



Originally printed in *Hamline* magazine, Summer/Fall 2001
Hamline Program Redefining Leadership
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Browse the business bestsellers at Amazon.com, and you'll notice that almost all promise to teach you great leadership or management skills. But would reading each one cover to cover make you a great leader? Not according to Doug Menikheim, director of the Center for Applied Leadership at Hamline's Graduate School of Public Administration and Management.

Trying to learn leadership from a traditional course would also fall short, he said, for the same reason.

"Most are focused on teaching leadership as if it was a skill or competency," he said. Instead of helping students figure out their own, unique style, many schools and books simply dwell on case studies and techniques that have brought success to others.

"You can't simply adopt Lincoln's style of leadership," Menikheim said. "You're not him. You need to discover your own individual leadership fingerprint." That is what GPAM's new Center for Applied Leadership is doing, by adding the element of self-development.

Currently, the Center for Applied Leadership guides people through this process during a six-month-long professional development series. In the future, GPAM will offer a concentration in leadership, then a full master's degree, and finally a doctorate. The School of Law will feature a class on leadership in the spring, and plans for partnerships between GPAM and the Graduate Liberal Studies Program, as well as GPAM and the Graduate School of Education, are also underway.

In addition to partnerships between the schools at Hamline, the Center for Applied Leadership plans to reach out into the community. In the future, they may also partner with the College of St. Catherine, Augsburg Fortress Press, and the United Theological Seminary. Throughout, they are contributing to the body of knowledge about this type of leadership, performing research, writing papers, and presenting their ideas at symposiums.

In all cases, they will maintain their focus on an individualized approach. "People who are comfortable with themselves, who know who they are, can be great leaders," Menikheim said. To foster that development, the Center for Applied Leadership guides students through four I's: intention, intellectualization, internalization, and implementation. The most important part, according to Menikheim, is the need for people to intend to lead, not just be promoted into that type of position.

"Instead of seeing leadership as the calling that it is, it's considered to be one of the givens of the higher status position," Menikheim said. "Without an explicit intention to lead, one is missing a basic ingredient of learning how. Leadership is about bringing about change, growing things, keeping up with the world as it evolves. It's the practice of common sense, but a lot of leaders today are getting bogged down with trying to remember it all."

Once a student has decided that they want to be an effective leader, ready to bring about change, Menikheim says that intellectualizing, studying, and discussing what has been done in the past is useful -- but then, they take it a step further and internalize the information.

Once students have absorbed this information, determined what they need to change about themselves, and what techniques and strategies will work for them, they are ready to implement their education -- but that doesn't mean their learning has ended.

"You learn leadership 60 percent by trial and error, 30 percent by observing, and 10 percent through books," Menikheim said. "The Center changes people's lives," Menikheim said. "They have an appreciation for leadership that they didn't have before."

