Social Change Model of Leadership

The Social Change Model (SCM) was introduced by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California-Los Angeles in 1996, with an aim to measure the concept of leadership among college students, based on social responsibility and change for the common good. “Of primary importance are increasing the individual’s level of self-knowledge and capacity to engage others in collaborative work” (Dugan, 2006, p. 219).

Considered to be one of the most established student leadership models used today, “the social change model of leadership development and seven C’s [sic] of social change have played a prominent role in shaping the curricula and formats of undergraduate leadership education initiatives in colleges and universities throughout the country” (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. 142). Embraced by leadership researchers, it is also frequently used as a foundation upon which student leadership retreats or co-curricular programs are built by student affairs staffs and leadership educators nationwide (Haber, 2006; Martinez, 2006; Seemiller, 2006).

Used in several recent studies and serving as the foundation of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007), the SCM clusters eight leadership constructs into three distinct value groups (individual, group, and community/society). The constructs making up individual values are (a) *Consciousness of Self*, (b) *Congruence*, and (c) *Commitment*; group leadership values include (a) *Common Purpose*, (b) *Collaboration*, and (c) *Controversy with Civility*; and community or societal leadership values are related to *Citizenship*. The eighth leadership value of “*Change for the Common Good,*” was introduced later as the overall goal of the model for leadership skills training and evaluation (Haber & Komives, 2009).
The *Socially Responsible Leadership Scale* (SRLS) was developed to measure and study outcomes of the SCM (Tyree, 1998, 2001). The model emphasizes that leadership is a collaborative group process, focused on promoting positive change in the community or the organization (Tyree, 1998). The concept is such that individuals who show strong socially responsible leadership skills are self-aware, act in accordance with personal values and beliefs, invest time and energy in activities that he or she believes are important, work with diverse others to accomplish common goals, have a sense of civic and social responsibility, and desire to make the world a better place (Astin, 1998; Dugan, 2006).

**Fraternal Organizations**

Organizations such as service groups, spirit associations, sports clubs and student government provide many opportunities for students to involve themselves with each other, the institution, and their community. Each of these activities and programs provide students with increased opportunities for integrating their academic learning with life outside the classroom (Astin & Astin, 2000). For more than 100 years, college fraternities and sororities have promoted the idea that membership enhances students’ personal and professional networks, commitment to community service and philanthropy, and contributes to the development of life-long leadership skills. While insufficient empirical data exists to validate these claims, research has shown that these organizations do provide numerous opportunities for leadership development and volunteerism (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1982).

Astin’s (1993) *Theory of Involvement* is often cited (Astin, 1998; Dugan, 2006, 2008; Ewing, Bruce, & Ricketts, 2009; Pascarella et al., 1996) specifically in fraternity and sorority studies, as “The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and
development in the undergraduate years” (p. 398). More recent research revealed that fraternity and sorority membership had a positive effect on the development of career-related proficiency, interpersonal skills, community orientation, and civic engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In a longitudinal study of more than 6,000 seniors, Pike and Askew (1990) found that “Greek students reported higher levels of academic effort, involvement in organizations, and interaction with other students” (p. 369). Years later, Pike (2003) determined that fraternity and sorority members were at least as engaged as their non-Greek counterparts. Haber and Komives (2009) explored the extent to which co-curricular involvement, holding formal leadership roles, and participating in leadership programs contributed to female and male college students’ capacity for socially responsible leadership. Haber and Komives found that membership in a fraternity or sorority emerged as a significant variable and reflected specific types of co-curricular involvement. In addition, fraternity and sorority membership was one of several significant variables that contributed to the development of leadership skills and ability (Haber & Komives).

Today, incoming college freshman are introduced to the opportunity of fraternal membership with promises of personal development, leadership development, and life-long friendships. Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity promotes its history of helping young men become better leaders and citizens through its “Building Better Men” campaign (Delta Sigma Phi, 2009, “About the Fraternity,” p. 1). Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for women has adopted a four-year member development program, “Leading with Values” (Pi Beta Phi, 2009, “Friends & Leaders for Life,” subject number six). And, one of the oldest African American male fraternities, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., is committed to preparing its members “for the greatest usefulness in the causes
Student Leadership in Colleges of Agriculture

Development of leadership skills in agricultural students has historically been a component of education in colleges of agriculture. Through a synthesis of research from 1988 to 2003, Connors and Swan (2006) found that student leadership development occurred in three forms: through coursework, departmental association, or experience with an organization. To better understand the association between experiential leadership opportunities, McKinley, Birkenholz, and Stewart (1993) questioned college of agriculture juniors and seniors about their perceived leadership abilities, finding that communication skills specifically were enhanced through organizational participation. Likewise, Birkenholz and Schumacher (1994) found that “participation in student activities at the high school and college level is positively related to overall leadership development” (p. 6).

Ricketts and Bruce’s (2008) study of college of agriculture students’ self perceptions about leadership skills was further developed (Ewing, Bruce, & Ricketts, 2009) to compare perceptions of leadership skills between members and non-members of student organizations. Using the Socially Responsibility Leadership Scale (SRLS) and the SCM, the authors (Ewing et al., 2009) found a majority of students believed that participating in a student organization could provide experiences not available elsewhere. This finding was comparable to a 2004 (Schertzer & Schuh) study of college students (not associated with a college of agriculture) in which researchers found that “disengaged students indicated that they did not feel qualified for
leadership, that they were not intelligent enough for the responsibility, and that their personality limited their ability to lead” (p. 126).

Previous research (Birkenholz & Schumacher, 1994; Rutherford, Townsend, Briers, Cummins, & Conrad, 2002) on leadership development in colleges of agriculture showed positive associations between organizational involvement and perceived leadership skills for undergraduate students. As a result of high school leadership programs, such as 4-H and FFA, students entering colleges of agriculture may have more confidence in their leadership abilities. Do students enter colleges of agriculture with already developed leadership skills from high school experiences, or do college-level student organizations such as fraternities and/or sororities play a role in their leadership development? Do student organizations in colleges of agriculture significantly improve students’ leadership skills beyond the levels attained from similar experiences in high school? If so, which leadership skills are improved and how much improvement occurs between students’ pre-college entry and their current year in college?