

Value Placed on Leadership 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. Institutions could submit additional local questions in addition to the 37 questions in the standard survey. Texas A&M asked the qualitative question: “*Describe the value you place on leadership*” (1201 responses with 1,369 independent thoughts). Students responded with comments both about what value they placed on leadership and also why they consider it to be a valuable commodity. Additionally, many students described what they consider the makings of good and/or bad leaders, and what might happen if leadership did not exist.

The table below illustrates the 20 most common response categories in descending frequency order. Each of the 1201 responses was categorized into one of 34 different themes.

Category (in descending frequency)	Total Responses
High/Important	229
Characteristics of Leadership	106
Task/Goal Accomplishment	102
Career/future	79
All Encompassing	76
Learning Process	70
Everyone could be a leader	59
Group Dynamics	57
Change/progress	49
Positional/Anti-Positional	49
Personal Characteristic	44
Followership	42
Organization Performance	38
Not Everyone Should be a Leader	36
Direction/Vision	33
Success	33
Did not answer/None/Not Applicable	28
Influence/Impact	28
Service	27
Situational Leadership	25

As is evidenced by the results displayed above, the largest number of respondents answered simply that they placed a very important or high value on leadership. The next few categories alternated between students describing specific behaviors which made leadership valuable to them (i.e. “I believe that leadership requires an open mind and an open heart. You can not be afraid.”), and valuable outcomes which were made possible through effective leadership (i.e. “Leadership to me is not about having the spotlight, but it is about accomplishing goals and that is why I highly value it.”). Also represented in the results are some dissenting opinions about whether or not every individual can and/or should be a leader.

For more information about the MSL, see <http://www.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.

