I just I just know that the ability to to to have context for the program that you're that you're participating in, is just as much important as what you're learning. And that's really hard to do. If your only experience is, you know, a part time employee at McDonald's while you were in high school or college, and I don't mean to put that down or cast any aspersions on that but I can't imagine how I would apply what I was learning in my multiple postgraduate programs had I not been I guess, the other thing I would say related to content is, I think, I think to echo what others have said that it needs to be really pragmatic. It needs to be kind, that it needs to be grounded in theory, but but have a lot of application	Focus Group 3
something that I really had no idea I would have so much get so much value out of was the group work.	Focus Group 3
that we all love, they had to get hands on and do some advanced things in Excel and use Tableau and, you know, not the best one to teach that. But I said at the minimum what you'll learn is what these things can do, and how to hire good people. Who can do this. I think exposure like hands on to some of these tools, advanced tools is really valuable. I was I was proud that	Focus Group 3
real world scenarios	Focus Group 4
Maybe I'll do something else. Maybe I'll do gig work. It's really it's what's gonna inspire me today and what's going to hit my values and it's it's so much different about how it associates employees think about just work in general. And you know, and I think maybe, maybe the generation now that's just now getting out of high school and maybe in college are starting to be a little bit more financially focused because they've seen a downturn.	Focus Group 5
It's really you know, kind of case study driven. And if it's really like, you're in a job and this is what you're doing, this is how you're going to use this and this is what you're going to do and just so how can I make it so relevant	Focus Group 5

Inclusion/DEI	Focus Group
There's an inclusive leadership elements of that as well as like, how do you lead people who aren't like you, like, especially as we continue to be part of, you know, given that we're in this world where you could probably do a job from, you know, like, I don't know, you can do a job from Honolulu that like you used to maybe only be able to hire for and Franklin right	Focus Group 1
competency thing would be some sort of inclusive inclusivity and cross cultural leadership of I had, like, how do you connect across cultures	Focus Group 1
how do you lean into that to like build an inclusive community and specifically, is there a course in inclusive leadership, cross cultural leadership, like how do you lead a team where you're actively, like, basically, like, it'd be like extending the grace and also creativity of like, iterating on what it means to like, be more than just like, you know, the mono syllabic type of thing that we can get when people are just speaking the same stuff all the time	Focus Group 1
diversity and inclusion	Focus Group 2
inclusive toolkit as a leader. So being able to work with people now. We have a lot more of a view of a whole person. And so you're thinking about a person who is a mother or a father or a caregiver of parents, and how do you manage and lead people that are kind of now more clearly in in the light of their whole life	Focus Group 4
And then we haven't mentioned inclusion. So how to be an inclusive leader how to build an inclusive team, a little bit more broad than just sort of dei kinds of things that are happening these days, but as a leader, do I have skills that I bring to the table behaviorally that make me an inclusive leader	Focus Group 4
diversity, but with an inclusive mind	Focus Group 5

Communication/Feedback	Focus Group
So like, how do you how do you do that and still connect there that like, the, like, the need for intention, and a larger toolkit is there and if somebody's interviewing somebody, and they were like, Hey, I'm a 23 year old and here's the three ways that I'd recommend connecting with like, what emerging Gen Z leaders are they Oh, my God, take all my money	Focus Group 1
Because you get that back and you have to you read into that whatever you do, you're not having that same feedback with the person so even like intentionally around I have a new employee	Focus Group 1
That's like that's a big culture shift anyway, and figuring out how to deal with constructive feedback is a big part of our how to get it isn't a to me, a huge leadership skill	Focus Group 1
Is that like direct communication, building some sort of like presence in conversation, powerful questions	Focus Group 1
So this might speak to this already, but like coaching leaders, right, so it makes specifically even if it's not executives, even if it's project leaders, even if it's like, you know, like your, you know, new leaders or emerging leaders, like how do you take those bedrock coaching skills and specifically coach leaders	Focus Group 1
communicate effectively	Focus Group 2
the communication and kind of just the leadership	Focus Group 2
written communication skills	Focus Group 2
really good listener	Focus Group 2
overall communication, both the listening and then the writing very critical and the facilitation those are all key parts	Focus Group 2
communication	Focus Group 2
collaboration	Focus Group 2
communication skills, and understanding, you know, so much work is hybrid now or first virtual which had its own challenges, but then I feel like hybrid creates even more challenges and having, you know, some people in the same space, sometimes a combination, things like that, and I think that like being able to communicate whether it's virtually or whether it's in person, but communicating and tailoring your message to the right audience, understanding what things the leadership wants to hear versus if you're communicating to your team, what tasks are actions or inspiring and touching on that resiliency pace, like communicating in a way of not just dictating	Focus Group 4

Communication/Feedback	Focus Group
communication	Focus Group 4
facilitation skills	Focus Group 4
feedback and difficult conversations	Focus Group 5
listening	Focus Group 5
So communication is just as important	Focus Group 5
No one knows how to give feedback	Focus Group 5
How to run a great meeting	Focus Group 5
to put together a really strong deck and tell a story	Focus Group 5
<b>How to write an executive summary</b>	Focus Group 5
different kinds of communication situations	Focus Group 5
tough conversations piece	Focus Group 5
And when you set facilitation skills, I was thinking about, like, meeting facilitation skills, also, yeah. The like, basically, how do you run a good and interesting and engaging meeting?	Focus Group 4

Trust/Ethics	Focus Group
in general in our organization, the best leaders are curious and treat trust with care. So and I say it that way because trust goes both ways. A good a good leader should be able to be trusted. But they should also freely give trust	Focus Group 1
<b>consistency</b>	Focus Group 2
<b>Integrity</b>	Focus Group 3
accountability piece	Focus Group 4
accountability	Focus Group 4
Accountable	