ACS Women's Leadership Development Program Working Group
Summer 2024

Sessions: 5 virtual sessions from June 17, 2024 to August 9, 2024

Members: Eight participants from six ACS schools joined this working group. Rashna Wadia Richards (Rhodes) served as the facilitator. The following faculty and administrators participated: Dayo Abah (Washington and Lee), Kerry Bechtel (Southwestern), Linda Boland (Richmond), Genelle Gertz (Washington and Lee), Melody Lehn (Sewanee), Elizabeth Thomas (Rhodes), Gabby Vidal-Torreira (Hendrix).

This working group was charged with developing a women's leadership development program for ACS schools. In Summer 2023, we ran a pilot Women's Leadership Institute for current and aspiring women leaders at ACS institutions. The program was really popular, and this working group was charged with evaluating the long-term feasibility of a program like that for ACS. Specifically, we focused on the following goals:

- Assess the content of last year's WLI.
- Review models of professional development, particularly for women-identifying faculty and staff, that are offered by other institutions, consortia, or higher ed organizations (e.g., HERS Institute, University of South Carolina's Women's Leadership Institute, etc.).
- Create an ongoing women's leadership development program for small liberal arts colleges.
- Assess the viability of an annual Women's Leadership Institute on the consortium level and develop a budget model for such a workshop.

Over five virtual sessions, we discussed why we would develop such a program, what gaps it would fill, how it would be different from other leadership development programs, and how it could be sustainable for the long term.

Here's the schedule for our work this summer:
June 17: Do we need leadership development for women? Why/why not?
Preparation: Read Johnson et al, "Where Women's Leadership Development Programs Fall Short"
Activities: Introductions and wish lists

June 25: How do we build a leadership development program?
Preparation: Read Armstrong et al, "Building an In-House Faculty Leadership Development Program" and ACS WLI 2023
Activities: Create criteria for evaluating leadership development programs

July 17: How do we assess the value of a women's leadership development program?
Preparation: Read Selzer et al, "Rethinking Women's Leadership Development" and research at least one leadership development program
Activities: Develop content areas for a women's leadership development program

July 25: How do we sustain a women's leadership development program?
Activities: Develop a budget model for this program

August 5: What are our next steps?
Activities: Final share-outs

What follows is the outcome of these five sessions. We have put together the program's mission, its content, and a budget model. We are willing to continue supporting this work, and we have already fleshed out panels and workshops for the specific sessions outlined below. Examples are provided in Appendix A. We are committed to making sure that we develop a high-quality leadership development program for women leaders at ACS.

ACS Women's Leadership Development (ACS WLD) Program

Program Overview: The ACS WLD is a professional development program, designed to provide women leaders with tools for crafting an authentic, inclusive leadership style and to develop diverse leadership pipelines at ACS institutions. The ACS WLD will be a virtual program, held monthly over eight 90-minute sessions during the academic year. It will be run by a core group of facilitators, who are administrators or faculty at ACS institutions, including those who have participated in the development of this program. Many of the sessions will have invited speakers or workshop leaders. What distinguishes the ACS WLD from other women's leadership development programs (like the HERS Institute, University of South Carolina's Women's Leadership Institute, etc.) is that it has been conceived by ACS members who know the challenges and opportunities of leading at liberal arts colleges. Each session takes a different approach, thus allowing us to focus on different areas of expertise and skill-building.

Goals: ACS champions gender parity and diversity in leadership positions at our member institutions. To achieve this, we believe in intentionally investing in leadership development programs for current and aspiring women leaders at ACS schools. The ACS WLD has been developed with that overall goal in mind. Through workshops, breakout sessions, and candid conversations, it will enable participants to build community, share resources, and learn how to prepare for their next leadership role.

Specifically, the ACS WLD is designed to:
* Create a supportive community for women leaders to identify common concerns and develop leadership skills.
* Empower women leaders to promote and manage change in their leadership roles.
* Strengthen and diversify the leadership pipeline at ACS institutions.

Audience: The ACS WLD is especially suited for:
* faculty who are considering institutional leadership roles beyond the department chair
* academic staff who are open to considering future leadership opportunities

That is to say, the ACS WLD is designed specifically for leadership development in Academic Affairs.

Content:
Session 1 (September): Women in Leadership
A panel of women leaders from ACS liberal arts colleges and universities will offer multiple models for leading in academia as a woman. Three panelists from different backgrounds will discuss their paths as well as the challenges they have faced along the way.

Session 2 (October): Barriers to Women's Leadership
Gender, race, age, etc. persist as barriers for women leaders in professional settings, hindering their advancement and diminishing their feelings of self-worth. This session takes an intersectional standpoint and equips participants with tools to recognize and overcome gender-based barriers to achievement and flourishing.

Session 3 (November): Strategic Planning for Liberal Arts Colleges
This session will offer insights into navigating and leading departmental/unit and institutional initiatives. It will also introduce essential topics in change management and budget planning, providing practical strategies and fostering leadership skills.

Session 4 (December): Self-Care
There is need for self-care because it is important that we lead from our best. How we show up matters, and self-care enables us to show up at our best and keeps us from leading from our worst. This session will ask the question: Who am I at this moment and how am I going to show up?

Session 5 (January): Personnel Management at Liberal Arts Colleges
Participants will discuss a wide array of personnel conflicts that may arise when leading a diverse group of colleagues as well as explore ways to establish and maintain a healthy working atmosphere where colleagues feel respected, appreciated, and heard. Special consideration will be given to the unique challenges of managing academics at small institutions like ours (such as tenure entitlement, identity conflict, academic bullying, and disciplinary action), while also allowing an exchange of ideas on how to celebrate, promote, and elevate our colleagues' scholarly achievements and contributions to create a more collegial, inclusive, and supportive academic environment.

Session 6 (February): Preparing for Leadership
This session will enable participants to consider leadership opportunities at their home institutions and beyond. The first half will focus on practical considerations: frontloading leadership skills in an administrative CV, learning about the executive search process, and so on. The second half will emphasize how to deal with the personal and relational changes when transitioning from a faculty position into administration.

Session 7 (March): Networking, Mentorship, and Collaboration at ACS and Beyond
This session will explore the art of collaboration for women administrators, especially with academic leaders at other ACS institutions. How can we draw on the expertise of several people to be effective in our role? What are the local and national arenas for finding others whose jobs are similar or adjacent to ours? Though the work of administration is often known as a lonely one, in what ways can we build camaraderie and support?

Session 8 (April): Cultivating Allies
Women's leadership is an important part of creating a more inclusive and equitable organization, and it is valued across ACS member colleges. Yet it is not only—or even primarily—the work of those identifying as women to create the climate in which gender equity in leadership can be achieved. This session will extend our earlier work on identifying mentors and sponsors as well as strengthening women-centered networks to focus on broader forms of allyship that can be achieved within and across our ACS colleges.

In addition to these outlined sessions, there will be opportunities built into the program for social hours at least twice a semester. These agenda-free sessions will enable participants to debrief and reflect upon previous sessions and further strengthen their community. While participants would be required to commit to attending at least six of the eight sessions, they may attend these social hours as their schedule allows.

Budget Model: We are presenting one potential model for sustaining a program like this. Our assumptions are that there would be wide buy-in from all ACS schools and that ACS schools would invest in leadership development. Therefore, we propose that each ACS institution can nominate up to two individuals each year, and the program will be capped at 20 participants. ACS institutions will determine what kind of nomination process works best for them internally. Once they have selected up to two nominees, they will submit to ACS a self-reflection from the candidate, a letter of support from the institution (typically from the Chief Academic Officer), and a registration fee of $500 each.

Revenue		Expenses	
Registration Fees (20 x $500)	$10,000	Core Facilitator Stipends (2 x $1,000)	$2,000
		Session Facilitator Stipends (8 x $500)	$4,000
		Guest Speaker Stipends (8 x $500)	$4,000

Assessment: Participants will complete a pre- and post-questionnaire to evaluate the progress they have made over the course of the ACS WLD.

Appendix A

Session 3 (November): Strategic Planning for Liberal Arts Colleges
- Welcome (5 minutes)

Introduction to panelists and explanation of why this topic is important
- Part 1. Panel Discussion (40 minutes)

Three experts share their experiences and insights on these topics, along with any tools or worksheets they have found helpful in strategic planning for smaller institutions. Panelists should be sure to identify the most likely barriers to success and ways to overcome those barriers.
  - Developing and aligning goals with the institutional mission
  - Engaging stakeholders and communicating effectively
  - Identifying key performance indicators to track progress and success
  - Leading change, including strategies to address and overcome resistance
  - Budget planning to ensure effective and strategic use of resources
- Part 2. Group Activity (20 minutes)

Break into small groups. Provide a scenario related to an institutional initiative and ask participants to identify some action steps, possible barriers, and how to overcome them. Panelists provide guidance as groups work through the exercise.
  - Step 1: Develop and align goals with the institutional mission.
  - Step 2: Identify key performance indicators.
  - Step 3: Create a communication plan to engage stakeholders.
  - Step 4: Develop a change management strategy to address resistance.
  - Step 5: Outline a budget plan for resource allocation.
- Group Presentations (20 minutes)

Each small group concisely presents one step of their strategic plan to all participants. There won't be time for each group to present all steps, but make sure each step has been presented in the large group setting (maximum of 4 minutes each group x 5 groups ~ 20 minutes). Try to allow time for one key question to be asked from a peer to the presenting group.
- Closing (5 minutes)

Session 6 (February): Preparing for Leadership

Pre-work: Use a sample administrative CV (provided by facilitators) to convert participants' academic CV into an administrative CV

- Welcome (5 minutes)

Introduction to guest speaker and explanation of why this topic is important

- Part 1. Speaker Presentation (30 minutes)

A search consultant from an executive search firm provides an overview of the executive search process, how to look for opportunities, and how to engage with search firms.

- Part 2. Group Activity (30 minutes)

Break into small groups. Workshop administrative CVs to look for emphasis on leadership skills.

- Part 3. Facilitator Presentation (20 minutes)

An experienced administrator speaks about applying for an internal leadership opportunity and about the changes to expect as one moves from a faculty or staff position to an administrative role.

- Closing (5 minutes)