

Leadership Efficacy at Texas A&M University Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership

In the spring of 2006, over 1200 Texas A&M undergraduate students participated in the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL), sponsored by the University of Maryland, College Park. Their theoretical framework was based on the Social Change Model of Leadership, and 54 institutions participated.

One key focus of the study was leadership efficacy (LE), defined as a measure of one's confidence with leadership tasks. For the purposes of the MSL students completed both a scale representing their leadership efficacy and a scale representing a pseudo-pretest of leadership efficacy prior to college. Each scale asked students to rate their current or previous confidence in success with various leadership tasks, including leading others, organizing a group's tasks, taking initiative, and working with a team.

The key findings from the MSL related to leadership efficacy are presented below. Each of these findings provides some insight into our practice as student affairs professionals. Perhaps the most important implication for our practice is to continue to emphasize the parts of the college environment that have a positive impact on the leadership efficacy of our students. This includes what we are already doing to encourage involvement in organizations and leadership positions. It suggests, however, that we also need to place greater emphasis on involving students in internships and in providing opportunities for our students to discuss a variety of socio-cultural issues with each other, with us, and with faculty. See the summary of MSL findings regarding socio-cultural discussions for more information on this important topic.

Key Findings

- The strongest predictors of leadership efficacy from the college environment at TAMU were holding a leadership position, socio-cultural discussions, having an internship, and involvement in college organizations. This is similar to the national results.
- There is a positive relationship between leadership efficacy and both being involved on campus and holding a leadership position.
Correlations 0.27 and 0.31 respectively. ($p < .01$)
- Students at TAMU are more confident in their leadership abilities in college than they were before college.
LE mean: 3.21 (SD=.61, n=974) Pre-test mean: 2.91 (SD=.69, n=974)
- Students at TAMU are more confident in their leadership abilities than the average student is nationally.
Texas A&M: 3.21 (SD=.61, n=974) National: 3.13 (SD=.63, n=50,378)
- Men are generally more confident about leadership tasks than women at TAMU.
Men: 3.27 (SD=.59, n=421) Women: 3.16 (SD=.62, n=553)
- Freshmen are more confident than seniors.
Freshmen: 3.29 (SD=.59, n=284) Seniors: 3.10 (SD=.62, n=203)
- Conservative political views seem to be linked to greater leadership efficacy.
Conservative: 3.25 (SD=.60, n=509) Middle-of-the road: 3.19 (SD=.63, n=344) Liberal: 3.12 (SD=.59, n=121)

Both leadership efficacy and the leadership efficacy pre-test were based on a 4-point scale.

For more information about the MSL, see <http://leadershipstudy.net/>. For information specific to Texas A&M students, see <http://studentactivities.tamu.edu/leadandserve/msl> or contact Krista Bailey at (979) 845-1133 or kbailey@stuact.tamu.edu.