National Student Officers’ Leadership Training Experience: A Leadership Training Model Encompassing a Global Perspective Component Through Partnerships

Laikhe Jones and Marta Hartmann, University of Florida

Introduction

The development of a global perspective and intercultural literacy are prerequisites for effective leadership in the 21st century (Rhinesmith, 1993). To be a viable leader, one must become globally competent in terms of outlooks and practices. A global perspective not only requires knowledge, but educational experiences promoting self-awareness, personal values, cultural sensitivity, behavior modification, and other nontraditional themes (Moran & Risenberger, 1994). To address this educational concern, the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) incorporated a global perspective component in the 2001 leadership training for its national student officers. MANRRS is an organization comprised of student and professional members in the agricultural, natural resources, and allied sciences. A primary objective of MANRRS is to enhance the “development of leadership and professional skills and scholarly excellence” through partnerships with the industry, government, and land-grant institutions.

Purpose of Poster

The purpose of this poster is to describe a model to prepare viable leaders for the 21st century based on collaborative efforts.

Major Points/Information to be Shared

• Non-formal educational experiences
• Multidimensional approach
• Utilization of leadership skills in a culturally diverse context
• Survey results of participants’ feedback on workshop effectiveness
• Collaborative activities

Conclusions

A unique attribute of this model is that it provides participants with benefits beyond the “traditional” leadership training, including self-assessment, group leadership roles, and communication skills. For example, the participants indicated that they were challenged to exercise their problem solving skills in a culturally diverse context. Other benefits included the development of cultural sensitivity, communication flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, and the significant role of culture on perceptions, values and behaviors. Examples of participants’ comments were: “I was able to perform outside of my usual environment.” and “This global networking has given me the inspiration that there are no boundaries.” The partnership established among national, regional and local collaborators: MANRRS, USDA/NRCS, the land-grant institutions, and FFA was instrumental in attaining the aforementioned outcomes.

Educational Importance

MANRRS is dedicated to providing leadership and professional development to its members. Leadership that is sound and relevant to the demands of the 21st century requires cultural literacy and a global perspective. This innovative model utilizes a comprehensive approach that incorporates cognitive, affective and behavioral changes through an experiential component. Partnerships established through collaborative efforts enhance the formal and nonformal educational experiences by providing a culturally diverse context. This model exposes the participants to the sociocultural dimension of the world of business and provides them with the personal and professional competencies required to exercise effective leadership in an increasingly global society.