



PRACTICES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

JAMES M. KOUZES
AND
BARRY Z. POSNER

Bestselling Authors of *The Leadership Challenge*

Praise for *Leadership in Higher Education*

“As with Kouzes and Posner’s previous bestsellers, this work begins with personal illustrations grounded in evidence followed by strategies for converting behaviors into practice. Wisdom and leadership practices gained from this book offer invaluable leadership skills for embracing and flourishing in higher education. We look forward to purchasing copies for our colleagues across the university. This work is timely, on point, positive, solution oriented, and as always, very accessible.”

—**Adrian Popa, Department Chair, Gonzaga University**

“Given the current era of significant change in higher education, this book is timely as a field guide, no matter what positions we are in, to make a difference in our work and impact the future of education. With specific examples from university and college leaders, it will help further support our work, both with students and with professional development for staff and faculty, in sharing best practices.”

—**Helen Wong, Head of Co-curricular Programs, Dean of Students’ Office, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**

“What I love about this book is that it uses everyday knowledge in an inspiring and enlightening way. When reading this book, I felt valued and inspired, even as someone who serves in an administrative role. I would encourage my colleagues and senior administration to read this book because it acknowledges our feelings about our community and environment in a way that inspires us to produce change.”

—**Aysen Ulupinar, Executive Assistant to the Associate Vice Chancellor, University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

“Kouzes and Posner remind us that students also learn by observing those who lead and that honesty, competence, and an inspiring vision are as essential in higher education as in other domains. This book doesn’t belong on a shelf—its pages should be enlarged and pinned to the walls of all college leaders who know they are always being observed by students and, as such, are always teaching leadership.”

—**Tom Schnaubelt, Assistant Vice Provost and Executive Director, Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford University**

“I enjoyed the way Kouzes and Posner have blended theory and practice, creating something both experienced and emerging leaders will relate to easily (and retain). It is refreshing to have tangible examples from the higher education sector, demonstrating that leadership does not need to be defined as academic or professional, rather, ‘of purpose and people.’”

—**Clare Litten, Senior Academic Search Consultant, University of Auckland**

“This is a higher education practitioners’ go-to book for leadership with profound advice on dealing with the complex problems of today as well as the unknown possibilities of tomorrow.”

—**Clarence Green, Chief of University Police, Northwest Missouri State University**

“Like every other industry, higher education is in desperate need of effective leadership—more so now than ever before. Read this book so that you can better understand how leadership actions and behaviors influence others and how you can liberate the leader within you, as well as those you work with.”

—**Cheryl Johnson, Leadership Development Consultant, CAJ Leadership Consulting**

“Kouzes and Posner are applying their leadership model and insights directly to the higher education sector. Bravo! With this sector now under so much disruption, *Leadership in Higher Education* is arriving just in the nick of time. Everyone in higher education can be a leader, and everyone who works in higher education needs to read this book!”

—**Joseph Phillips, Dean, Albers School of Business and Economics, Seattle University**

“This book is relevant to all leaders in higher education, peppered with practical stories and lessons learned. I will be using this foundational book in all my Leadership in Higher Education workshops and coaching!”

—**Lillas Marie Hatala, Canadian higher education leadership development consultant**

“This book is a game changer for higher education. It’s unique in that it identifies highly researched, proven leadership behaviors that provide direct data to you as to your performance as a leader. It is a very personalized and prescriptive process to becoming more effective in all aspects of your life.”

—**Todd Sutherland, Chief Student Affairs Officer, Texas A&M University at Galveston**

“What I value most about Kouzes and Posner’s work is their accessible and inspiring view of leadership: everyone can think of a ‘personal best’ leadership experience and commit to practicing behaviors that create more of them. The examples throughout this book illustrate that all of us can make exceptional things happen, regardless of our charge or position. This is vitally empowering within the hierarchical structures of higher education.”

—**Abby Conover, Coordinator of Undergraduate Initiatives, Biology Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota**

“With the challenges facing higher education today, this book could not be timelier. Kouzes and Posner provide a road map for academic administrators to become transformative leaders in the most challenging academic environment of the last half century. They have created a toolkit for academic entrepreneurs.”

—**Joseph DiAngelo, Dean, Haub School of Business, Saint Joseph’s University, and Past Chair, AACSB International**

“Kudos to Kouzes and Posner for continuing to demonstrate that some ‘old practices’ really are the best! I stuck tabs in my copy—very, very good reminders that I can never be too busy to demonstrate better leadership.”

—**Elizabeth Barron Silva, Senior Assistant Dean of Finance and Administration, Santa Clara University**

Leadership in Higher Education brings Kouzes and Posner's tested model into the context of higher education with tailored examples, practical suggestions, and helpful reflective questions that will get any reader thinking and more prepared to act."

—**Willow Jacobson, Professor, School of Government, University of North Carolina**

"While lessons and reflections on leadership from Kouzes and Posner have resonated strongly with me before, with this book those lessons are now firmly rooted in my day-to-day experience on a college campus, better equipping me for next steps in taking on new initiatives."

—**Susan Dorn, Leadership Gift Officer, Bowdoin College**

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JAMES M. KOUZES

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BARRY Z. POSNER



BK

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Leadership in Higher Education

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Preface

LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: *Practices That Make a Difference* is about how people on college and university campuses mobilize others to want to struggle for shared aspirations and make extraordinary things happen. It's about the behaviors that leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, segments into solidarity, and risks into rewards. It's about exercising leadership that creates the climate in which people work together to turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.

College and university leaders can and do make a difference in the strength of their institutions. Many, in fact, assert that leadership, more than any other single factor, will determine the future vitality of higher education.¹ Goldie Blumenstyk, a senior writer at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, notes that “cruise-control leadership is no longer an option” and that a balance is needed between knee-jerk reactions to the latest trend and flat-footed reluctance to go after real opportunities.² Not only are there no shortages of challenges facing people involved in institutions of higher education but the opportunities for providing leadership within them are also available to everyone, every day.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

The fundamental purpose of this book is to assist people throughout the higher-education community in leading others to places they have never been before. Leadership matters whether you are a faculty

member, department chair, program director, dean, vice president, or president. Likewise, leadership matters for the staff and managers of residential life, career development, student records, admissions, campus safety, information technology, library, counseling and health centers, facilities, alumni relations, development, and all other organizations on campus. We have written this book to help individuals—no matter what their position—strengthen their capacity to make extraordinary things happen. We have also written it to uplift your spirits. We have learned from our research that people in institutions of higher education are capable of developing themselves as leaders and exercising leadership far more than tradition has ever assumed possible.

This book is not about the institution or business of higher education at a macro level or about being in a leadership *position*—as if leadership were a place. It is about having the courage and spirit to make a significant difference from wherever you are within a college or university. This book is also not about leaders per se. Instead it is about the practices, behaviors, and actions associated with *leadership* and how people in higher education exercise them when making a difference.

In this book we present stories of real people from all across college campuses and university settings who achieved bigger-than-life results at their institutions. Through an analysis of their experiences, we offer practical guidance for enhancing your leadership capabilities. As you will see from the scores of examples, the principles apply regardless of the nature of your institution (e.g., public or private, secular or nonsecular, small or large, urban or rural, two-year or four-year), and they are not dependent on any particular demographic characteristic (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, function, nationality) or personality variable. The focus is on the behaviors and actions of what people in higher education do when they are exercising exemplary leadership.

RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICES

Leadership in Higher Education is written to enhance your abilities, and the principles and practices described in it are based solidly on quantitative and qualitative research. The book has its origins in a study we began in 1983. We wanted to know what people did when they were at their “personal best” in leading others. These were experiences in which people, per their own perceptions, set their individual leadership standards of excellence. We started with an assumption that to discover best practices we didn’t have to interview and survey star performers, select celebrities in academe, or people “at the top.” Instead we assumed that by asking people at all levels and across a broad array of organizational settings to describe extraordinary experiences, we would be able to find and identify patterns of success. And we surely did.

The results of our initial investigation—and of the ongoing research we have conducted for nearly four decades—have been striking in their consistency and are a refutation of many leader stereotypes.³ People frequently assume, for example, that leadership is different from one institution to the next. Nothing could be further from the truth. While each campus may look different from the outside, we find that what leaders do when they are at their best is quite similar. This pattern of behavior varies little across higher-education settings and circumstances. In the appendix we describe more fully the research basis for this book, involving a database of over 125,000 respondents and more than 100 interviews and case studies. True enough, the context keeps evolving, and the landscape of higher education has shifted over time, but leadership remains an understandable and generalizable process. Leadership is not a fad. While each leader is a unique individual, there are shared patterns to the practice of leadership.

A GUIDEBOOK ON LEADERSHIP

Think of *Leadership in Higher Education* as a guidebook to take along on your leadership journey. We have designed it to describe what leaders do, explain the fundamental principles that support these leadership practices, and provide actual case examples of real people on college and university campuses who demonstrate each practice. Based on the real-world experiences of thousands of people who have answered the call for leadership, we offer specific recommendations on what you can do to make these practices your own and to continue your development as a leader.

Chapter 1 introduces you to our point of view about leadership and briefly describes The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership revealed in our research. In it we also describe the characteristics that people most desire in their leaders. We present the foundation on which all great leadership is built. We tell the leadership story from the inside and move outward, describing leadership first as a personal journey of exploration and then as a mobilization of others. Our research has shown that leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It is a process people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. Liberate the leader in everyone, and extraordinary things happen.

In chapters 2 through 6, we explore The Five Practices, one to a chapter. The discussions are built on the results of our research, and we expand your understanding of leadership by drawing on studies of other scholars. We do not summarize the literature or all the various conceptual perspectives on leadership; instead we provide a particular point of view on leading that is empirically sound and practically valuable. We illustrate each practice with case examples, recommend actions you can take to put the practice to use, and pose questions for you to reflect on in developing your leadership capabilities. There is no sacred sequence to these chapters. We suggest that you read chapter 1

and then go wherever your interests are. Please remember though that all of these practices are essential. While you might skip around in this book, you can't skip any of the fundamentals of leadership.

In chapter 7 we discuss how leadership is a learnable set of practices, accessible to anyone. We show that leadership is everyone's business and that the first place to look for leadership is within yourself. In so doing we hope to demystify leadership and show how everyone has the capacity to lead. We discuss as well the contrasts and contradictions of leadership—no one ever said it would be easy—and how you will need to strike a balance. Finally, we offer guidance on how you can continue your growth and development, and we reveal a secret to achieving success in life.

A core theme that weaves its way through all the chapters is that *leadership is a relationship*. Whether it's one-to-one or one-to-many, leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. Young or old, faculty or staff, manager or individual contributor, experienced or novice—success in leadership and success in life will continue to be a function of how well we work and get along with one another.

If you want to know more about how we conducted our research for this book, you'll find detailed information on the methodology, statistical data, and highlights of validation studies by other scholars on our website: leadershipchallenge.com. Those interested in a more thorough treatment of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model and its application across a wide variety of organizational settings should read *The Leadership Challenge*.⁴

THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

The domain of leaders is the future. We hope this book contributes to the ongoing revitalization of higher education, to the renewal of healthy college communities, and to greater respect and understanding

among people of all traditions. We also fervently hope that it enriches your life and the lives of your students, colleagues, alumni, friends, and family. The most significant contribution leaders make is to the long-term development of people and institutions so that they can adapt, prosper, and grow.

Leadership matters not just within your university and your career. It's essential in every sector, in every community, and in every country. Right now we need more leaders, and we need them more than ever. There is so much extraordinary work to be done. We need leaders who can unite us and ignite us.

In the end we realize that leadership development is ultimately self-development. Meeting the leadership challenge is a personal—and a daily—challenge for everyone.

James M. Kouzes

Barry Z. Posner

September 2019

Leadership Is a Relationship

TOGETHER WE HAVE MORE THAN 50 YEARS of experience in higher-education administration—and even more time than that researching and writing about how leaders make extraordinary things happen. The thousands of interviews and leadership cases we’ve collected, not to mention the millions of responses to our surveys, have been from people very similar to you. They’re the colleagues you run into daily around campus. We’ve chosen to tell the stories of these everyday leaders because we firmly believe that at its core leadership is *not* about position or title. It’s about caring, about relationships, and about what you *do*.

Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and practices that are available to everyone, not just a few charismatic men and women or individuals with lofty titles and positions. We challenge the myth that leadership is found only at the highest levels of an organization, whether in the halls of academe or in corporate executive suites. The theory that there are only a *few* great men and women who can lead is just plain wrong. We consider the women and men in our research to be exemplary, and so do those with whom they’ve worked.

We know from our experience, research, consulting, and seminars that everyone at your institution can learn to lead. This realization