P11.2194 Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations  
Fall 2010  
Tuesdays 6:45 – 8:25 PM  
Bobst LL139  

Instructors  
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Office Hours: Appointments can be made before class sessions on Tuesdays from 5:00PM – 6:15PM or at other times by request.  
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Course Description  
Strategic Leadership is an advanced seminar designed to equip mid-career students with the tools, perspectives, and frameworks for executing high-impact strategy within mission-driven organizations. Topics include conceptual frameworks for understanding high impact organizations and the role of strategic leadership, analytical tools for developing and assessing strategy, approaches to working with stakeholders to mobilize commitment, and methods for leading change. We will explore a wide range of sources including established approaches to strategic planning and management, and emerging practices such as narrative leadership and a campaign approach to change. We will draw on the experiences students bring to the classroom. Students will need to gain access to a nonprofit or public service organization, as a professional or a volunteer, in order to fulfill the assignments.  

The course is co-taught by the Research Center for Leadership in Action’s (RCLA www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership) executive director and an RCLA senior fellow who is the director of Advancing Women Professionals (www.advancingwomen.org) and an organizational consultant. It combines scholarly readings, case studies, and a range of activities to support application. We recognize the EMPA students as adult professionals who learn best when they are responsible for their own education and are given opportunity for application. Over the course of the semester, we will delve into the roles and tasks of strategic leaders and the contribution of strategy to building organizations that achieve lasting impact.  

Objectives  
The purpose of this course is to develop in the EMPA students an understanding of and an enhanced capacity to enact the roles and tasks of strategic leadership in the service of building a mission-driven organization with deep and lasting impact. Specifically, by the end of the course students will be able to:  

- Identify critical components of high impact organizations and articulate the role of strategic leadership in building such organizations;  
- Apply a set of analytical tools to develop and assess effective strategy;  
- Work with others to mobilize the commitment required to deliver on a strategy; and  
- Understand a variety of perspectives on how to lead a change agenda.
Readings
Readings, available either on blackboard or in a course packet (unless otherwise noted in this syllabus), are comprised of journal articles and book chapters and are listed under each session below.

Course Requirements
Class Participation (25%):
Students must complete all readings before class and engage actively in the discussions and classroom activities. To participate fully, students should allow sufficient time to complete readings and spend time reflecting on how their experience supports or challenges the concepts presented in those readings in preparation for each class. The blackboard contributions described below are meant to help students prepare for class discussion. The instructors have outlined assignments in the syllabus for sessions in which there will be classroom exercises. These exercises include group presentations and peer consultations among other activities. All students are expected to actively engage in these exercises and will be evaluated on the quality of their participation. Please note that there are readings due for the first class.

Blackboard Contributions (10%):
In preparation for class discussions and exercises, students must submit brief comments on readings, including questions they’d like the group to take up at the next session, on the course blackboard site. Students are required to comment on blackboard prior to at least 10 of the sessions by midnight the night before class. Comments must include references to the readings and should focus on what students found compelling or useful as well as critiques of theories presented.

Analysis and application papers – (65%):
1. Environmental and Organizational Assessment (3-4 pages) – Select a nonprofit organization or public service institution that you want to focus on during the semester. Describe the agency briefly. Identify one macro level trend you believe is impacting the world of public service, and describe how that trend is playing out in this organization. Select one of the analysis tools from the readings and use it to assess that organization and to identify a strategic challenge.

Due before the start of session 5 on October 5, 2010

2. Synthesis of Concepts (2-3 pages) – Select and summarize the frameworks, concepts, and theories from this course that have been most influential for your own thinking about how to lead change. Identify which concepts you are most likely to use in your own work and discuss how you might use them.

Due before the start of session 13 on November 30, 2010

3. Strategic Change Case (5-7 pages) – This will be the major written and graded assignment for Strategic Leadership. It is designed to assess your ability to synthesize the
concepts learned throughout the class and apply them to a real world case for change. In particular, emphasis should be placed on the concepts presented in the articulating vision, mobilizing stakeholders, building leadership as a collective achievement, and leading change sections of the course, though you are free to bring in other concepts as appropriate.

Select an example from your own work in the nonprofit or public service sector, or initiate research in your field of interest. Describe an approach to leading change on a challenge that you have identified for the organization, the sector, or for society. Imagine that you are a strategist who is responsible for developing the approach or approaches that should be used to lead change for the organization or social change for society. You should apply at least three concepts from articulating vision, mobilizing stakeholders, building leadership as a collective achievement, and leading change to develop your approach. In presenting your approach, please address the following:

a. Describe the situation as it currently exists and the change challenge to be addressed based either on your own knowledge of the field or research that you do.

b. Create a change strategy and explain how this strategy makes use of the ideas from the readings.

c. Identify at least one small win that could be achieved in the near term and explain why and how it can be accomplished.

d. Articulate a BHAG for the change challenge and identify one crucial change the strategy could achieve toward that BHAG in the mid-term.

e. Describe who needs to be mobilized and how they should be engaged.

Due by December 14, 2010.

Note: All assignments must be emailed to both instructors prior to the start of the session for which it is due.

Schedule

Session 1: September 7, 2010
Exploration of Key Components of the Syllabus & Individual Reflections on Leadership

Guiding Questions:

- How can leaders best develop their emotional intelligence at various stages and ages?
- How does the material in the chapter affirm or challenge your assumptions about how people become leaders?
- What profound change do you want to make in yourself and where is the source of your resistance?
Readings:

- Goleman, Daniel, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, Primal Leadership Chap. six pp 92-112 (available on blackboard)

Application and Assignment:
Please come to class prepared to participate in small group interviews with your classmates and to:

- Describe an experience that has shaped your leadership trajectory;
- Share a recent or current professional challenge that is relevant for this course; and
- Build your learning agenda based on the “five discoveries” in Primal Leadership

At the end of class we will ask for people to sign up to make presentations in either session 2 or 3, and you will be divided into teams accordingly. Those who sign up for session 2 will be asked to prepare a presentation about a public or nonprofit organization that embodies the characteristics of excellence described in the readings for session 2. Those who sign up for session 3 will be asked to become experts on one session 3 reading and present to the rest of the class the key concepts and a real world example of those concepts in action from either their own work or outside research.
Session 2: September 14, 2010

Elements of High Performing Organizations

Guiding Questions:
• What are the characteristics of high performing organizations?
• In what ways does context influence our understanding of success and impact?
• What are essential differences between the private and social sector that affect strategy?

Readings:
• Collins, Jim. Good to Great and the Social Sectors, 2005. Note: This text may be ordered online for approximately $10 from Amazon.com or another bookseller.

Application and Assignment:
Team presentations of high impact and/or great organizations, followed by questions and responses with the rest of the class. We will use a participatory voting process to select the team that makes the most persuasive case. Small prizes will be given for the winning presentation.

Session 3: September 21, 2010

Defining Strategy and Strategic Leadership

Guiding questions:
• What does it mean to lead strategically? How is strategic leadership different from managerial or visionary leadership?
• Where are the sources of strategic leadership in organizations?
• How does strategy connect to the understanding of excellence we developed in session 2?
• How have you taken up or contributed to strategic leadership in your own work?

Readings:
• Rowe, Glenn W. Creating Wealth in Organizations, Academy of Management Executive, 2001, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 81-94. (available on blackboard)

Application and Assignment:
Expert presentations on key concepts and examples of application for each of the week’s readings.

At the end of class we will discuss the organizations you are choosing to work on throughout the rest of the semester. Please bring the name of the organization to class and your thoughts on how you will gain access if it is not your current place of employment.

Session 4: September 28, 2010
Tools for Reading the Environment & Assessing your Organization

Guiding Questions:
• What is an idea in good currency, and how do these and other trends impact the world of public service at both a macro and micro level?
• What are the current macro trends we should be paying attention to as public service leaders?
• What tools can we use to understand the critical environmental forces affecting the organization and the organization’s internal capacity to respond and adapt?

Readings:
• Scanning the Environment: Ideas in Good Currency, CFAR (Center for Applied Research), 2005. (available on blackboard)

Application and Assignment:
Bring two newspaper or journal articles that highlight ideas in good currency that are salient for the organization you will be working on throughout the semester. One article should highlight an idea that is latent or growing, and the other should highlight an idea that is peaking or declining.

In addition, take time to reflect on your own experience of these kinds of exercises and tools in your own professional life. What made them most productive? What were some of the challenges to effective implementation? How might you approach it differently in the future?

Guest Speaker – To be announced

At the end of class, we will group you into trios for next week’s application exercise.

***Assignment 1 due before session 5***
Note: Bring 2 copies of your completed paper to class
Session 5: October 5, 2010
Strategic and Business Planning – Part 1

Guiding Questions:
- What is the fundamental purpose of engaging in strategic planning and business planning?
- What are the most essential elements of these processes?
- Do you see these as linear or iterative processes, and why?

Readings:
- Bryson, John M. Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, Chap 2, pp. 30 -61 (available in coursepack).

Application:
Bring two copies of your completed first paper to class. Exchange it with the other two people in your trio working group. Discuss how you would initiate a planning process with the organization that you described in your paper and give one another feedback on the approach discussed.

Session 6: October 12, 2010
Strategic and Business Planning – Part 2

Guiding Questions:
- How can organizations best prepare themselves for strategic planning?
- How are key strategic issues identified?

Readings:
- Case materials on guest speaker’s organization

Application:
Guest speaker – to be announced
Session 7: October 19, 2010
Articulating Vision

Guiding Questions:
- What is the role of vision and vision statements?
- How do we differentiate between rational discourse and narrative? What is the potential of each to influence strategic action?
- How does your cultural background or your generation influence your sense of purpose?

Readings:

Application:
We will spend time practicing storytelling to share our own narratives about the forces that have shaped us as individuals and as public service leaders.

Session 8: October 26, 2010
Building Leadership as a Collective Achievement

Guiding Questions:
- What is the value of creating distributed leadership within an organization?
- How can a leader support the distribution of leadership within his or her organization?
- What mental models of leadership do you hold, and how do your preferences manifest themselves?
- How can an effective social media strategy support distributed leadership?

Readings:
- Raelin, Joseph A. We the Leaders: In order to form a Leaderful Organization, Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, Vol 12, No 2 pp. 18-30. (available in the coursepack)
- Wheatley, Margaret J. Goodbye Command and Control. Leader to Leader, July 1997. (available on blackboard)
Application and assignment:
Imagine you are the candidate for CEO of an organization where you have worked. The Board has asked you to talk about what structural or cultural changes you would make to enhance distributed leadership in the organization. You will be grouped in trios. Be prepared to make a five minute presentation and discuss your strategy for developing distributed leadership.

Session 9: November 2, 2010
Board Governance

Guiding Questions:
- What is the importance of the role of the Board, and how can Board members be mobilized to add value to an organization?
- How and why is the role of the Board changing?
- What are the essential differences between strategic and generative modes of Board governance?

Readings:
- Governance as Leadership: A Conversation with William Ryan. The Bridgespan Group, 2009

Application:
Based on a scenario that will be distributed in class, you will be invited to analyze an issue from the perspective of a Board of Directors, operating in the fiduciary, strategic or generative modes.

Session 10: November 9, 2010
The Role of Middles in Strategic Leadership

Guiding Questions:
- What is the conventional wisdom about the role of middles that is being challenged by the authors?
- What fundamental shifts can “middles” make to make to increase their influence and impact in an organization?

Readings:

**Application and Assignment:**
Bring in a brief memo to the CEO of either the organization where you currently work or the organization you’ve chosen to focus on for the semester that suggests three steps that can be taken to strengthen the role of middle managers. Be prepared to share in small groups and with the class.

**Session 11: November 16, 2010**

*Leading Across Differences*

**Guiding Questions:**
- How are the perspectives of each generation reflected in their attitudes towards leadership?
- What are the limits of conventional approaches to diversity?
- What is essential for creating networks for social good?

**Readings:**
- *Beyond Diversity: Working Across Differences for Organizational Change*, *Center for Gender in Organizations*, June 2004. (available on blackboard)
- Podolny, Joel M. *Networks for Good Works*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2007 (available on blackboard)

**Application and Assignment:**
You will be divided into three groups. Each team will be asked to draft recommendations on how to initiate changes in public service workplaces that will test new approaches to diversity.

**Session 12: November 23, 2010**

*Leading Change Part 1*

**Guiding Questions:**
- How do the approaches described in the readings build upon or diverge from the approaches to strategic and business planning we explored earlier in the course?
- In what contexts would you be most likely to apply each of these approaches?
- Are there ways in which these approaches can be used together to complement one another?
- What are some strategies for affecting behavior and actions in order to achieve organizational change more broadly?
- Based on your understanding of your own leadership style and strengths, which of these approaches would you adopt? To what extent does the context matter?
**Readings:**

- Briefing Note: *The Campaign Approach to Strategic Change*, CFAR, 1999. (available on blackboard)
- Mini Case Study: Being project manager when no one reports to you, CFAR, 1999. (available on blackboard)

**Application:**

We will work in small groups to discuss how the theories from the readings this week will apply to the final papers you are developing.

**Assignment 2 is due before Session 13 on November 30.**

**Session 13: November 30, 2010**

**Leading Change Part 2**

**Guiding Questions:**

- What does it mean to think systemically? How can systems thinking help us lead change?

**Readings:**


**Application and Assignment**

Bring in an outline of your final paper to discuss in small groups. What points are strongest? Where does your thinking need to deepened and refined? Be prepared to receive and offer feedback in small group consultations.

Guest speaker to be announced.

**Session 14: December 7, 2010**

*The final session will synthesize all the key ideas from the course. We will return to your learning agenda, and see how much progress you have made. We will create action plans for future growth.*

**Assignment 3 is due by December 14.**