

2016

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Recommended Citation

Parish, Sally and Scogin, Joe (2016) "THE VOLEADERS ACADEMY AND BOUNDARY SPANNING LEADERSHIP," *Tennessee Law Review*: Vol. 83: Iss. 3, Article 10.

Available at: <https://ir.law.utk.edu/tennesseelawreview/vol83/iss3/10>

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THE VOLEDERS ACADEMY AND BOUNDARY SPANNING LEADERSHIP

SALLY PARISH* & JOE SCOGIN**

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, we are continuously challenged with spanning boundaries to create partnerships and possibilities that extend beyond individual departmental units. As we strive to connect our institution through true collaborative partnerships, boundary spanning is the only true method to guide our collective journeys.¹

In Ernst and Chrobot-Mason's book *Boundary Spanning Leadership: Six Practices for Solving Problems, Driving Innovation, and Transforming Organizations*, the authors study twenty-five different organizations, and identify and recommend practices for leading across differences and for developing asset-based partnerships.² These partnerships can and should extend across departments, divisions, and into larger communities, making the

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1. Sally G. Parish, *Boundary Spanning Leadership: Six Practices for Solving Problems, Driving Innovation, and Transforming Organizations*, 19 J. HIGHER EDUC. OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT 207, 207 (2015) (book review).

2. CHRIS ERNST & DONNA CHROBOT-MASON, BOUNDARY SPANNING LEADERSHIP: SIX PRACTICES FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS, DRIVING INNOVATION, AND TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS, at xvii (2011).

contributions of universities to society the most meaningful and impactful.

The authors define and explore the concept of boundaries as two connected, but differing, notions: "borders that limit human potential" and frontiers that house "advanced thinking and breakthrough possibilities."³ Both definitions are embraced and advanced through the work of boundary spanning leadership, defined by the authors as "the ability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across boundaries in service of a higher vision or goal."⁴ The authors recognize five primary boundaries that are encountered in organizations, including:

1. Vertical boundaries: hierarchical boundaries where people are separated by title, rank, power, and privilege;⁵
2. Horizontal boundaries: boundaries that exist because of "turf" or silos that exist in our organizations;⁶
3. Stakeholder boundaries: boundaries that exist where sources of value are kept distinct and separate between organizations and partners, vendors, and communities;⁷
4. Demographic boundaries: boundaries found in the difference of identity within our communities and places of work;⁸ and
5. Geographic boundaries: boundaries of space, distance, region, and location.⁹

Horizontal boundaries were found to be the most prevalent. The authors describe horizontal boundaries as "the walls that separate groups by areas of experience and expertise."¹⁰

To navigate the complexities and challenges of aligning groups to achieve greatness, while acknowledging and working across the five most prevalent boundaries, Ernst and Chrobot-Mason outline six critical practices for boundary spanning leaders:

1. Buffering: creating intergroup safety by monitoring and protecting the passage of information and resources across groups.¹¹

3. *Id.* at 3.

4. *Id.* at 5 (emphasis omitted).

5. *Id.* at 21-22.

6. *Id.* at 23-25.

7. *Id.* at 26-28.

8. *Id.* at 28-30.

9. *Id.* at 31-33.

10. *Id.* at 23.

11. *Id.* at 9.

2. Reflecting: fostering intergroup respect through the understanding of boundaries and the facilitation of the exchange of knowledge across groups.¹²
3. Connecting: building intergroup trust through the suspension of boundaries and the bridging of people and divided groups.¹³
4. Mobilizing: reframing boundaries and developing intergroup community through the development of a common purpose and a shared identity across groups.¹⁴
5. Weaving: advancing intergroup independence, “the state of mutual dependence and collective learning that develops when intergroup boundaries are interlaced within a larger whole,”¹⁵ by drawing out and integrating group differences within a larger whole.¹⁶
6. Transforming: enabling intergroup reinvention through the partnership of multiple groups to create new emergent directions that cross-cut existing boundaries.¹⁷

The job of a boundary spanning leader, Ernst and Chrobot-Mason observe, is to build bridges and provide the space for the six practices of boundary spanning leadership to occur. They note: “[T]he days of ‘I lead and you follow’ are over. Gone are the days when leaders work *within* an intact group in which leaders and followers share a culture, values, and interests. Instead, today you must lead *across* groups”¹⁸

Taken together, and in the context of leadership and sport, the six practices of boundary spanning leadership have provided a powerful approach for faculty, staff, and professional practitioners at The University of Tennessee to employ in fostering synergistic university-community collaborations to both holistically develop the student-athlete, not only in the context of their roles as athletes and leaders, but also as agents of social change. As Ernst and Chrobot-Mason state, “When safety, respect, trust, community, interdependence, and reinvention characterize the interactions between groups, these groups will achieve something together above and beyond what they could achieve on their own.”¹⁹ Such groups have the potential to achieve what the authors refer to as the “Nexus

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.* at 10.

14. *Id.*

15. *Id.* at 195 tbl.8.1.

16. *Id.* at 11.

17. *Id.* at 11-12.

18. *Id.* at 6-7.

19. *Id.* at 219.

Effect,” characterized as the “limitless possibilities and inspiring results that groups can achieve together above and beyond what they could achieve on their own.”²⁰ The authors paint a picture of a synergistic community that we have made great strides for at The University of Tennessee through the creation and implementation of the VOLeaders Academy.

Leadership programs and athletic programs have both existed on college campuses for many years, however, it is rare to find a holistic leadership development program specifically tailored for student-athletes and even more rare to find one that is collaboratively shared between departments and divisions. This is what makes the collaborative VOLeaders Academy at The University of Tennessee so groundbreaking in nature. Through a dynamic partnership between the Center for Leadership & Service; the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society; and the Department of Athletics, the VOLeaders Academy was developed to cultivate positive leaders who will create positive social change through sport.

Leadership and Sport are two common languages throughout the world. By using their platform in sport, student-athletes admitted into the VOLeaders Academy learn how to positively impact their team, campus, and local and global communities. They are charged to find ways to use their passion for sport and their influence to enact positive change that transcends their athletic success.

“Widely held research related to leadership in athletics focuses primarily on the development of coaches’ leadership styles versus developing student-athlete leadership capacity. The structure in athletics usually allows for slow steady growth as an athlete, which also can allow for purposeful growth as a positional leader.”²¹ These “positional leader[s],” usually identified as either captains or top athletic performers, are typically the only student-athletes engaged in leadership development experiences at the collegiate level, and oftentimes those experiences are not grounded in theory or in a collaborative approach. The work we have sought to do through the VOLeaders Academy at the University of Tennessee has challenged traditional norms of student-athlete leadership identity development through the shared leadership of three unique units across our campus.

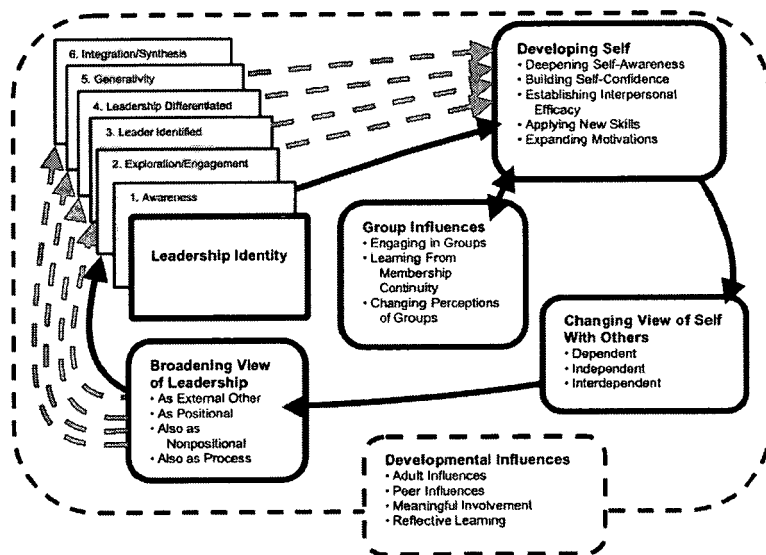
20. *Id.* at 223 (emphasis omitted).

21. Anthony Weaver & Kathleen Simet, *Intercollegiate Student Athlete as Leader*, in *NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP: STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RECREATION AND ATHLETICS* 53, 54 (2015) (citing Philip J. Sullivan & Aubrey Kent, *Coaching Efficacy as a Predictor of Leadership Style in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 15 *J. APPLIED SPORT PSYCHOL.* 1, 1-11 (2003)).

“With the varying environments in recreation and athletics, there are myriad opportunities to develop student leaders by means of applying leadership developmental models. The use of a framework or model will be dependent upon the environment and context it is being used.”²² At the University of Tennessee, we have incorporated the use of the Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model and the Social Change model to shape the VOLeaders Academy program and have integrated the frameworks of Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Emotionally Intelligent Leadership, and Strengths Based Leadership to develop each student-athlete into the best possible leader he or she can be.

CORE MODELS OF THE VOLEADERS ACADEMY:

Leadership Identity Development Model: This model frames leadership as collaborative, relational, and as a process that one can engage in at varying levels. The LID Model posits that leadership can be developed and is not tied to a leadership position. This grounded theory references leadership as an experience that one engages in through a six-stage developmental process illustrated below:²³



22. Cara W. McFadden & Donald A. Stenta, *Connecting Collegiate Recreation and Athletics to Leadership*, in *NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP: STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RECREATION AND ATHLETICS* 5, 16 (2015).

23. Susan R. Komives et al., *Developing a Leadership Identity: A Grounded Theory*, 46 *J. C. STUDENT DEV.* 593, 599 fig.1 (2005).

Social Change Model: Established in 1994, the Social Change Model approaches leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change. The Social Change Model espouses the understanding that anyone can lead, and that leadership can be developed in all who seek it, which is why it is the perfect model for college students seeking to develop as leaders or change their respective communities. The model was built upon the following assumptions:

- Leadership is socially responsible; it impacts change on behalf of others.
- Leadership is collaborative.
- Leadership is a process, not a position.
- Leadership is inclusive and accessible to all people.
- Leadership is values-based.

Community involvement/service is a powerful vehicle for leadership.

The model incorporates the “7 C’s” which serve as values and practices of leadership that occur in three interactive dimensions with the goal of positive social change.²⁴

From a pedagogical perspective, the VOLeaders Academy engages students in experiential and service-learning opportunities, both locally and abroad, which provide them with the unique opportunity to learn, lead, and empower underserved populations through sport. A recent report of the findings within the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership identified four high-impact practices that serve as predictors of collegiate student leadership capacity.²⁵ Of the four identified, three are relevant to the work of collegiate athlete leadership identity development and have framed significant experiences within the VOLeaders Academy. These include sociocultural conversations with peers, community service activities, and mentoring relationships. Each of these three practices has been successfully integrated into the VOLeaders curriculum:

Socio-Cultural Conversations: Students engaged in the VOLeaders Academy participate in course-based and co-curricular conversations surrounding diversity, interculturalism, power, privilege, and social justice.

24. For more information regarding the Social Change Model, see HELEN S. ASTIN & ALEXANDER W. ASTIN, HIGHER EDUC. RESEARCH INST., A SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: GUIDEBOOK, VERSION III (1996).

25. See John P. Dugan et al., *The Role of Social Perspective-Taking in Developing Students' Leadership Capacities*, 51 J. STUDENT AFF. RES. & PRAC. 1, 1-11 (2014).

Community Service: VOLeaders participate in community service and service-learning experiences locally and abroad through their participation in the Academy, and they are also exposed to the concepts of Servant Leadership, which are at the foundation of the University of Tennessee's history.

Mentoring Relationships: VOLeaders are mentored by faculty and staff throughout their time in the program and are also trained through an Applied Leadership Experiences course to mentor future generations of VOLeaders as well as other rising leaders on their teams.

This collaborative, year-long program is highlighted by four core components:

Leadership Retreat: All VOLeaders Academy participants attend a full-day, off-campus leadership retreat. The focus of the retreat is on individual and group development and features Strengths Based Leadership exploration, activities to encourage group development, and the initial exploration of emotionally intelligent leadership.

Leadership in Sport Course: This academic, three-hour leadership course meets twice weekly in the Fall semester and focuses on individual leadership development through the Social Change Model, Emotionally Intelligent Leadership, and Servant Leadership. Key concepts include values, ethical leadership, 360-degree leadership, creating change, integrity, and serving others. The class provides students with an understanding of their individual leadership styles, gives them the practice of leadership in collegiate athletics, and equips them with the foundational skills necessary to lead their teams, campus, and community. Practices of successful leaders in sport are examined, as is the prominent leadership theory. This is one of the only courses of its kind in the nation, and it also exposes VOLeaders to the university's Leadership Studies Minor.

Sport and Social Change: This course is designed to teach students leadership principles, professionalism, critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication skills through sport-based service. Specifically, this course is designed in collaboration with local community partners who are using sport as a tool for community development. This course is designed to prepare students for the service experiences they will be exposed to throughout their summer service immersion trip.

Service Immersion Experience: Students engage in a ten-day service immersion experience that exposes them to leadership and sport in another culture. Locations change each year, and key concepts include servant leadership, social justice, service learning, and social change through sport-based service. The 2016 VOLeaders Service Immersion Experience is to take place in Sao Paulo and Rio, Brazil, where they will plan a day-long sport-based community

development program and will engage with local non-profit organizations to provide sport-based service at the site of the 2016 Olympic games. Throughout their service immersion experience, VOLeaders are also enrolled in a two-credit-hour academic course. This *Applied Leadership Experience* course engages students, in theory, to practice conversations and dialogue surrounding their service experiences and strengths as student-athlete leaders.

The innovative approach of the VOLeaders Academy is possible only due to its unique campus-wide collaboration that brings together three unique entities:

The Center for Leadership & Service, a department in the Division of Student Life whose mission is “to educate and engage all students to lead and serve in the global community.”²⁶ Created in 2012, the Center for Leadership & Service (“the Center”) is guided in part by a number of leadership and service theories and best practices. Their overarching frameworks are the LID Model and the Active Citizen Continuum. The primary models that are infused in the Center’s programming, training, courses, and services are the Social Change Model, Social Justice Theory, Servant Leadership Model, and Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory. The Center for Leadership & Service wholeheartedly believes that all students can lead and that it is our duty as Tennessee Volunteers to serve. The Center seeks to understand and explore our unique identities through shared leadership and service experiences and also celebrate diversity while advocating for social justice and inclusion for all. It is the Center’s hope that, through leadership and service, we can make our campus, community, and world a better place. To date, over 100,000 hours of community service have been logged with the Center, totaling over \$2.5 million in economic impact, and over 25,000 students have been educated or engaged in some way with the Center.

The Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, a unit in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences whose mission is “to use sport to change lives, communities, and the world through teaching, research, and service.”²⁷ While the Center was established in 2012, the co-directors of this Center have a combined thirty years of experience working toward promoting cultural diversity and empowering underserved populations through sport. With partnerships in seventy-two countries worldwide, they are training a

26. *The Center for Leadership & Service*, UNIV. OF TENN. – KNOXVILLE’S DIV. OF STUDENT LIFE, <http://leadershipandservice.utk.edu> (last visited Apr. 18, 2016).

27. *Center for Sport, Peace, and Society*, UNIV. OF TENN. – KNOXVILLE’S COLL. OF EDUC., HEALTH, & HUMAN SCI., <http://sportandpeace.utk.edu> (last visited Apr. 18, 2016).

new generation of change-makers who are using the intersections of sport, education, and media to tackle some of the world's most complex issues.

The Thornton Center, a unit in the department of Athletics whose mission is to “foster the pursuit of comprehensive excellence through the holistic development of each student-athlete. We cultivate champions for life by maintaining a culture of integrity, utilizing an innovative approach, and displaying leadership while honoring and fulfilling the volunteer spirit.”²⁸

Alone, these departments could not successfully accomplish the goals of the VOLeaders Academy, but through a dynamic cross-divisional collaboration, a transformative and unique program has proven that boundary spanning leadership is possible at the University of Tennessee.

This collaborative program is unlike any other in our field, on our campus, or in the country. It not only provides a unique cross-divisional partnership, but it also provides a holistic, cohort-based leadership and service experience for a group of elite student-athletes who compete at the highest level. While other programs feature service experiences for athletes, leadership workshops, speakers, among others, the VOLeaders Academy uniquely blends curricular components through the use of leadership coursework rooted in experiential learning and a theoretical background with co-curricular community development and service aspects that incorporate their teams with local and far-reaching communities. The approach is truly innovative and transformative and could serve as a national model for a comprehensive and collaborative student-athlete leadership program.

Without this program, students from ten different sports teams would never be united in a common mission or purpose, and three departments, from three different divisions, would not share the same strong commitment to student development that is now present. In short, it has changed the culture on our campus and within our community.

Emerging leaders were selected for this program so that each member would have the ability to apply what he or she has learned while still at the University. All students involved in the program are either sophomores or juniors with at least one year of eligibility remaining beyond their yearlong VOLeaders Academy journey. The students were nominated by their respective coaches, and all

28. *Mission Statement*, UNIV. OF TENN. – KNOXVILLE'S THORNTON ATHLETICS STUDENT LIFE CTR., <http://thorntoncenter.net/about> (last visited Apr. 16, 2016).

nominees were interviewed before VOLeaders faculty from each collaborative department.

In an attempt to evaluate the growth of each student and assess the impact of the VOLeaders Academy on leadership development, students are given a pre-assessment, mid-point assessment, and post-assessment to determine their growth at each stage. Assessments are collected quantitatively through the use of survey data, which also incorporates the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale and the Student Leadership Competencies Inventory. Assessments are also conducted qualitatively through the use of participant interviews.

Students engaged in the VOLeaders Academy have demonstrated significant growth in the following outcome areas in a pre- and post-test comparison following their completion of the Fall 2015 *Leadership in Sport* course taught by the authors and housed within the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences (see table 1):

- Articulate an ability to translate exemplary leadership skills and practices to the post-collegiate setting;
- Describe and employ my personal leadership style;
- Identify my core values and commit to act on them;
- Define heightened self-awareness as it relates to personal strengths, privileges, and preferences;
- Develop and support the leadership capacity of my peers;
- Describe increased confidence in my ability to lead my peers;
- Foster a leadership culture by mentoring leaders younger than me;
- Articulate a personal mission statement;
- Describe the tenants and application of servant leadership;
- Develop and support the leadership capacity of others;
- Describe a heightened sense of confidence in my ability to lead with commitment, congruence, consciousness of self, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship to create individual, group, and community change; and
- Demonstrate increased self-confidence in my ability to contribute to the unity of a team.

Table 1: Paired T-Test used to analyze statistically significant changes in VOLeaders' knowledge prior to the *Leadership and Sport* class and after completing the class. Means (Standard Deviations) are presented for both the Pre-Test and Post-Test.

Asterisk in the Post-Test column indicates statistically significant increase in VOLeaders' self-reflections.

Question/Outcome Question Stem: "I am confident in my ability to..."	Pre- Test	Post- Test
Articulate an ability to translate exemplary leadership skills and practices to the post-collegiate setting	3.54 (1.05)	4.38 (.65)**
Describe and employ my personal leadership style	3.54 (.78)	4.54 (.66)***
Articulate a heightened sense of civility, justice, and respect for those around me	4.39 (.65)	4.62 (.51)
Identify my core values and commit to act on them	4.08 (.76)	4.85 (.38)*
Define heightened self-awareness as it relates to personal strengths, privileges, and preferences	3.92 (.64)	4.62 (.51)*
Develop and support the leadership capacity of my peers	3.62 (.96)	4.58 (.51)*
Describe increased confidence in my ability to lead my peers	3.54 (.66)	4.62 (.51)**
Act as an authentic and ethical student and leader	4.23 (.73)	4.69 (.48)
Foster collaboration by promoting cooperation and building trust	4.23 (.60)	4.46 (.52)
Foster a leadership culture by mentoring leaders younger than me	4.00 (.91)	4.69 (.48)*
Articulate a personal mission statement	3.38 (1.04)	4.77 (.44)**
Describe the tenants and application of servant leadership	3.31 (.85)	4.54 (.52)***
Develop and support the leadership capacity of others	3.77 (.93)	4.62 (.51)**
	3.77 (1.01)	4.53 (.66)*
Develop meaningful interpersonal relationships with other students, faculty and staff	4.62 (.65)	4.77 (.44)
Demonstrate increased self-confidence in my ability to contribute to the unity of a team	4.38 (.65)	4.92 (.28)*
Actively practice servant leadership and volunteerism and articulate the importance of	4.08 (.95)	4.54 (.52)

serving local and global communities

Engage in critical thinking about leadership through assignments, activities, reflection, and discussions	4.15 (.80)	4.54 (.66)
Form meaningful, authentic relationships with peers and instructors	4.69 (.48)	4.84 (.38)
Identify positive practices for leading change on our campus and in our community	4.25 (.62)	4.33 (.65)
Identify practices to demonstrate resilience and courage through times of conflict and challenge	4.08 (.49)	4.54 (.66)

1. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .000$

Response options on a 5-point Likert scale: 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree

The following responses were provided during the open-ended post-test:

What did you learn from this program?

- Different leadership techniques that won't only help me now, but in the future as well with myself, my sport, my community, and my future.
- Different aspects of leadership that have helped shape me into a better teammate, person, and friend.
- I learned how to use my voice to lead my team and how to help others lead as well.
- I learned how to face different situations with certain leadership skills, how to be confident in myself and in front of others, and qualities it takes to be an effective leader.
- I learned how to better myself and others through leadership and service and instill the confidence in others to help them develop lead skills.
- My position as a college athlete gives me an enormous platform. Developing relationships with peers lead to the ability to make positive culture changes.

What impact does this program have on athletics at UT?

- It helps foster friendships between athletes of different sports, and create a positive environment on the pursuit of success.
- This program helps build leaders that will ultimately strengthen all UT sports teams.
- It has introduced me to people from other sports which gives us a platform to work together on. I can also seek third-party advice on problems on my team.

- It can help turn cultures within teams around. It helps raise the standards within the athletic dept., starting with the captains.
- I believe this program will have a huge impact on athletics at UT because the class teaches us how to make an impact.
- This class helps show athletes the platform they are on and the impact they can really have on the surroundings.

Additionally, VOLeaders reported that the class allowed them to interact with students and staff they otherwise would not have encountered, a continued testament to the boundary spanning leadership this program provides (see table 2).

Table 2: Percent Agree/Strongly Agree and Means (Standard Deviations) for Additional Outcomes/Questions given on Post-Test Only: VOLeaders

Outcome/Question Question Stem: "As a result of this class..."	% Agree Or Strongly Agree	Mean (SD)
I learned how to apply leadership skills and practices to my role as a student and athlete	100%	4.92 (.28)
I can identify specific leadership skills and practices to implement in my sport	100%	4.69 (.48)
I developed a greater understanding of the importance of integrity, passion, tradition, and legacy in sport	100%	5.00 (.00)
Question Stem: "This class..."		
Helped me feel connected to the institution	85%	4.23 (.73)
Developed my leadership skills both within and outside of my sport	100%	4.85 (.38)
Allowed me to interact with students and staff I otherwise would not have known	100%	4.92 (.28)
No Question Stem		
Overall I enjoyed this class and feel it was a worthwhile contribution to my learning	100%	4.92 (.28)

Response options on a 5-point Likert scale: 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree

Qualitative data collected through student interviews has also demonstrated the impact of the program on the student-athlete leadership experience:

1. The biggest impact VOleaders have had on me is that it has helped me reflect on who I am as a person, athlete and leader and how my actions are influenced more so by knowing who I truly am. – *Ryan Coetzee, Men's Swimming*
2. Since I have been part of the VOLeader program, I have learned more about myself and how I can push myself outside of my comfort zone to be the leader I can be. Throughout this class, I have been able to see where my strengths are as well as my weaknesses. Being able to have such an open discussion class, I have learned new approaches to situations that combat with my weaknesses. Being able to learn and share with a classroom full of student-athletes just like myself has given me so much more confidence in myself. – *Meghan Gregg, Softball*
3. The most powerful impactful part of my VOLeaders experience has been becoming a family with my fellow VOLeaders and staff. It has been such an honor to represent a majority of Tennessee's sports in just one classroom, and to be able to learn from each different individual and their own experiences they have had. – *Ashlee Boles, Women's Tennis*
4. The most impactful part of VOLeaders has been being blessed to be surrounded by such amazing and compassionate people. The program has provided me an opportunity to learn and grow on a daily basis from some of the best people at the University of Tennessee. – *Drew Kelley, Men's Track & Cross Country*
5. The most impactful part of the VOLeaders Academy has been the strength and humanity of the people in the academy and their desire to make the world a better place. – *Juan Carlos Serrano, Men's Golf*
6. The most important part of my experience so far has been expanding my support circle and developing relationships with peers and mentors that truly care about who I am as a person. – *Colleen Callahan, Women's Swimming*
7. Being a VOLeader has changed my athletic and academic experience because I have been able to connect to people from different sports that I probably never would have gotten to know otherwise. I get to support them and learn about their team and what they are going through which makes Tennessee athletics feel much more like a family to me. Academic wise it is just an opportunity to experience a different, more interactive and open classroom style. Every class is like a breath of fresh air

because it doesn't even feel like a class. We talk about interesting and relevant things that we all can relate to or want to know more about. – *Andraya Carter, Women's Basketball*

8. After suffering a season ending injury in our first game, I initially thought I couldn't make an impact on my team. I thought my only job was to get better and get ready for next season. The VOLeader Program completely changed my athletic experience this season. Through talking to my VOLeader peers and reading numerous leadership articles, I learned that I could still lead my team from the sideline. I could be a positive, uplifting voice my teammates hear from the bench, and when they come off the field, I can instruct them on issues I was seeing and how to fix those problems. Even though I was injured, I was still able to play a big role on my team thanks to VOLeaders. – *Michele Christy, Soccer*
9. Being a VOLeader has changed my athletic experience in such a positive way. It has taught me the ways to make a positive change to my team. Many times everyone says that they want to make a change in a positive way but don't know where to start or how to do it. VOLeaders teaches you how. – *Cidaea Woods, Women's Track*
10. Being a VOLeader has changed my entire athletic and academic experience by helping me reevaluate my goals through self reflection. The VOLeaders Academy has helped me shrink the gap between my academics and athletics. – *Matt Zajac, Men's Track & Field*
11. Being a VOLeader has shown me that I am in fact capable of leading others. Prior to joining the academy, I think I failed to realize that my actions and words were closely looked upon by by classmates and teammates. For example, hard work has always been engraved in my everyday life, but being apart of VOLeaders has shown me that through persistence, honesty and a "why it matters" mentality, I can inspire others to work hard as well. – *Emily Morrow, Soccer*
12. VOLeaders made me better at balancing academics and athletics. It is providing a direct link between the two areas of my life, which makes it easier for me to balance academics and sports. Directly connecting the two areas has been really fun. – *Alex Cleveland, Women's Swimming*
13. Being a VOLeader has changed my athletic and academic experience in many ways. One of which is that it has given me the tools and confidence to create positive

- change among my peers. – *Drew Kelley, Men's Track & Cross Country*
14. The VOLeaders Academy has given me the confidence and tools to grow into a leader to help guide my values, relationships, team, and community in the right direction. – *Colleen Callahan, Women's Swimming*
 15. The VOLeaders Academy has impacted the way I lead my team because I am much more confident in leading now. I have been able to really understand different parts of leadership that I really didn't have a grasp on before and I am able to learn lessons from the leadership experiences, struggles and successes of my professors and classmates to take back to my own team. – *Andraya Carter, Women's Basketball*
 16. I've learned many different ways of leading a team and it is not always from the front or as the voice. One can be behind the scenes helping individuals to strengthen the team and helping others to step forward if they have valuable insight and qualities the team needs. – *Ryan Coetzee, Men's Swimming*
 17. VOLeaders has impacted the way I lead my team in many ways. Before being a VOLeader, I was seen as a good leader on my team because I had the respect of my coaches and peers, and I provided a loud voice on the field. My struggle in leadership was holding everyone to a certain standard, even if they were my friend. Through VOLeaders, I have learned that being congruent is one of the most important qualities in being an effective leader. Through personal reflections, I have established my values and my "True North." When I lead my team now, I make decisions that are congruent with my values instead of making decisions based on my relationships. – *Michele Christy, Soccer*
 18. Before I started this program, I was not a very vocal teammate mostly because of my lack of confidence. I always had confidence in myself, but when it came to more than just worrying about me, I was not as confident leading. Being in a class that relies heavily on speaking up and sharing your thoughts on certain topics, I have gotten more comfortable in saying what I believe. This has helped me become more vocal on the field and around my teammates when it is needed. I am more confident in leading the team and being the voice needed for the team. – *Meghan Gregg, Softball*
 19. VOLeaders Academy has greatly impacted how I lead my team and how I plan to do so in the future. It has not only

- given me the confidence to do something, but has provided me with the support to do so. – *Drew Kelley, Men's Track & Cross Country*
20. The VOLeaders Academy has made me remember that there are people with feelings, issues and love behind the athletes we see performing. – *Juan Carlos Serrano, Men's Golf*
 21. VOLeaders Academy has given me the confidence to use my voice to lead my team in the right direction based on the values and expectations we have established. – *Colleen Callahan, Women's Swimming*
 22. The most important concept I have learned in class is that leadership is about service. Giving your time and efforts to either an organization, team, community, etc. is the most important quality and characteristic a leader can have. – *Emily Morrow, Soccer*
 23. The most important concept I've learned in class has been servant leadership. I believe it is the most important because I believe that you must always serve others first. We have all been blessed with great opportunities and should show our appreciation by giving back to others. – *Drew Kelley, Men's Track & Cross Country*

Each response further supports the impact of the VOLeaders Academy and its progress of developing boundary spanning leaders within the context of the LID and Social Change Models of leadership. Undoubtedly, this program is unique and has had a significant impact on our campus, within our community, and soon will have a global impact. The lessons learned therein can certainly be applied to future research and program development to specifically address the unique needs of our student-athlete leadership population. While sport provides a myriad of situations to display leadership, research shows that it is not always positively cultivated by leaders nor accessed by all team members. The VOLeaders Academy strives to revolutionize that approach and will continue to do so by spanning the boundaries and experiences of our campus and community.

