

TITLE:

Adopting U.S. Coast Guard Academy Methods for Teaching Leadership: A Collaboration Between Faculty at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Norwich University, and Ferrum College

ABSTRACT:

This panel includes the continuation of research into military and non-military collaboration that began at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in the Fall of 2022. Faculty at that time were working together to develop and deliver curriculum across six different sections of OB&L. Since then, USCGA faculty have shared the academy's approach to OB&L with leadership faculty at two other schools: Norwich University and Ferrum College. The panel is therefore composed of faculty from three schools, who will share their insights on working across institutional borders to adopt, develop, and innovate approaches to curriculum development and instruction.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Military, Teaching

INTRODUCTION:

This panel is composed of military and civilian faculty from the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), Norwich University (Norwich), and Ferrum College (Ferrum). What began as a simple project to develop a consistent learning experience for cadets at the USCGA has evolved. It is now a wider collaboration that consists of four faculty members of leadership programming across a military academy, a college, and a university, each of whom offers a unique professional perspective. The present transformation occurred in steps, the first of which was the addition of Ferrum, where a former USCGA civilian lecturer-turned-Associate Professor is using USCGA methods in a newly developed leadership course. The second step is a result of a series of academic conferences in which USCGA faculty discussed their experiences of sharing and collaboration with one another to develop and deliver six different sections of a core OB&L course. As a result of describing their experience(s) of working together with a wider audience of the peers, USCGA panelists were contacted by faculty from other schools, usually with requests to network. However, one of these contacts was interested in exploring a potentially collaborative relationship with the USCGA: a faculty of philosophy at Norwich — the oldest private military academy in the U.S. The potential benefits that could be accrued by forming a relationship with Norwich were obvious to the panelists: the school possesses a well-honed and developed leadership program that consists of undergraduate as well as graduate-level programming; its purpose as a military institution of higher learning resonates with that of the USCGA; and a scholar of philosophy with a focus on OB&L studies would contribute a perspective that could potentially re-shape our discussions and, hence, our approaches to leadership.

BACKGROUND:

The theoretical premise of our discussions are rooted in works related to the military, given that the present project began with the experiences of faculty at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy's School of Leadership and Management (SLAM). As such, this submission has its basis in an area in which little research exists, so that the references included in this section are by necessity included in other works by the panelists. Having made the previous acknowledgement, we begin with the notion that military academies prepare cadets to serve:

‘service academies have only one reason for their existence—to prepare young men and women for a career of service to the United States in the armed forces’ (Caine, 1998, as referenced in Rodriguez, 2009, p. 65). Furthermore, across military academies in the United States, military education emphasizes the development of leadership skills and individual character strengths that have a basis in military doctrine (Matthews et al., 2006), as it is commonly understood that leaders directly impact on mission success (Hutchison, 2013). Mission success, in turn, is an important factor that spans all levels of the military: ‘In a professional military organization such as the U.S. Army, effective performance as a leader is seen as an essential aspect of professional expertise at nearly every organizational level’ (Bartone et al., 2007, p. 501). Similar to the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, the USCGA has developed a leadership program to serve the needs of a specific branch of the U.S. military (i.e., the USCG); and like the other service academies, the USCGA emphasizes experiential learning activities and simulations in addition to leadership theory.

The USCGA leadership program includes a leadership development framework, (L.E.A.D.), which is the USCGA’s adaptation of Kolb’s (1984) Cycle of Experiential Learning Theory. As such, L.E.A.D. is not an exact replication of Kolb’s model, in which student learning is broken into four general stages: concrete experience; observations and reflections; the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations; and being able to test the implications of concepts through application in new situations (Kolb, 1984). Instead, the L.E.A.D. framework is intended for use by cadets and USCG servicemembers as they progress in their careers, and its four stages are intended to develop one’s leadership capabilities within the context of the USCG: (1) Learn from theory; (2) Experience learning through application; (3) Analyze experiences and apply reflection; and (4) Deepen and reinforce understanding by mentoring others. (<https://uscga.edu/mission/leader-development-process>). All sections of OB&L at the USCGA included, and continue to include, the L.E.A.D. framework as a central component. In addition to teaching the L.E.A.D., experiential exercises, self-assessment tools, and various leadership activities are a consistent feature across all sections of OB&L. These will be discussed further in the panel.

Presently, the USCGA's approach to OB&L is being used by one of the panelists, who developed and now teaches two sections of a leadership course at Ferrum. The Ferrum panelist uses the L.E.A.D. framework as a guide and includes USCGA activities—such as the creation of a Leadership Philosophy and a VIA presentation—although the USCG does not feature as a theme. Ferrum is a small institution of higher learning (approximately 750 students) with a unique combination of affiliations: it is a member of both the Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities and the Appalachian College Association, the latter of which includes 36 colleges across Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Virginia. Unlike the USCGA, Norwich, and perhaps most colleges and universities in the U.S., Ferrum was founded with funds contributed by a women's missionary society arm of the United Methodist Church to create “a school for mountain boys and girls, in a remote place, yet accessible, where the need seemed the greatest” (<https://www.ferrum.edu/about/ferrum-history/>). Ferrum's motto is ‘Not self, but others’ and it was founded to help people who lived in poverty. To this day, the school endeavors to provide an affordable—and often free—learning experience to disadvantaged and first-generation students. The rationale behind using USCGA methods at Ferrum was largely (but not entirely) based on the panelists' curiosity: (i) each institution is service-oriented or focused on serving others and (ii) the students and cadets each attend schools in which a culture of shared values exists. Using a Values-in-Action approach at Ferrum, we reasoned, could make sense—after all, Ferrum students are expected to serve in their communities (i.e., action).

Insights gathered by using USCGA material at Ferrum have led to new, albeit early stage, insights that will be discussed in the panel. With the potential addition of a philosophy-based perspective from Norwich, faculty at the USCGA and Ferrum expect to learn new approaches and ways of viewing leadership that could elicit different reactions from cadets and students alike. For example, at Norwich, students are asked to reflect on being called to a vocation which, at first glance, seems to offer a new means by which cadets and students can shape and engage in their own self-reflections. Furthermore, Norwich may also provide USCGA and Ferrum faculty with a different perspective on how to encourage and develop the critical thinking skills, and the

ethical reasoning skills, of both cadets and students. Thus, while the main topic of this panel discussion is focused on faculty collaboration to develop and deliver leadership programming that is largely based on the USCGA model of leadership development, this project can loosely be described as a three-way conversation, given its dynamism. It is our expectation that by conference time in 2024, we will have new information to share—whether bad or good—as a result of ‘what comes out’ of our own meetings together. Our intended audience includes military and non-military faculty who teach applied leadership, regardless of context, and individuals with professional leadership backgrounds. However, all are welcome to attend and to share insights on faculty collaboration that may be helpful to both panel and panel attendees alike.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE:

The panel consists of: two USCGA faculty members; one Norwich University faculty member; and one Ferrum College faculty member. We recommend 50 minutes to an hour for our presentation.

1. The Ferrum College panelist will facilitate the discussion and open the presentation by (i) allowing panelists to introduce themselves, (ii) providing a brief project overview, and (iii) detailing the presentation agenda (approximately 5 minutes).
2. USCGA panelists will then discuss (i) the L.E.A.D. framework, (ii) the methods USCGA faculty use to teach OB&L, (iii) what they’ve learned through collaboration with Ferrum College and Norwich University, and (iv) areas in which they intend to innovate as result. (approximately 15 minutes)
3. Ferrum College’s panelist will then discuss: (i) the application of USCGA methods and tools into a leadership course in a private, Methodist, liberal arts school; (ii) whether use of the USCGA approach engaged students, and (iii) what the panelist learned from Norwich University that could lead—or led—to further changes in leadership programming at Ferrum College. (approximately 10 minutes)
4. Norwich University’s panelist will then present: (i) their rationale for engaging with the USCGA and what they hoped to derive through collaboration with another military-focused institution of higher education; (ii) the Norwich approach to leadership programming and how it differs, if at all, from the USCGA and Ferrum College; and (iii) the challenges of developing students into future leaders who will

be prepared to tackle the overwhelming number of issues we are now facing as a global community .

(approximately 15 minutes)

5. Questions from the audience will be taken and the presentation will then open up to audience members for a wider discussion. (approximately 15 minutes)

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