

# SHARING SCHOLARSHIP

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## NSEE DISSERTATION OF THE YEAR 2020

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### DISSERTATION

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### **Abstract:**

This study explored alumni' valuation of an undergraduate leadership program by gaining an understanding of what leadership learning and leadership behaviors transferred into their work environments. The alumni graduated from the same university in the southeastern United States, and while enrolled completed a four-year, co-curricular leadership program. In this mixed methods study, eight participant alumni engaged in semi-structured interviews as well as completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. Alumni perceived that leadership experiences, learning community, classroom learning, peer coaching, and intentional reflection were the most valuable attributes of the program. The leadership learning that effectively transferred to work environments included collaboration, leveraging differences, communication, diversity awareness, negotiating conflict, strengths awareness, emotional intelligence awareness, and leadership confidence. Program alumni were frequently engaged in the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership at work

to some degree. Some recommendations include the program should be more career focused and expressed desire for an alumni group. This study fills a gap in the literature as limited research exists that assesses the transfer of leadership learning from an undergraduate leadership program into alumni work environments. When developing leadership programs, practitioners may consider incorporating similar programmatic attributes and leadership learning deemed valuable by program alumni.

**Electronic Access:** <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1946/>

**Key Search Words:** Undergraduate leadership development, Transfer of leadership learning, Alumni perspective, Experiential learning theory, Transformational leadership, Five practices of exemplary leadership, Leadership program

## **AUTHOR PROFILE**

John has served as the Leadership Educator in the Office of Leadership and Community Engagement at Georgia Southern University since July of 2016. In this role he develops leadership programming for undergraduates and teaches leadership courses. In 2019 the leadership program he helps coordinate, Southern Leaders, was recognized with the NASPA Gold-Level Excellence Award. His previous roles have included serving as the Assistant Director for Student Affairs at East Georgia State College (EGSC), and the Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Services at GSU. He completed his Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern and earned his master's and bachelor's degrees from The University of Georgia. His research interests include undergraduate leadership learning, experiential learning, leadership program assessment, and teaching strategies in leadership education.

