

Presidents Leadership Class – *Making Excellence Inclusive*

July 14, 2016

Inclusive Excellence (IE) is both a mindset and a term used in higher education to identify a process of intentional integration of diversity efforts into all core aspects of an institution such that the culture is forever changed--- including everything from how each unit conducts its day-to-day operations to the academic initiatives its supports and the way in which courses are taught and how people are habitually treated. Institutions that embrace IE do so because they truly believe that the institution's future success is dependent on how well it values and intentionally seeks to utilize diversity as part of its strategic plan for excellence.

PLC defines excellence as the process of achieving goals in a manner consistent with our individual and community values, expectations and standards. Excellence is practiced by individuals - faculty, staff, and students - as well as by the collective. Attaining excellence begins with an individual's will to do so, but that individual absolutely requires the active support of the group to provide an environment where excellence is expected and nurtured.

PLC defines inclusiveness through the lens of leadership and leadership development; and to that end, focuses on relationships as most leadership opportunities happen in an interactive context, expressed as a relationship. If PLC subscribes to a leadership model, that model is the Relational Leadership Model (RLM). RLM is a human-centered model that is inclusive of people and diverse points of view, that empowers those involved, is highly ethical, and that is premised on the belief that any individual can make a meaningful contribution to their community broadly defined. Inclusive, empowering, purposeful, and ethical, the relational leadership model PLC practices as a unit and models for its students demands that faculty, staff and students possess the knowledge, skills and attitude of inclusive excellence.

Concretely, we do this in the way we recruit, select, and retain our faculty and staff and in the way we recruit, select, and retain each new cohort of PLC students. Published CU Boulder employment opportunities regularly encourage women and minorities to apply as part of the institution's commitment to intentionally shaping a more diverse and representative body of faculty and staff. The PLC core staff is 50% male and 50% female, providing students with role models of excellence in leadership that are representative of the genders of our students. Extensive research in the field of women and leadership indicates that this type of mentorship and role modeling is particularly important for the development of women leaders, and 57% of our entering PLC class in fall 2016 are women. PLC also intentionally recruits and hires faculty and staff with a global perspective, and so 100% of the faculty and the professional staff have studied or worked abroad providing our PLC students with models of global engagement.

Our selection process for our students includes more than just a names and test results as excellence means more than just SAT scores, GPAs and graduation rankings. Excellence is about impact and a student's ability to engage in the campus community, the Boulder community, the state of Colorado and the increasingly global world in which collaboration and work with other people and other cultures is the new normal for emerging leaders. All of our students are encouraged to have an experience abroad. 100% of our PLC students participate in human-centered design projects, tallying a total of over 1,000 project human-centered design service hours that benefits the Boulder community before they even enter their sophomore year. Our students also engage in two field experiences (walkabouts intensives) that take them, some into the local community, others across the United States even globally. Because our students engage with the community in significant ways throughout our rigorous 4-year ethical leadership

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education program, we intentionally select students who possess emotional intelligence, a passion for service above self, and a commitment to demonstrating integrity in action in the ways in which they problem solve when that problem solving involves people.

This human-centered, relational leadership model is **inclusive excellence in action**, and these students are selected, nurtured and trained to engage in the world in a way that scales up for excellence and changes culture precisely because of its intentional emphasis on inclusion, empowerment, and the belief that teams, organizations, communities, the nation and the world will be stronger when all participants are heard, visible and valued. As part of our student selection process, as we interview prospective PLC scholars, in addition to emotional intelligence, we intentionally look for good communicators who can develop into excellent communicators, creative problem solvers, and most of all, are predisposed to active engagement in their spheres of influence. As a leadership program, we thus intentionally recruit from diverse spheres of influence so that each entering PLC cohort is composed of college students who want to make a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world. We want to engender in each student, and faculty and staff for that matter, a genuine sense of equity in our approach.

Concretely, PLC helps students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes conducive to inclusive excellence through PLC's Leadership Development Competencies. These include academic and professional excellence, critical thinking and analysis, creativity, ethical reasoning, and implementation (applied learning). We begin this work in our two first year courses by helping students to value individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations). In PRLC 1810, students take the Gallup Strengths Quest, and then we use this information to form teams to accomplish project goals so that even as first semester college students, our students can see and value individual difference. In 1820, in our human-centered design unit, students engage in an active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. Subsequent courses Multi-Level Issues in Leadership and Global Issues in Leadership round out the required PLC curriculum. The academic curriculum is enhanced through required co-curricular field experiences. These experiences take our students into the peer and campus community and into the extended community. Our extensive network of alumni (national and international), parents, board members, community leaders, mentors, guest lecturers, internship mentors and financial donors allow our students to gain exposure to areas outside of the academic environment and to apply their developing leadership skills to diverse real-world experiences.

How does PLC define excellence? People. And how does it define inclusive excellence? Again the answer is people. The people we recruit, select, retain, develop, and in the case of students, graduate. Inclusive, empowering, purposeful, and ethical, the relational leadership model PLC practices as a unit and models for its students offers individualized support for PLC students, faculty and staff that is a model of inclusive excellence, dedicated to student success, and measured by the success of each and every graduate and the impact they make in the real-world.