Engaging Leadership Program

Program Purpose

Many Virginia Tech students are seeking ways to get involved on campus or in the community, and learn more experientially than what they can do in many classes they take. Leadership Tech’s Engaging Leadership program was initiated in fall 2006 as a co-curricular program to support these students and help them take full advantage of the valuable learning that can happen when students are involved with issues in which they are interested. The purpose of the Engaging Leadership program is to use these experiences to help prepare undergraduates for lives of responsible citizenship and leadership in a global society.

A central feature of the program is the opportunity for students to select a small team to join based on their interest in one of the following multidisciplinary public issues (themes): environmental sustainability; social justice; global issues; multiculturalism; health and wellness; and community vitality. Each team is facilitated by two graduate students or senior-level students with experience, knowledge and interest in that theme area.

A major activity of the program involves each team working with a community agency or organization in service activities related to the team’s theme. Engaging Leadership involves a range of weekly activities and gatherings throughout the fall and spring term including: community service; challenge course; leadership simulations; self-assessments; team-building activities; large group gatherings; and personal development activities.

Teams

Teams involve about 8-12 students, each team dedicated to exploring leadership through a multidisciplinary public issue. Teams provide a space where students can gain perspectives, and work closely with others who share their interests. Themes and possible community service activities include:

Environmental Sustainability. For those interested in creating more sustainable communities, including issues such as community and campus sustainability, ecosystem protection and restoration, and watershed management. Example community service includes: stream clean-up, supporting efforts with local watersheds, sustainable farms, "green" building and construction, and mine reclamation sites.

Global Issues. For those interested in global and international service and leadership, and raising awareness of pertinent international issues. Example community service includes: assisting international student organizations with awareness and cultural events; assisting with International Week Events; English conversation groups with international students and adults.

Multiculturalism. For those interested in leadership in consideration of the challenges and opportunities associated with an increasingly diverse society. Possible community activities include assistance with campus heritage month programming, and cultural celebrations.

Social Justice. For those interested in leadership for social justice efforts, developing inclusive communities, and creating a more just and fair society. Example community service includes: improving a local clothing bank; organizing a homeless awareness event; helping in a soup kitchen; assisting at camps with local kids.

Community Vitality. Targeted to those what want to work with businesses, agencies or nonprofit organizations supporting balanced local community development. Example community service
includes: supporting a downtown revitalization project; assisting at a community event, working with a local foundation (i.e. Community Foundation of NRV) or granting agency.

**Health and Wellness.** For those interested in promoting the quality of life, health and well-being. Example community service includes: assisting with the “Healthy Kids Day” in April; working with Second Harvest Foodbank and Hokies United Against Hunger in October; and supporting nutrition programming with disadvantaged schools and communities.

**TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Team activities.** Each team will meet seven-eight times each semester to participate in small group activities and discussions, and work with community-based organizations in service related to the team’s theme area.

**Program Forums.** All Engaging Leadership participants will convene several times each semester for large group activities, conversations with guest leaders and scholars, and meeting and learning about the service and activities of the other teams.

**Community engagement.** Service to society is a primary aspect of Leadership Tech. Each semester students will complete at least 10 hours of service related to their theme. Much of this will be done with your team.

**Poster Presentation:** Each team will prepare a poster on their service activities for fall and spring program forums.

**Fall and spring retreat.** Off-site retreats involving “ropes” courses, will provide an introduction to team building concepts, leadership, personal challenge, and help students meet others in the program.

**Winter break group book.** Each team will select a book related to leadership and/or their theme to read over winter break.

**Campus Events.** Because each individual has different interests, skills, and aspirations, we’d like you to take advantage of the many opportunities to enrich your customize your extracurricular learning experiences. Select and attend two campus lectures, workshops, or other events that relate to the goals of Engaging Leadership.

**Portfolio.** Based on your activities in Engaging Leadership, you will create and contribute materials to a personal portfolio that can be valuable for future leadership positions or job interviews.

**Final presentation.** The final step of Engaging Leadership is a presentation and discussion of your portfolio and experience in the program with a small group of peers and facilitators from the program.

**HOW STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM LEADERSHIP TECH**

- Get involved in community service with others with shared interests in environmental sustainability, multiculturalism, social justice, community vitality, global awareness, or health and wellness
- Meet others who want to make a positive difference
- Gain practical experience and skills in team work, community service and leadership
- Make a positive difference in the local community

*For more information, contact the Department of Student Activities, 540-231-5725 or stuact@vt.edu.*
What about Engaging Leadership interests you and what do you hope to gain from participation?

#1: 2008-07-28 14:34:19
What I'm most interested in about Engaging Leadership the more hands-on approach we will hopefully take with the community around Virginia Tech. It excites me to know that I and my team will be able to apply our critical-thinking skills and whatnot into a real project of our own. What I hope to gain from participation is a greater understanding of what I specifically can do to help the world in real-life situations.

#2: 2008-08-01 00:04:16
This program interests me because I feel that it will be a great way to practice all that I learned in Leadership Tech Year 1. I am looking forward to having way to reach out into the community by participating in a focus group that has a concentration on issues that I really care about. By participating, I hope to get a chance to use all of the skills that I obtained from participating in Leadership Tech Year 1. I hope to have a great time with new and old friends while simultaneously improving the leadership skills that I will need to be successful.

#3: 2008-08-01 15:22:38
I loved participating in Leadership Tech last year, and I am excited to apply what I learned through that program in Engaging Leadership this year. Over the years I have done many service projects through Key Club and through my church, and I would like to continue serving as much as possible. I also hope to become close with my team members; I really value the friendships I have with the people that were part of my Leadership Tech group last year.

#4: 2008-08-15 12:57:21
I hope to expand my views on life in general. I don't have much experience in these sort of programs that help improve life of those around us. I want to gain from this program a greater sense of how a small focused group can better the lives of those they focus on.

#5: 2008-08-15 13:11:52
I participated in Leadership Tech's year 1 program last year and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I was in a leadership specialty center in high school during which I organized a community service project of my own that I spent a total of around 60 hours on. I would love to participate in the social justice group because I am a political science major with the intention to declare pre-law this semester. I have interned with the Commonwealth Attorney's office here in Richmond under Alex Taylor and I think this group would help further my interest in law and provide me with some experience in the field.

Engaging Leadership seems to offer a combination of many things that I care about and want to be a part of to hopefully make a difference. I have been searching for a very qualified group/club to join at Virginia Tech that will push me to apply skills that I acquire to my everyday life.

#7: 2008-08-15 13:31:10
I feel that leadership is a very marketable tool in many job fields across the United States. I am very interested in how I can better my skills in team work and communicating with others. Team-building is a great asset to everyone because everyone participates on a team at some point. Whether it be at work, athletics, church, or a community event, everyone needs the ability to work and communicate with others. I am very passionate about this program because this gives you the ability to work within a team and achieve a group's common goal.

#8: 2008-08-15 15:17:26
I am very interested in helping individuals as well as making an impact and giving back to my community. Most often I do this in small acts which believe add together to make positive changes in the world we live in. Yet, I also know that when a group of people who have a strong desire to educate, help and improve our community get together then we will impact the world in a strong and different way. I very much would like to be a part of a group of people who have these strong wills and goals to educate and help others about something that we're passionate about and in turn improve their lives.

#9: 2008-08-15 15:25:37
I would like to become more involved in the Virginia Tech community and I believe that being a member of Engaging Leadership would give me the ability to do that. I believe that the public issues that Engaging Leadership is looking to address are very important, and often overlooked, on college campuses. It is important that these issues are discussed and it is even more important that they are addressed by students who can give the issues a fresh perspective.
I hope to gain leadership experience and meet other college students interested in the social and public issues that Engaging Leadership addresses. I also hope to become a more active member in the community on the Virginia Tech campus and in Blacksburg.

#10: 2008-08-15 17:03:54
Engaging Leadership interests me because it integrates leadership with real life service application. I also think it's a great idea to have students apply for the specific themes that interest them most because it will lead to more passionate service and greater satisfaction for the volunteers. I hope to gain substantial leadership experience from Engaging Leadership. I would also hope to
meet people who share similar concerns that I do. But most of all, I hope to do work with them that has a lasting effect on us and the people we serve.

Engaging Leadership is an organization that would greatly benefit me, as it would give me the opportunity to work with others that have similar interests as I do. It would also allow me to devote myself to a specific area, allowing me to provide my full dedication and attention. By working for a specific cause and being involved in this organization, I would be able to meet so many new individuals and create a new perspective on my own life. I would gain the ability to make positive changes that would affect not only the community, but myself as well.

I am interested in becoming more involved with my community with my fellow Hokies. I hope to gain a deeper appreciation for community work and how important it is. I also hope to make friends and to feel more connected to my school through this program.

I am studying to be a dietitian and am trying to get as much experience and community service in dealing with health and wellness issues throughout my stay here at Virginia Tech. As that is what I plan to do when I graduate and have become a Registered Dietitian.

What I like most about Engaging Leadership is the fact that it doesn't call upon a group of people who are similar ethnically or religiously to become leaders in their own unique community. Instead it appears to bring all students together to focus on issues prevalent to the world as a whole. I also like the idea of meeting new individuals and coming together in order to reach a particular goal. By participating in this program, I hope to have a whole new perspective on an issue that I may have overlooked in the past. I hope to gain the knowledge to spread what I've learned to others who aren't in the program and hopefully inspire them to take initiative in their communities as well.

One of the main reasons, I am interested in Engaging Leadership is because it will give me the opportunity to network and engage with other Virginia Tech students. Also, I am used to being involved on campus academically and taking a stance when it comes to being a leader. This is a great opportunity that I don't want to pass up; it will help me adapt to the Virginia Tech community, since I am Junior transfer from Florida. I hope to obtain more knowledge on how to be a better leader and team player.

The issues that will be addressed interest me; particularly social justice and community vitality. I also enjoy participating in community service activities. I think it will be a great opportunity to work with community organizations related to one of these fascinating issues. I hope to gain a better sense of leadership and knowledge that I can use in the future and I learn best by doing hands-on activities.

The word 'leadership' immediately caught my in the subject line. I feel that I can be a good leader and realize the importance of becoming an even better leader. I don't want to pass something that can enhance my leadership skills up.

I have wanted to engage in community service activities while at Virginia Tech, but have not found an opportunity such as this. I think this will allow me to involve myself more in the community. Also future employment opportunities could result from an activity like this.

I like the idea of students feeling empowered and being able to make a difference in areas of interest. It is rare that young people feel the desire to get involved and I think that this program encourages students to do so. I'm interested in a program like this because I've always wanted to get involved, but I have never found a captivating outlet. I believe that this program will encourage me to get involved and share my thoughts with others that have the same interests as I do.

Engaging Leadership sounds like an incredible program. I look forward to being able to work with other devoted students towards making our community a better and more accepting place to live. I think that as a team, excelling students can work off of each other's strong points and lift up each other's weak points towards a unanimous goal. I am interested in getting a chance to improve my own leadership and build off of the leadership of others. On such critical and large issues as the topics listed above, it can be difficult to find one solid direction for a group to put its effort toward. I think that that challenge of teamwork and unity will be a unique learning opportunity. I am excited to have a chance to practice my teamwork and leadership skills toward bettering our community these next fall and spring semesters with Engaging Leadership.