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Of Wigs, Wickets, and Moonshine: Leadership Development Lessons from an International Collaboration

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ARTICLE

OF WIGS, WICKETS, AND MOONSHINE: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LESSONS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

*Douglas A. Blaze**

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* Art Stolnitz and E.E. Overton Professor of Law and Dean Emeritus, University of Tennessee College of Law. Professor Blaze is the founding director of the Institute for Professional Leadership at the College of Law. This class, and article, would never have been possible without my remarkable friends and collaborators, Sarah Derrington, Roger Derrington, and Brad Morgan.

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“This course was the highlight of my legal education so far. I had the time of my life, and I grew personally and professionally. I learned who I am as an individual as well as a leader and, along the way, I developed lifelong friendships. I became an informed leader, developed a style of leadership that is most effective for me, and broadened my perspective.”

- Sarah Blessing (UT Law '17)¹

I. Introduction

In his book, *How Will You Measure Your Life*, Clayton Christensen writes about the importance of being open to serendipitous opportunities.² Fortunately, on December 31, 2014, I was. Though the entire

¹ Sarah Blessing, Final Student Reflection Paper (Jan. 30, 2017) (on file with author).

² CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN ET AL., *HOW WILL YOU MEASURE YOUR LIFE* 42–61 (2012).

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university was closed, I came into my office to meet with the then-dean of the University of Queensland, T.C. Beirne School of Law, Sarah Derrington, and her husband, Roger.³ The meeting had been arranged by mutual friend, Wayne Ritchie.⁴

Sarah, Roger, and I hit it off right away. Both schools were interested in exploring potential collaborations. Sarah was trying to encourage pedagogical innovation at her school. I was very interested in exploring expanded international opportunities for our students. When we started talking about the new UT Law leadership program and Sarah's recent experience at the Center for Creative Leadership, Sarah quickly and emphatically said "let's collaborate on a leadership course for a combined group of students from each school!" Later that evening at a reception celebrating the Sarah and Roger's visit to Knoxville,

³ Sarah Derrington is now a federal judge and President of the Australian Law Reform Commission. Justice Sarah Derrington served as Dean and Head of School of the T.C. Beirne School of Law at the University of Queensland from 2013 until her appointment to the bench in January, 2018. *See President: The Hon. Justice S.C. Derrington, President*, AUSTRAL. L. REFORM COMMISSION, <https://www.alrc.gov.au/about/president/> [<https://perma.cc/2TQ3-JU8Q>]. Her husband, Roger Derrington, is also a federal judge, having been appointed to the bench in 2017 after a very successful career as a barrister QC. *See The Hon Roger Marc Derrington*, FED. CT. AUSTR., <https://www.fedcourt.gov.au/about/judges/current-judges-appointment/current-judges/derrington-j> [<https://perma.cc/643N-XKC7>].

⁴ Wayne Ritchie is a prominent member of the Tennessee bar with the firm of Ritchie, Dillard, Davies & Johnson in Knoxville. *See Wayne A. Ritchie II*, RITCHIE, DILLARD, DAVIES & JOHNSON, <https://rddjlaw.com/attorneys/wayne-ritchie/> [<https://perma.cc/YD4V-DMPK>].

Sarah announced, to a collection of lawyers, judges, and political leaders, our very tentative plan as a fait accompli.

And so, we did. We have been together teaching that course every New Year's Eve since, alternating between Brisbane and Knoxville. Along the way, all of us, faculty and students, have learned a great deal.

II. Lawyers as Leaders: Transpacific Perspectives

A. Backdrop

Three years before I met the Sarah and Roger Derrington, Buck Lewis⁵ and I decided to design and to teach a course about leadership. Buck and I (but mostly Buck) started exploring what other schools were doing. We initiated a conversation with Deborah Rhode at Stanford and researched the programs at Elon, St. Thomas, and Ohio State. A copy of Santa Clara Law Review *Symposium on Leadership Education for Lawyers and Law Students* became a permanent fixture on my desk.⁶

Within a few months Buck had created a library of possible course materials, developed a tentative syllabus, and started lining up guest speakers. Buck and

⁵ George T. "Buck" Lewis is senior partner with the Baker, Donelson, Bearman, and Caldwell law firm and former president of the Tennessee Bar Association. *See George T. Lewis*, BAKER DONELSON, <https://www.bakerdonelson.com/George-T-Lewis> [<https://perma.cc/A9Z8-T5KG>].

⁶ Donald J. Polden, *Symposium on Leadership Education for Lawyers and Law Students*, 52 SANTA CLARA L.R. 685, 685–1001 (2012).

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I co-taught the course, *Lawyers as Leaders*, for the first time in the fall of 2012.⁷

The first cohort of thirty students responded enthusiastically. Several students commented that as a result of the class, and for the first time since starting law school, they felt excited about becoming a lawyer.⁸ The course also resonated with alumni. Several expressed an interest in providing financial support. Our class also served as an important supplement to the professional development aspects of the law school's career services program, student pro bono program, and mentoring program. We quickly recognized the value of increasing the connection and coordination between our efforts and those programs.

So, in 2014, based on the work of a faculty working group, the full faculty voted to establish an Institute for Professional Leadership. The Institute was formally approved by the University in July, 2014.⁹ About the same time, we secured a major estate gift to support the

⁷ Buck served, and continues to serve each fall, as the Larry Wilks Distinguished Practitioner in Residence at the law school. *George T. Lewis, supra* note 5. Larry Wilks, a friend of both Buck and me, was a giant of a lawyer and leader whose untimely death resulted in a bequest that supported the creation of the leadership program at Tennessee. *See Institute for Professional Leadership: History of the Institute*, U. TENN. C. L., <https://law.utk.edu/programs/leadership/history/> [<https://perma.cc/4BXQ-45K3>]. In his role as Practitioner in Residence, Buck has been the moving force behind the growth of the leadership program at UT Law.

⁸ These recollections can be found in student reflection papers on file with the author.

⁹ *Institute for Professional Leadership: History of the Institute, supra* note 7.

Institute and that gift enabled us to raise additional funds for the program.¹⁰

With that backdrop and foundation, Sarah Derrington and I made the decision to build on our new leadership program and offer a yearly course as a collaboration between our two law schools. We decided we would alternate the course location between Brisbane and Knoxville.

When we first began talking about leadership in the context of legal education, Sarah remarked that “we need to do more than just educate graduates who are capable of doing their jobs; we need to be striving to produce people of influence and impact fifteen and twenty years after they graduate.”¹¹ Her aspirational statement helped guide our work in designing the course.

B. Getting Started

The course we envisioned, and ultimately developed, is somewhat unique. Most study-abroad programs are limited to a cohort of students from their home country studying in a foreign country. Many study-abroad programs take place over multiple weeks or months. Our proposed course, in contrast, involves a mixed group of students from two different countries all living together and learning in a very immersive, condensed format.

Our first challenge was to find a time period to offer the course that would work for both law schools. Since we were each located in different hemispheres, our seasons and, as a result school terms, did not align. Our UT summer break coincided with the middle of the UQ winter term, and vice versa. We finally identified a

¹⁰ *See id.*

¹¹ Email from Sarah Derrington, Australian Law Reform Comm’n, to author (Mar. 9, 2020) (on file with author).

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small two-week window – between Christmas and mid-January – that would work. Students at both schools would have to give up a bit of their summer and winter breaks respectively, but we assumed (correctly) that the timing would not be an impediment to student interest.

As with any successful project, both Dean Derrington and I had to identify critical partners to help make the course possible. Upon her return to Brisbane, Sarah secured financial support for her students from an enthusiastic donor.¹² She and Roger also found a location for the course, including needed housing, at Emmanuel College.¹³ I recruited Brad Morgan, then-Associate Director of the Institute for Professional Leadership, to help design and teach the course.¹⁴ Having worked and taught with Brad for several years, I had learned that getting him involved with a project ensured its success.

Before we tackled the course design, perhaps putting the cart before the horse, we all felt the need to come up with a meaningful course name. We wanted something that clearly differentiated the course from the

¹² This information has been confirmed by Dean Derrington.

¹³ Emmanuel College is one of eleven residential colleges within the University Queensland. *See generally Our Values Our History*, EMMANUEL C., <https://www.emmanuel.uq.edu.au/our-values-our-history/> [<https://perma.cc/EFL4-FDXF>]. At the time Roger Derrington was serving as Deputy Chair of the Council at Emmanuel College. *See The Hon Roger Marc Derrington, supra* note 3. Emmanuel College continues to serve as an important and very supportive partner as the course enters its fifth year of being offered.

¹⁴ Brad Morgan has played a number of important roles at UT Law. He is presently serving as Interim Dean of Students after very successful service as Director of Career Services. *Meet the Deans*, U. TENN. C. L., <https://law.utk.edu/our-college/deans/> [<https://perma.cc/89XQ-48WQ>].

pre-existing UT course, *Lawyers as Leaders*. We struggled for a few days exchanging ideas via email. Then Sarah, on the long trip back to Brisbane, came up with an elegant and meaningful name - *Leading as Lawyers: Transpacific Perspectives*.

C. The Course

1. Basic Structure

The holidays and the start of the spring semester in Tennessee limited our window to a two-week period that includes the New Year holiday.¹⁵ As a result, we realistically had ten class days with which to work. We scheduled classes from 9 a.m. to 12 noon every day, with sessions on two afternoons for specific leadership exercises. An additional debrief class was scheduled in Brisbane and Knoxville for the respective student groups after the end of the core class.

Consistent with the Emmanuel College tradition, the course kicked off with an opening dinner. The dinner provided a relaxed social opportunity for the students and faculty to get to know each other. We planned a similar closing dinner the last evening of the course.

Recognizing that much of the students' learning would occur outside of class through discussions and social interaction, we wanted to ensure a significant amount of unscheduled time, especially on weekends. We did, however, schedule several optional field trips to local

¹⁵ Our first year in Brisbane, we also conflicted with the celebration of Boxing Day in Australia. Normally celebrated on December 26th, because the 26th fell on a Saturday, that year Boxing Day was observed on Monday, December 28th. Although most businesses and schools were closed, Emmanuel College graciously accommodated the class and our students.

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points of interest, sporting events, and dinners at faculty homes.¹⁶

2. Students

Both financial considerations and our desire to maximize student interaction and cohesion, we decided to limit the course to twelve students, six from each school. We also wanted to ensure that the cohorts from each school were equal in size to make it easy to pair American and Australian students.

To ensure access to all students regardless of their available financial resources, both schools decided to subsidize the housing accommodations for each student.¹⁷ The schools separately selected the participating students based on applications and statements of interest.¹⁸ In making those selections we looked for, among other things, a demonstrated interest in leadership and a commitment to service.

3. Goals

While our primary objective was to introduce students to basic leadership principles and the value of service through the lens of lawyers, our international collaboration presented some unique possibilities. We wanted to leverage the cross-cultural opportunities to have both American and Australian law students experience and examine the subtleties in styles and

¹⁶ See *infra* text and accompanying notes 27–28.

¹⁷ Students remained responsible for all travel and personal expenses.

¹⁸ Because law school in Australia is normally an undergraduate program, Sarah recruited students at UQ that were in their penultimate year of studies.

approaches of the two legal systems on either side of the Pacific.

To achieve those broad goals, we identified a fluid set of teaching objectives.¹⁹ Our initial list of objectives was:

1) To develop in students a better understanding of leadership attributes, skills, and styles;

2) To help students understand their own leadership attributes, skills and styles and to develop further those attributes, skills and styles;

3) To provide students with self-leadership strategies and tools to manage stress and maintain well-being;

4) To develop in students a purposeful approach to professional development and career planning;

5) To develop an understanding of the unique way lawyers are called upon to lead; and,

6) To help students understand the importance of the concept of legacy.²⁰

Sarah, Brad, and I also shared less clearly defined aspirational goals for the students' educational experience. For example, we hoped our students would broaden their perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of other people, countries, and cultures.²¹ We also hoped our students would become more confident and effective as lawyers functioning in an increasingly

¹⁹ A copy of the most recent syllabus is available upon request to blaze@utk.edu.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ While we, as discussed below, include a number of field trips and comparative presentations, we correctly assumed that most of this learning objective would be achieved through the out-of-class interaction between the students.

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globalized profession. Finally, we very much wanted our students to have fun in the process.

4. Classes

We sequenced the classes, based on our teaching objectives, in four phases. First, the class surveyed leadership generally by identifying effective leadership characteristics, including the skills needed to exhibit those characteristics. Second, students began to explore leadership development in more depth through experiential application, with feedback, of specific leadership skills. Third, we examined methods of career planning and professional development. Fourth, we considered the unique opportunities for lawyers provide leadership for positive changes in their profession and communities. We also wanted students to learn, throughout the entire course, about the differences between the Australian and American legal professions, systems of legal education, political systems, and cultures more generally.

In keeping with the immersive, experiential focus of the learning experience, we kept reading assignments to a minimum. All students read Deborah Rhode's *Lawyers as Leaders* as the basic text.²² We supplemented the text with a few articles from a variety of sources. We also invited several exceptional guest speakers including judges, prominent lawyers, and faculty colleagues with interest and expertise relevant to the particular class or topic.

²² DEBORAH L. RHODE, *LAWYERS AS LEADERS* (2013) [hereinafter *LAWYERS AS LEADERS*].

i. *Leadership Overview*

Our first class started with an exercise that provided a foundation for later discussions about specific leadership skills. We paired the students – one UT student with one UQ student – and had them interview and then introduce each other. We later used the exercise as a reference point for discussions of active listening, oral presentation, and self-awareness.

Most often leadership is viewed in terms of “traits, processes, skills, and relationships.”²³ So we begin the exploration of leadership by having the students create lists, as a group, of what characteristics and actions *effective* leaders demonstrate, and what characteristics and actions *ineffective* leaders demonstrate. The discussion is always robust and, with minor differences, consistently results in an inventory of characteristics and skills that includes self-awareness, integrity, effective communication, empathy, social awareness, vision, and competence.²⁴

We then take the list generated and have the students rank, in small groups, the three most important attributes of effective leaders. We conclude the discussion by sharing research that ranks the top attributes of “most admired leaders,” in order, as honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.²⁵ Focusing on those four attributes, supplemented with additional items from the student generated list, we drill down into the skills

²³ DEBORAH L. RHODE & AMANDA K. PACKEL, LEADERSHIP FOR LAWYERS 5 (2018).

²⁴ The similarity the lists produced in multiple classes is consistent with the research. *See, e.g.*, LAWYERS AS LEADERS, *supra* note 22, at 3–4.

²⁵ RHODE & PACKEL, *supra* note 23, at 27–29 (citing JAMES M. KOUZES & BARRY Z. POSNER, THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE 14–23, 28–30, and 32–35 (4th ed. 2007)).

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necessary to demonstrate those attributes. For example, students regularly identify the skills or actions of communication and transparency as essential to the leadership attribute of honesty.

ii. Leadership Development

Using the discussion of characteristics and skills as a foundation, the students then spend the next two classes learning to develop and to apply specific leadership skills through exercises followed by peer and faculty feedback. This part of the class is loosely divided into two overlapping components: leadership of self and leadership in groups.

With regard to leadership of self, the class first focuses on the critical skill of self-awareness. All the students take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator²⁶ and the VIA Character Strengths Survey²⁷ before the course begins. We debrief in class the survey results by engaging in a discussion of potential lessons regarding increased understanding of ourselves and of others. This part of the class finishes with a discussion of methods of obtaining meaningful feedback and the importance of mentors. We then turn to the topics of self-discipline, stress management, and well-being. The discussion is robust and wide ranging, and concludes with a presentation of strategies to increase positive emotion and well-being.²⁸

²⁶ See THE MYERS & BRIGGS FOUNDATION, <https://www.myersbriggs.org> [<https://perma.cc/C8G2-UPUT>].

²⁷ See VIA INSTITUTE ON CHARACTER, <https://www.viacharacter.org> [<https://perma.cc/FW5R-CJ7S>].

²⁸ Students are provided with a variety of materials and other resources developed at the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. See generally PENN ARTS &

After a brief discussion of group interaction and dynamics, the students participate in several exercises designed to increase their understanding and skills. First, the students engage in an active listening exercise followed by self, peer, and faculty feedback.²⁹ Second, the students are divided into teams and plan and execute a group task achievement exercise developed by Brad Morgan and a business school colleague, Dr. Mandyam Srinivasan.³⁰ Third, the students work on oral presentation skills by making a pitch to the faculty on why they should be hired for a legal position of their choosing.

The final exercise continues through the remainder of the course both in and outside of class. Students, in pairs, are assigned to observe their assigned partner's interaction with themselves and others with the goal of providing constructive feedback on how that behavior might be improved. Utilizing the Situation-Behavior-Impact ("SBI") model of feedback,³¹ students exchange the feedback SBI's on the last day of class. The feedback session is a particularly meaningful exercise. The students have told us that the exercise helps them

SCIENCES POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CENTER, <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/> [<https://perma.cc/HU4A-TMDQ>].

²⁹ We have used a number of different active listening exercises. All of the exercises have a similar structure: one student interviews and counsels another on a relevant topic, e.g., job choice, with a third student observing and providing feedback.

³⁰ Pilot Corp. Chair of Excellence, University of Tennessee, Haslam College of Business. *See Mandyam Srinivasan*, HASLAM C. BUS., <https://haslam.utk.edu/experts/mandyam-srinivasan> [<https://perma.cc/R842-3W3U>].

³¹ *See* Mind Tools Content Team, *The Situation – Behavior – Impact Feedback Tool*, MIND TOOLS, <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/situation-behavior-impact-feedback.htm> [<https://perma.cc/JM3Q-EBEF>].

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significantly increase their self-awareness and improve their group interactions by being more observant and purposeful in their behavior.

iii. *Career Planning and Professional
Development*

One of our major goals is to encourage the students think more deeply about the kind of lawyer and leader they want to be. Through a focus on professional planning and development, we push the students to be more intentional about putting their thoughts into action. We also want the students to begin to plan the steps they will need to be successful once they enter the profession in whatever capacity they chose.

My colleague, Brad Morgan, always introduces this part of the class by presenting a dialogue from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in which Alice is seeking advice from the Cheshire Cat.

Alice asks the Cat:

“Would you tell me please which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don't much care where —,” said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“— so long as I get *somewhere*,” Alice added as an explanation.

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“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”³²

During this phase of the course, we discuss topics such as mentors, resumes, strategic planning, and credentialing. We also talk about the value of becoming involved in Bar Associations and Law Societies, as well as judicial clerkships. The students also examine the future of the legal profession through readings, guest speakers,³³ and classroom discussion. At the conclusion of the course, students are required to prepare a professional development plan, followed by a meeting with the faculty to provide feedback on their efforts.

iv. Leadership as Lawyers

The last class session examines the role of lawyers as leaders for positive change. Discussion of topics like public service, access to justice, law reform, and community leadership are supplemented with case studies and guest speakers. Most recently, the students have participated in virtual legal clinic, answering online legal questions for people who cannot afford a lawyer through the ABA-supported Free Legal Answers website.³⁴

³² See LEWIS CARROLL, ALICE’S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND 45 (Richard Kelly ed., Broadview Literary Texts 2000) (1865).

³³ We are fortunate to have a wonderful colleague, Ben Barton, who is a thought leader on the topic presented to the class when it is in Knoxville. See, e.g., BENJAMIN H. BARTON, GLASS HALF FULL: THE DECLINE AND REBIRTH OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION (2015).

³⁴ *Free Legal Answers*, A.B.A., <https://www.abafreelegalanswers.org/> [<https://perma.cc/K8UV-JKR8>]. Free Legal Answers, and its original creation as Tennessee Online Justice, is the brainchild of another incredible colleague, George “Buck” Lewis. See *Meeting the Need*, U.

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As the course concludes, we turn to concept of personal and professional legacy. The goal is to get the students, who are understandably focused almost exclusively on their short-term goals of graduation and gainful employment, to begin to think about their long-term impact on their profession and community. We begin the discussion with an exercise asking the students to identify three significant expenditures of their time that proved worthy, and three that proved unworthy. The vitally important roles of friends, family, new experiences, and helping others are highlighted over and over again. The faculty conclude the conversation by offering our thoughts on our own legacies.

v. *Extracurricular Activities*

We strongly encourage extracurricular activities to build group cohesion and to foster a better understanding of our respective professions and cultures. But we also understand that, as a matter of leadership development, we should leave most of the planning for out-of-class time to the students themselves. The faculty, however, arrange field trips related to the legal profession, particularly the courts. In both Brisbane and Knoxville, we devote one full afternoon to visit and learn more about our respective state and federal courts, interact with judges,³⁵ and visit with members of the bar.³⁵

TENN. C. L., (July 18, 2019), <https://law.utk.edu/2019/07/18/meeting-the-need/> [<https://perma.cc/E73P-8NR2>].

³⁵ In Brisbane, we visit both law firms and barristers' chambers. The visits help the American students better understand the distinction between barristers and solicitors. Giving the students a chance to model a barrister's wig is always a highlight of the field trip.

The faculty also help organize at least one additional field trip to explore a unique aspect of our respective locations. In Brisbane, we visit the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. In Knoxville, we arrange a tour of the extensive athletic facilities of the University of Tennessee and, depending on the winter weather, encourage a visit to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

We also try, knowing our students, to provide an optional opportunity to attend local sporting matches and other special events. For example, in 2016, we took advantage of the fact that the Lawyers Cricket World Cup was held in Brisbane contemporaneously with the course. The matches and awards reception provided a great opportunity for the students to interact with lawyers from around the world.³⁶ While in Knoxville, the students always enjoy attending a Lady Vols basketball game.³⁷

vi. Course Conclusion

The course concludes with a closing dinner. While the primary purpose of the dinner is to celebrate the course and each other, the students have two assignments for the evening festivities.

Early in the course, the students are assigned to make a personal coat of arms building on the class

³⁶ See AUSTRALIAN LAWYERS CRICKET COUNCIL, <https://www.australianlawyerscricket.asn.au/> [<https://perma.cc/9J6U-NCKM>].

³⁷ Both the Lady Vols games and the athletic facilities tour are due to the gracious support of Joan Cronan, the former Director of Women's Athletics at UT, and a strong supporter of our leadership program. See *Joan Cronan*, TENN. SPORTS HALL FAME, <http://tshf.net/halloffame/cronan-joan/> [<https://perma.cc/HQN6-TK88>].

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materials, speakers, and discussion.³⁸ More specifically, we ask them to divide the coat of arms “shield” into four quadrants. The upper left quadrant is for their leadership skills. The upper right quadrant is for their passion. The lower left section is for their key values. And the lower right quadrant is for a particular time they experienced a strong sense of success or competence. We encourage them to be creative in designing and illustrating the contents of each quadrant. Finally, they are asked to craft and place a personal motto at the top of the coat of arms. After dinner, the students present and explain the coat of arms they have crafted. The effort and thought that each student puts into their coat of arms and their presentation is consistently exceptional. The assignment underscores, for the faculty at least, the students’ personal and professional growth during the course.

The second assignment involves the exchange of toasts between the students. During the last class session, students are again paired, UQ students with UT students. The faculty confer to determine the pairing assignments based on our observations of the students during the course. We urge the students to be creative with their toasts. Songs and poems are encouraged. The toasts are always exceptionally well-done - thoughtful, meaningful, and usually a bit humorous. The tradition is a wonderful way for the students to celebrate their shared experiences and bonds of friendship.

³⁸ We began using this exercise during the third iteration of the course.

III. Lessons Learned

All courses and classes provide great learning opportunities for the teachers. But the unique format, locations, and content of *Leading as Lawyers: Transpacific Perspectives* has provided a number of invaluable lessons for leadership development work.

A. Immersive Learning³⁹

I have helped teach our original leadership class, *Lawyers as Leaders*, in a twice a week class format for seven years. While each class responds somewhat differently, I am frequently disappointed with lack of depth to the discussions of more personally challenging topics like wellness, work-life balance, gender equality, and diversity. In contrast, the discussion of those topics in *Leading as Lawyers: Transpacific Perspectives* is almost always, deep, robust and, inspiring.

I attribute the difference between the discussion quality in the two courses to two things. First, the exceptional teaching abilities of my colleagues, Sarah Derrington and Brad Morgan, create a safe space for deeper discussions in *Leading as Lawyers*. Both Sarah and Brad connect well with every student and both are exceptional listeners. The students feel comfortable opening up and sharing almost immediately.

³⁹ I am aware that the label of “immersive learning” has a specific meaning in the context of learning language and online learning. *E.g.*, *Immersive Learning Explained*, RACOON GANG, <https://raccoongang.com/blog/immersive-learning-explained/> [https://perma.cc/6FPC-VRE7]. I think the same principles that underlie the appropriateness of the label in those contexts support my use here. *But cf.* THE PRINCESS BRIDE (Act III Communications 1987) (“*You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.*”).

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Second, and most important, the students are all immersed in the course for two weeks. All twelve students live together, attend class together, eat together, and socialize together. Within the first two days, the trust that develops between the students is obvious in the classroom. The discussion become increasingly open and honest, even when dealing with value-laden issues like gender bias in the legal profession and the value of diversity. The conversations about well-being and stress management are much more meaningful because the students are willing to share their concerns, fears, and weaknesses.

The value of the immersive format of the course extends beyond the class sessions. The faculty occasionally drop in on the students during their lunch following class. The discussions we observe are almost always focused on the topics we covered earlier that day in class. Additionally, as students work together to make social plans, they have the opportunity to utilize the leadership and communication skill lessons from class.

The concept is not unique; intersession courses follow a similar model. But the mix of students from two countries, half of whom are in a very new place, seems to make the condensed class format an even more effective learning experience.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The format has proven so successful that another colleague and I have utilized it to teach a course on well-being, *Thriving as a Lawyer*. While we do not leave campus for two weeks, we structure the course over two weekends in the spring semester. From Friday mid-day through Sunday mid-day, students and faculty are together for class sessions and most meals.

B. Experiential Development of Cultural Competence

For the initial 2015–16 course, we assumed that most of the learning about similarities and differences between the United States and Australia would occur out of class through interaction between the students. We did, however, have a unique resource available. A lawyer in Brisbane had grown up in Knoxville, attended both the University of Tennessee College of Law and the T.C. Beirne School of Law, and had worked as a lawyer in both countries. In fact, the joint alumna, Cynthia Sullivan, had been a student of both Sarah Derrington and me during her time at our respective schools.⁴¹ Due to Ms. Sullivan’s availability, we did not have her speak to the students until very late in that first course. The feedback from the students was unanimous – have a comparative information session at the very outset of the class. The students felt strongly that an overview of each countries legal, political, and economic systems would help facilitate discussions on those issues among the students both in and out of class.

Since the first course, we have always devoted a significant portion of the first class to a comparative informational session on the Australian and American legal professions, legal and political systems, and systems of legal education. A combination of judges, senior lawyers, and junior lawyers present to the class and answer questions. The students are often surprised, as evidenced by their questions and comments, by both

⁴¹Ms. Sullivan is the only University of Tennessee College of Law alumnus in Australia. *See generally* Rynn Dupes, *Law Vols Around the World*, U. TENN. C. L. (Oct. 27, 2015), <https://law.utk.edu/2015/10/27/law-vols-around-the-world/> [https://perma.cc/YT2B-JWBW].

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the differences⁴² and the similarities⁴³ in the cultures, legal professions, and political systems of the two countries. The class helps the students begin to experience what Professor Raquel Aldana refers to as a shift from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative attitude.⁴⁴

Building on the in-class informational presentations and discussion, the students then experience and discuss various cultural differences throughout the remainder of the course. Together, the students visit each other's homes, attend cricket, tennis, and basketball events, celebrate the New Year, socialize, party, go to the beach, eat barbeque, try moonshine, and talk about their lives and futures. There are significant individual and shared cultural competency learning outcomes from these experiences and interactions.⁴⁵

For example, in their post-course reflection papers, a number of students have commented in depth about the differences in the communication styles of the

⁴² For example, the students ask a great deal about professional distinction between barristers and solicitors in Australia, mandatory voting in Australia, law school as a graduate program in U.S, public ownership of law firms in Australia.

⁴³ *E.g.*, stress of practicing law, work-life balance issues, rapidly changing legal profession in both countries.

⁴⁴ See Raquel Aldana, *Intercultural Legal Sensibility as Transformation*, 25 S. CAL. INTERDISC. L.J. 1, 12 (2016). The American students often comment that their Australian counterparts are more informed than the American students about American political issues. Most Australian students have far more international travel experience than the American students as well.

⁴⁵ See generally Susan Bryant, *The Five Habits: Building Cross-Cultural Competence in Lawyers*, 8 CLIN. L. REV. 33 (2001) (discussing the process of development of cross-cultural competence).

students, particularly between the Australians and Americans. For example, one student wrote:

[The Australians] possess a quiet humility and are careful to listen before speaking. I found that much of their outward demeanor was reflective of their culture. When put in a large group, the American students, myself included, consistently voiced their opinions and emotions. If we were tired, hot, or hungry, the whole group would know. The Australian students, however, kept such observations to themselves. I realized that, in my interactions with any of the Australians, I felt valued. They listened attentively, and they rarely shifted the conversation to themselves.⁴⁶

This lesson of conscious attention to the process of communication, and the associated empathy and self-awareness, is essential to effective leadership and lawyering.⁴⁷ In the process, the same experiences can help students to shed stereotypes and biases.⁴⁸

The cross-cultural interaction also helps the students become more adaptive and emotionally resilient.⁴⁹ One student, for example, thrived in the course despite having lost all his luggage and tearing his

⁴⁶ Student reflection paper on file with the author.

⁴⁷ See Bryant, *supra* note 45, at 72–73 (cross-cultural experiences encourage purposeful attention to communication process).

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 76–78.

⁴⁹ See Julia Shaftel, Timothy Shaftel & Rohini Ahluwalia, *International Education Experience and Intercultural Competence*, 6 INT'L J. BUS. & ECON. 30 (2007).

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ACL the first day of class.⁵⁰ At the conclusion of the course, he wrote: "I limped away from this course with an appreciation for knowing myself, focusing on the small things, being authentic, not wavering in my morals, and ultimately with an appreciation of the differences among all of us."⁵¹

C. Going Where the Class is Ready to Go

As mentioned at the outset of this article, we need to deliberately plan but, at the same time, recognize and be open to emergent opportunities that arise. Thanks to my colleagues, we have utilized that approach in teaching the course with great success.

Brad, Sarah, and I very intentionally plan our course coverage class-by-class. We carefully select the materials, decide on assignments, and outline the topic coverage for every session. But then, using that outline, we meet at the end of each class session to review and rethink our plan for the next day. Brad, Sarah, and I talk about how we might be able to build on that day's discussion as a foundation for another topic. For example, one class concluded with a discussion of the students' concerns about their post-graduation futures. Much of the conversation revolved around the students' concerns about the stress of practicing law. The next day, in response, we started class with a presentation and discussion about work-life balance⁵² Sarah then turned

⁵⁰ The injury occurred during an Americans vs. Australians game of netball. The Americans prevailed, but only because our polite Australian hosts were reluctant to call too many fouls.

⁵¹ Student reflection paper on file with the author.

⁵² I use the phrase "work-life balance" here because there is a somewhat common understanding of what the topic entails. In

the focus to the unique challenges faced by women lawyers, and the class ended up having a very rich discussion of gender inequality in the profession.

We occasionally do the same thing on the fly during a class session. After our first two or three class sessions, Sarah, Brad, and I learned to interact very effectively with a reasonable understanding of where each of us was headed in the discussion. As a result, the three of us have become more adept at pivoting during discussion on one topic to another related topic based on perceived interest and receptivity of the students. For example, a discussion of barriers to effective leadership might shift to the importance of feedback and mentors, even though coverage of that topic was planned for the professional development class two days later.

While it may sound like we jump around in class, the contrary is true. By going to where the class seems ready to go, we cover the material more cohesively and effectively. Admittedly, the condensed format of the course makes our approach more appropriate, but I strive to achieve greater flexibility in my other classes as well.

D. Teatime

Thanks to Sarah's foresight, we included the Australian tradition of morning teatime during the first offering of the course in Brisbane. About the middle of the morning session, we would break for tea, coffee, and

our class we avoid the phrase, noting for the students that work is a subset of life and that balancing the two is conceptually impossible. Instead we refer to "value-based decision making." See Kelsey Knoer, *Thinking Bigger Than Work-Life Balance*, A.B.A.: YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION (July 31, 2019), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/projects/no-limits/thinking-bigger-than-work-life-balance/ [<https://perma.cc/XQ94-4QG5>].

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pastries for twenty to thirty minutes. Presumptively a social time, our morning teatimes proved to be an important part of the educational experience. Students and faculty regularly debrief the morning discussion, talk about career goals and planning, and get to know each other better on a personal and professional level. Guest speakers for the day are also invited and readily participate. As a result, the morning breaks reinforce the learning from the morning class session and help maintain a collective sense of energy and commitment for the rest of the class.

Teatime in Australia proved so important, we made sure to replicate teatime – albeit with limited culinary success – in Knoxville.

E. Facilitating vs. Teaching

Teaching leadership development is, for me, far different than teaching a doctrinal course, whether it is criminal law, maritime law, or even pretrial litigation.⁵³ In my introductory comments to the students in *Leading as Lawyers*, I emphasize that the students will learn far more from each other than from the faculty. Leadership development necessarily focuses on the unique skills and attributes each student must utilize to be a successful leader.⁵⁴ The student learning, as a result, involves an individualized process of self-discovery and development by the student guided by the faculty.⁵⁵

⁵³ Sarah, Brad, and I teach maritime law, criminal law, and pretrial litigation, respectively.

⁵⁴ See Douglas A. Blaze, *Law Student Motivation, Satisfaction, and Well-Being: The Value of a Leadership and Professional Development Curriculum*, 58 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 547, 560 (2018).

⁵⁵ *Id.*

The role of the faculty, we have learned, should be that of a *facilitator* of the students learning, rather than that of a traditional teacher imparting information and knowledge. “Facilitation is different from teaching in that trainers are usually process guides, and the activity is more experiential, collaborative and less didactic.”⁵⁶

All three of us have adopted a facilitation model for our teaching. After introducing a topic, we immediately ask for student thoughts and ideas on the issue, sharing our knowledge or information only sparingly and as necessary. To introduce leadership principles, for example, we ask the students to identify the characteristics of effective leaders based on their own experience or observation of others. Only when we have completed that discussion, and the students have ranked those characteristics in terms of importance, do we share research into what are recognized as the most important leadership attributes and skills. The step for sharing the research and our knowledge is, most often, simply one of validating the students’ work.

The faculty also have extensive one-on-one interaction with students both in and out of class. While we still function as facilitators of the student learning in those one-on-one settings, our individual interactions with students are more appropriately characterized as coaching and mentoring. Those roles, we have found, continue long after the conclusion of the course.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See Joseph L. Curtin, *Teaching Versus Facilitating in Leadership Development: Trends in Business*, 1 J. LEADERSHIP EDUC. 58, 60 (2002).

⁵⁷ We all continue to serve as mentors and advisors to many of the students long after the course.

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IV. Conclusion

Leading as Lawyers: Transpacific Perspectives has been the highlight of my teaching career. The impact on the students, and me, has been life changing. The program has provided me with a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for my professional role. Teaching alongside Sarah Derrington and Brad Morgan has been inspiring. Working with the students has been a source of hope and excitement about the future. There is an incredibly talented and committed generation of new leaders emerging.

The globalization of our profession and legal education, coupled with the increasing attention to leadership training in law schools,⁵⁸ presents the opportunity for other law schools to provide similar courses and programs. I hope that some of you will consider exploring the idea. We need to work together to develop future lawyer-leaders committed to positive change in our profession and our communities.

⁵⁸ More than forty law schools now report having courses or programs in leadership development. See *Law School Leadership Development Programs*, BAYLOR U., <https://baylor.app.box.com/s/v53753qbp8xdta2xqdh7nvcf4wngng8u4> [<https://perma.cc/9EZD-ZEKS>].

