



The Birth and Growth of the Leadership Minor

REA 6TH REASON

TO CELEBRATE THE ILLINOIS LEADERSHIP CENTER

This semester, the Illinois Leadership Center (ILC) is commemorating its 15th anniversary by counting down 15 reasons to celebrate the ILC. This week, we are highlighting the birth and growth of the Minor in Leadership Studies. To do so, we had a chance to talk with Lisa Burgoon, the Director of the Minor in Leadership Studies. Lisa has been in this role since 2011. She also teaches AGED 260, Introduction to Leadership Studies, the foundation for the Minor in Leadership Studies, which she started teaching in 2008. Prior to directing the minor, she was managing a leadership grant in the college of ACES. Lisa has also been facilitating i-Programs since 2006, and is a great colleague and supporter of the ILC!

ILC: In your words, describe what students are learning in the minor in leadership studies?

Lisa: The studies part is important to us; academically we hope students learn leadership theory and leadership practice. We want to ground what we are teaching in research and give students the opportunity to practice it. The theoretical grounding is based in social psychology, organizational development and administration, and educational theory. That academic grounding is critical to the studies piece. This is an academic minor and not designed to be as much about the practical skill piece (although we do some of that in our courses).

ILC: What is the history of the minor?

Lisa: Quick back story here: then Director of the ILC, Sara Thompson said "Illinois needs a leadership minor. Let's get this through and get this approved!" and with the backing of a group of committed faculty members there was growing sentiment that there could be a Minor in Leadership Studies! A committed group of faculty and ILC staff tried three times to get the minor approved. In the spring of 2011, the third time was the charm! Students started to enroll in October 2011. The reason it took three times was because the faculty senate had some specific parameters that needed to be met; specifically we needed to find an academic home for it (it couldn't be the ILC since it's not an academic unit). The other issue was a department needed to be able to take on the cost and be able to commit faculty resources to it. The College of Agricultural Consumer Environmental Science (ACES) said they wanted to be the home for it since they already had courses developed in leadership; they also had great connections with Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Psychology Department. ACES had an excellent foundation to support the Minor. The great collaboration of the ILC and ACES ultimately got it approved.

ILC: Are there plans for change/growth?

Lisa: That's the million dollar question! We have grown from 8 graduates in 2012 to around 105 in 2017. We think we're going to graduate around 120 this spring 2018. Right now we don't have the capacity to go more than that, unless we add faculty. The capstone course is so critical since it's a very hands on, highly intense, practical course, and that needs to remain small. I think in a couple of years we'd like to try to grow! There are currently 287 enrolled with rolling admissions throughout the year.

ILC: How many students have earned a minor in leadership studies?

Lisa: Roughly 540 in the last 6 years. Attrition is only 8.5%...so when students enroll, they stay!

ILC: Lastly, Why do you think it's important for students to study leadership?

Lisa: I firmly believe that students can learn to be good leaders; and in the 21st century, that's what we need. We need students who can talk to each other, hear different perspectives, be collaborative, be open minded, be savvy about organizational culture, and need to have leaders that have open cultural perspectives in our diverse world. There are huge challenges with leadership now, and I feel we can teach our students the concepts, the theories, and the practical approaches to learn how to interact well with others towards a common goal...that's what leadership is!

Reason #6 to celebrate the Illinois Leadership Center: The Birth and Growth of the Leadership Minor.

To stay up to date with the commemoration of our 15th anniversary, be sure to visit leadership.illinois.edu/about/15.

To RSVP for our event celebrating 15 years of leadership follow this link: <https://forms.illinois.edu/sec/440994>