Growing Number of Universities Establishing Servant-Leadership Programs

by Nancy Larner

Higher education needs new metaphors, metaphors so beautifully in keeping with the times that they will succeed in getting us all to rise and rededicate ourselves once more to fulfilling our society’s highest hopes.

— Patricia R. Plante

What ingredients are necessary for a successful university? High enrollment? Exceptional grade point averages? A well-known name? Some of the traditional measures of successful universities thirty years ago may need to be redefined. Certainly the endeavor to increase enrollment and achieve greater than average grade points will not likely fall by the wayside, but perhaps something else should begin to be held at a higher standard; namely, the ability of universities to come fully into their own as dynamic learning communities.

In order to keep our higher education from falling behind the times, we cannot rely on conventional ways of operating universities. John P. Kotter, professor of leadership at Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration advocates university programs that “go beyond simple knowledge transfer, that focus on skills and values that will help people even when specific knowledge becomes outdated.”

A few universities are rising to this proposal by incorporating servant-leadership into the curriculum.

McMurry University in Abilene, Texas, introduced the Servant Leadership Center of the Southwest as a pilot program in 1990. Guided by Ann Liprie-Spence, the Center has received state and national recognition for its program. The Servant Leadership Center focuses on exploring ways in which one can learn to live as a servant-leader through a four step certification process: a course which includes community service, leadership training and small group discussion, a sequence of at least nine training sessions; an internship within the community; and a seminar in leadership development. In addition to the certification as Servant-Leader, the Center offers three hour training sessions to community, university, business, and religious organizations throughout the Southwest.

In Tampa, Florida, a unique concept was brought into existence through the creative efforts of students and teachers in the MBA program at the University of South Florida (USF). The Leadership House is comprised of student volunteers dedicated to serve the community in projects such as cooking donated food for the homeless, environmental projects, and a plan to work with Habitat for Humanity building low-income housing. The impetus for the Leadership House grew out of Robert Greenleaf’s book, Teacher as Servant: A Parable, the underpinning of which makes up the experiential leadership course taught at USF. Jim Stuart, one of the professors who teaches the leadership course, is passionate about Greenleaf’s ideas and he says that he sometimes finds it quite a challenge to (Continued on page 6)

Selected Upcoming Programs in 1997

• The Greenleaf Center will offer an open registration workshop in San Francisco on Friday, February 7, 1997. Personal Journey Through Servant-Leadership will be held at the Golden Gateway Holiday Inn, 1500 Van Ness Avenue, from 9:30-4:30. This program will be facilitated by Richard Smith. The cost for the workshop is $159 and includes lunch and all workshop materials. Call Michele Lawrence at the Greenleaf Center for more information.

• In conjunction with the San Francisco workshop, the Greenleaf Center will host a reception for Bay-area members and friends immediately following the workshop (4:30-6:30). Those in attendance will have an opportunity to meet and mingle with Greenleaf Center board members and with Larry Spears and Richard Smith. Call Michele Lawrence at the Greenleaf Center for more information.

• The Greenleaf Center is co-sponsoring a second Servant-Leadership Retreat with the Carmelite Retreat Center in Darien, Illinois, April 2-4, 1997. The cost of this retreat is between $380 and $495, depending upon room occupancy. Fees include meals, snacks and workshop materials. For more information, please call Michele Lawrence at (317) 259-1241, or Larry Fidelus at (630) 969-4141. Registration is limited.

• There will be two Team Spirit Certification opportunities offered through the Greenleaf Center in 1997, both in Indiana—
Renewing Churches Through Servant-Leadership

by David S. Young

Servant-leadership is the emerging style for renewal of the church. Churches want to be more effective organizations and seek to nurture people spiritually. Servant-leadership can help the church both ways by uniting these efforts as one and leading congregations to become more vibrant, serving communities. In serving we go deeper spiritually, and as we grow spiritually we increase our serving. The model of servant-leadership has led some congregations to a whole new vitality.

At Calvary Baptist in the inner-city of Chester, Pennsylvania (where Martin Luther King did his student ministry), servant-leadership has brought revitalization. Tommy Jackson, pastor, participated in a course on servant-leadership and church renewal. Jackson decided that his style of leadership had to change, and that he would take what he calls the "lower road" of the servant.

Now five years later, the church has established many services, including a homeless shelter, a food pantry and a food co-op. Church deacons follow-up on a regular basis with worship attendees. If someone is missing, a call is made to see how they are doing. Attendance in worship has nearly doubled. Refurbishing is being done; new pews are being built in, and ramps have been put in place. Most recently, Tommy Jackson has established a new training approach involving a wider base of leaders. Some fifty persons were trained in servant-leadership in a recent Churchwide Leadership Training Institute. Tommy's story and others are recorded in the resource, A New Heart and A New Spirit: A Plan for Renewing Your Church.

In this book is a seven-fold process that utilizes principles of servant-leadership. Persons develop a deeper spiritual walk, find a vision, utilize a renewal team and identify strengths of a congregation. Then, seeing things whole, they artistically design a plan of renewal that matches strengths with needs. As needs are served and service ministries unfold, a new vitality emerges. A congregation becomes more healthy spiritually. Often new people are attracted. A new spirit pervades.

Many of us believe that servant-leadership also has deep roots in the Scriptures. In the so-called servant songs of Isaiah, the author was trying to lift up the purpose of the nation of Israel at one of her lowest ebb. Coming out of captivity, Israel's call to being a servant helped to define this people and actually provided leadership for the nations. Seven traits of a servant emerge: having a felt sense to serve God, acting in a gentle manner, having a vision, listening with ears opened by God, having "no form nor comeliness," being the unlikely one who actually points the way, and carrying a sense of joy of spirit.

Such themes of the servant easily blend into what we talk of as servant-leadership. As the light, the servant goes out to point the way. As a servant-leader, the church can also lead others to a deeper spiritual pilgrimage. The basin and towel as symbols of service lead to a unity of spirit and action. That is what makes for vibrant congregations. People in these congregations grow as servants reaching out in all aspects of their lives. Servants become servant-leaders, providing direction to others along the way. Servant-leadership is truly the emerging style for renewal of the church.

[Editor's note: David invites interested readers to contact him: David Young, 317 Cherry St., Elizabethtown, PA 17022. David's book, A New Heart and a New Spirit: A Plan for Renewing Your Church is available from the Greenleaf Center. The cost is $14, ($10 + $4 for shipping-and-handling).]
The mightiest of rivers are first fed by many small trickles of water.

This observation is also an apt way of conveying my belief that the growing number of practitioners of servant-leadership has now increased from a trickle to a river. On a worldwide scale it is not yet a mighty river. However, it is an expanding river, and one which has a deep current.

My friend Bill Bottum has said that the period of the 1950’s and ‘60’s was an “arid desert” in the world of business. He believes that the emergence of servant-leadership in the 1970’s, ‘80’s and ‘90’s has brought sustained nourishment to those kindred-spirits who long for institutions where a caring spirit and ethical values are considered cultural norms.

You may have your own preferred metaphor when it comes to reflecting upon servant-leadership. Whatever it may be, it is an undeniable fact that since 1970 a change for the better has occurred inside of many businesses and other organizations. Greenleaf’s inspirational essay, The Servant as Leader, has touched upon thousands of institutions and millions of lives. And that number is growing.

The past three decades have also witnessed an evolving expectation of a stronger democratic element within many of our institutions. This impulse toward participative approaches, along with an emphasis on organizational learning, has also helped to strengthen worldwide interest in the practice of servant-leadership. Today, many institutional leaders will readily admit that there is more knowledge and wisdom within a group than within any one individual. The challenge we all face is to devise systems which effectively tap into that collective knowledge, experience and wisdom.

For meaningful change to occur, it must begin its journey inside each individual. Servant-leadership calls upon each of us to examine our own views of what ethical and caring behavior means to us, and then to adhere as much as we can to that as a goal. When we fall short of that goal, we need to learn from our mistakes and redouble our efforts.

One of the most important things that the Greenleaf Center does is to share widely those examples of institutional and individual practices of servant-leadership. We seek to do this through our growing number of publications and programs. There is much to be learned from those who have taken servant-leadership to heart, and who are living it out in unique and inspirational ways.

Our vision for the future is one in which servant-leadership will be both understood and practiced by many more people and organizations around the world. The many separate trickles of servant-leadership have already joined forces to become a river. With sustained commitment I believe that this river will continue to grow over time.

Who is the Servant-Leader?

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant — first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?"

— from The Servant as Leader by Robert K. Greenleaf

The Greenleaf Center’s Mission

“The Center’s mission is to fundamentally improve the caring and quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decisionmaking. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decisionmaking.”

The Greenleaf Center’s Goals

1. To help deepen an understanding of the original ideas of Robert K. Greenleaf and the principles of servant-leadership, via the preservation and promotion of his writings.
2. To nurture colleagues and institutions by providing a focal point, and opportunities to share thoughts and ideas on servant-leadership.
3. To produce and publish new resources by others on servant-leadership.
4. To connect servant-leaders in a network of learning.

Originally founded in 1964 as the Center for Applied Ethics, Inc., the Center was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985. The Center is an international, not-for-profit institution headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.

What Others Say

“I have found Greenleaf and his writings among the most original, useful, accessible and moral on the topic of leadership.”
—Warren Bennis, author, Why Leaders Can’t Lead

“Greenleaf is important reading. He wrote from the heart and envisioned a world we are each required to seek.”
—Peter Block, author, Stewardship
Learning as a Way of Being


Reviewed by Jeff McCollum
(From time to time reviews of books pertaining to servant-leadership are included in The Servant Leader. This review is written by Jeff McCollum, a member of the Greenleaf Center’s board of trustees. Jeff is director of Organization Development for Warner-Lambert, a consumer health products manufacturer.)

Peter Vaill, who brought the metaphor “managing in permanent white water” into contemporary managerial parlance with his book, Managing as a Performing Art, has crafted a penetrating and provocative exploration into the practices, stances and personal qualities that will be demanded of us in an increasingly complex, chaotic and rapidly changing world. Although the focus is on managerial learning set in an organizational context, I experienced the book at an intensely personal level which confronted many of my basic assumptions about learning, teaching, managing and leading.

The ideas which Vaill presents have been more than 30 years in the making. Interestingly, like Robert Greenleaf, much of his thinking was formed in the ferment of the college campuses in the 1960’s. It was where Vaill began his professional career and where Greenleaf began his second career. There are many ideas in this book which resonate strongly with Greenleaf’s, but none more so than the idea of “seeing things whole.” The book is about seeing learning whole. Vaill weaves several elements into a system of interdependent qualities and strategies which, taken together, develop learning as a way of being.

Vaill identifies seven qualities of learning, “individual notes out of which learning as a way of being becomes a variety of chords and intricate melodies,” which build on each other, interact with each other and establish a model of learning that is radically distinct from the “institutional learning” which dominates the academy as well as learning centers that have sprouted up in other organizations. Before we can explore “learning as a way of being”, we have to be willing to examine the underlying, implicit assumptions of institutional learning and be willing to modify them. We have to surrender beliefs that the education process should be goal oriented, that the learner values the goals to which learning is directed, that the learning goal is outside of the learning process, and that the efficiency of the process is the paramount consideration. The institutional model, Vaill contends, is a control system, not a learning system.

We have to surrender these beliefs, rooted in external control, in order to radically restructure how we define and how we go about learning. When we do, we can experience the qualities of learning as a way of being. These qualities, which comprise learning as a way of being, include self-direction (“the behavior we call leadership is, before it is anything else, an initiation from within oneself”), creative exploration, expression and action (“doing things and learning in the process”), openness to feelings (“all learning has cognitive and affective elements”), learning on-line, recognizing that learning is continual and reflecting on the learning process. Learning then becomes process-based rather than content-based.

Learning as a way of being becomes a strategy for dealing with some of the more vexing aspects of contemporary institutions: systems learning, leader learning, unlearning cultural assumptions and developing spirituality. Vaill devotes a chapter to each of these topics. Systems learning draws heavily on the systems theorists as an explanation of that part of our permanent white water which is created by an increasingly interdependent and global world. Leader learning focuses on how we can develop better leadership in our institutions. Unlearning cultural assumptions by developing open mindedness addresses the diversity in our environments. Spiritual learning is about finding meaning and purpose in our work.

The focus on the process of leader development, leader learning in Vaill’s terms, connects to a major thematic element in Greenleaf’s work. In discussing the quality of “on-line learning”, Vaill argues for the “need to find ways for as much learning as possible to occur on the job.” In On Becoming a Servant Leader, Greenleaf discusses examples of structures and processes he created that are consistent with this idea. One that he discussed was using a pair of line managers to conduct diagnostic research into their own organization in order to improve it. “Every business must develop its own know-how within the framework of its own way of doing business,” Greenleaf writes. In making this statement, he seems to be rejecting the institutional learning model and advocating something similar to Vaill’s system of qualities.

In Leadership Without Easy Answers, another contemporary scholar on leadership, Ronald Heifetz, draws a distinction between “technical” and “developmental” problems [reviewed in the Spring, 1996 issue of The Servant Leader]. Technical problems have one, clear-cut answer. Developmental ones require learning and adaptation by the person who has the problem. The institutional learning model works for technical problems. Learning as a way of being seems necessary for dealing with developmental problems. The essence of “permanent white water” is contending with a whirling kaleidoscope of developmental problems.

Learning and leading become elements of individual philosophy. Learning is leading. Leading is action. Executive development is spiritual development. All of these become “a flowing mosaic of attitude and action.” These ideas permeate Vaill’s volume and echo Greenleaf’s. And they raise profound questions of how we develop leaders in a society living in white water. According to Vaill, we are spending a lot of money on managerial education without contributing to an overall improvement of the quality of leadership in our institutions.

There are ideas in this book for those of us who want to improve our own learning as a personal strategy for surviving in the permanent white water, our own leading, and our ability to serve those we lead by challenging them to grow and develop.
New Reading and Dialogue Program is Underway

Partners in 20 states, Belgium, England and Canada have inquired about starting a Reading and Dialogue group in their area. Currently, four groups have recently organized and are meeting regularly using the kit to study the seminal writings of Robert Greenleaf. It is flexible enough to be used by a wide variety of groups. Depending upon the length of each session and the number of participants, the kit can be used from five to ten sessions. It is designed for six to twelve participants.

The Reading and Dialogue Kit was created by Greenleaf Center staff to give Center partners a guided way to meet and talk about servant-leadership. The kit includes three essays: The Servant as Leader, The Institution as Servant and Trustees as Servants. It also includes a workbook containing twelve thought-provoking questions per essay, a guide to facilitating and a place for journaling. One biographical video about Greenleaf per group is also included.

The cost of the kit is $35 a person. If you are interested in starting a group, call the Center. We'd be happy to help you get started. You can preview the program by ordering a sample kit for $35. Just call the Center at 317-259-1241 for more details.

Servant-Leadership as a Way of Being
June 12-14, 1997 • Ann Arbor, Michigan

- Everyone is called to lead. How does being a servant first, aid in being a leader?
- What tools do leaders need to employ in the 21st century to combine both being and doing?
- How does an organization live out its values, meaning and purpose?

Join us as speakers Peter Vaill, Jim Shannon, Milton Murray, Lea Williams and international guests Tjeb Maris and Ralph Lewis explore the truths and challenges of these questions.

Registration Form

Name __________________________
Organization Name _______________
Address _________________________
City ____________________________ State _______ Zip ___________
Daytime ( )____________________ Phone ( )__________
Fax ( )_________________________ E-mail ___________

Pre-Conference Workshops
(Thursday, June 12, 10am - 5pm. Lunch included)
- $175 Personal Journey Through Servant-Leadership
- $175 Servant-Leadership: A Foundation for Effective Organization Change
- $175 Servant-Led Boards

Conference
(Thursday evening, June 12 - Saturday, June 14)

By March 15 By May 15 After May 15
Regular Rate $450 $475 $500
Student Rate (please provide verification with registration) $400 $425 $450
Group Rate (4 or more participants — please mail registration together) $425 $450 $475

One-Day Conference
(please check one: Friday, June 13 or Saturday, June 14)

Regular Rate $230 $250 $275
Student Rate (please provide verification with registration) $225 $240 $250
Group Rate (4 or more participants — please mail registration forms together) $220 $245 $260

Total Conference Fees (meals included in price)
(Subtract 10% discount for members/partners) __________________ TOTAL ___________

Payment Information

Check Enclosed __ VISA __ MasterCard __ American Express

Credit Card Number __________________________
Exp. Date __________ Signature __________________

The Conference will take place at the Crowne Plaza in Ann Arbor. Call 1-800-2 CROWNE to book your hotel room.
Servant-Leadership Programs in Universities

Teach as compellingly as Greenleaf writes. Stuart feels the success of the course is dependent upon the intention, conviction, and commitment of the teacher which sometimes "opens a space within the student, and a light goes on; when that happens, you can see it in their faces." Of course there are still wrinkles to be ironed out, but being involved in a program that is on the cutting-edge keeps the energy and ideas flowing to help deal with challenges that face any new project.

Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana also has a leadership concentration as a part of their MBA program. One of the professors involved in this program, David Luechauer, says it is the most popular concentration in the MBA program. Greenleaf’s work, as well as others, are used to challenge students to "radically change their perceptions of leadership." Studies of organizations which practice servant-leadership, community service, videos on servant-leadership, and guest speakers are part of the cross section which make up this leadership course. Furthermore, through the initiative of former Greenleaf Center intern Julie Beggs, the university hopes to create a Leadership House much like the one at the University of South Florida.

In 1995, the Servant-Leadership Program at Wright State University near Dayton, Ohio came into fruition through the work of Presidential Scholar Sue Seitz, who designed the program based on the precepts of Greenleaf’s writings. This program was designed to give students varied service experiences in tandem with speakers and activities which center on personal development. The students complete a two-year experience comprised of two tracks — a Service Phase and a Leadership Phase. Development in this program includes understanding the effectiveness of both servant-leaders and servant-followers, and that both are of equal stature.

The ongoing expansion of servant-leadership throughout society is now taking hold within many colleges and universities. These four diverse expressions at McMurry University, University of South Florida, Butler University, and Wright State University are helping to deepen the servant-leadership roots within their respective communities.

Nancy Lerner is an intern for the Greenleaf Center working on her Master’s degree in Wellness Management at Ball State University.

Selected Upcoming Programs in 1997

Naples. The first session is scheduled for March 18-21, and the second is November 11-14. Please call Michele Lawrence for more details.

- The Center’s second annual Leadership Institute for Higher Education will be held in Culver, Indiana, April 16-18, 1997. Any interested educational institutions are encouraged to apply. Contact Michele Lawrence for more information.

- The Greenleaf Center’s annual International Conference on Servant-Leadership will be held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 12-14, 1997. This year’s theme is “Servant-Leadership as a Way of Being.” Featured speakers include Peter Vaill, James Shannon, John Lore and Isabel Lopez. The conference will also include fifteen different concurrent sessions and many special treats. The Center will also offer three concurrent, daylong pre-conference workshops on June 12: Personal Journey Through Servant-Leadership, Servant-Leadership: A Foundation for Effective Organizational Change, and Servant-Led Boards. A conference brochure is available. Contact Kelly Tober or Nancy Lerner for more information, or to register.

- The Greenleaf Center is co-sponsoring a two-day "commuter retreat" on servant-leadership with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church in Worthington, Ohio (a northern suburb of Columbus, Ohio). Personal Journey Through Servant-Leadership will be offered on Saturday, August 2, 1997, and Servant-Leadership: A Foundation for Effective Organizational Change will be offered on Sunday, August 3, 1997. The fee is $200 for both days. Lunches and all workshop materials are included in the price. For more information, contact Michele Lawrence at the Greenleaf Center.

- The Greenleaf Center will unveil its new Leadership Institute for Healthcare, October 22-24, 1997, at The Spring House in Porter, Indiana. This innovative Institute program will be open to all senior-level executives working for health-related institutions. Contact Michele Lawrence for more information.