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LEADERSHIP CIRCLES

LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

Participant Guide

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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LEADERSHIP CIRCLES

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WELCOME TO LEADERSHIP CIRCLES!

This guide is designed to support your experience as a participant in Leadership Circles, a space for reflection, shared learning, and peer connection. Each session invites you to explore key leadership attributes, engage in meaningful dialogue, and apply insights to your work. Your voice, perspective, and presence are essential to the success of this experience.

WHY LEADERSHIP CIRCLES?

Leadership Circles are designed to:

- **Strengthen your skills** and confidence as a leader
- **Foster deeper connections** within your department or academic unit
- **Learn new perspectives** and approaches to complex issues
- **Create intentional space** to pause, think, and apply insights to your leadership
- **Discover creative solutions** through shared learning

Each Circle includes **five sessions**, one for each leadership attribute. Sessions typically last **60–90 minutes** and may occur **weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly** depending on group preference.

WHAT ARE LEADERSHIP CIRCLES?

Leadership Circles are small, structured groups that meet regularly to explore leadership through conversation and reflection. They are built around five core attributes that define effective leadership at the University of Iowa:

- **Adaptive** – staying flexible and resourceful in changing situations
- **Culture Builder** – shaping environments where people thrive
- **Emotionally Intelligent** – understanding and managing emotions in yourself and others
- **Integrity** – leading with honesty, consistency, and accountability
- **Collaborative** – working together to achieve common goals

SESSION FLOW

1. **Opening Check-In**
   - Brief introductions and initial thoughts
2. **Guided Discussion**
   - Focused conversation on the attribute
3. **Closing & Reflection**
   - Key insights, takeaways, and actions

Your facilitator will guide the process, but the richness of the experience comes from the shared wisdom of peers.

Feel free to **engage fully, listen deeply, and contribute openly**. This is your space to grow as a leader.

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1 | ADAPTIVE

DEFINITION

Adaptive leaders act to mobilize others to handle tough challenges successfully. They intentionally communicate through ambiguity to build trust and foster quality relationships. Adaptive leaders value learning, creativity, and accommodating multiple perspectives as a way to discover new strategies that can work.

PRE-WORK

Read: *"5 Principles to Guide Adaptive Leadership"* by Ben Ramalingam, David Nabarro, Arkebe Oqubay, Dame Ruth Carnall, and Leni Wild (Harvard Business Review).

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use this space to jot down thoughts during group discussion:

- What do we mean by adaptive leadership?
- How is adaptive leadership relevant in your role? In higher education?
- What challenges might leaders face in demonstrating adaptive leadership?
- How do leaders demonstrate agility and clarity in challenging situations?
- What strategies help build trust during uncertainty?
- How can leaders bring forward different perspectives to find workable solutions?

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAYS

One key idea I'm taking from today:

One way I can apply adaptive leadership in my role:

LOOKING AHEAD

Next session will focus on the **Culture Builder** attribute.

PRE-WORK

Read: *"Building Culture From the Middle Out"* by Spencer Harrison and Kristie Rogers. MIT Sloan Management Review.

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2 | CULTURE BUILDER

DEFINITION

A culture builder actively fosters an environment of collaboration, trust, and respect. They promote a sense of mutual support among others, serve as role models, and cultivate relationships that instill confidence and create a supportive atmosphere. Culture builders aim to enhance innovation, problem-solving, and overall excellence.

PRE-WORK

Read: "*Building Culture From the Middle Out*" by Spencer Harrison and Kristie Rogers. MIT Sloan Management Review.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use this space to jot down thoughts during group discussion:

- How would you describe the culture of your team/unit/department?
- How well does your current culture align with the values highlighted in the definition?
- Are there other values you believe are important in your culture?
- Who is responsible for shaping culture in your organization, and how is it managed?
- In what ways can leaders without top-level authority actively build and enrich culture?
- How can leaders without top-level authority link big-C culture (formal values, processes) with small-c culture (daily interactions, behaviors)?
- What strategies could you use to reinforce collaboration, trust, and respect in your team/unit/department?

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAYS

One key idea I'm taking from today:

One way I can apply culture building practices in my role:

LOOKING AHEAD

Next session will focus on the **Collaborative** attribute.

PRE-WORK

Read: "*How to Manage Decision-Making in Collaborative Leadership*" by Voltage Control.

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3 | COLLABORATIVE

DEFINITION

A collaborative leader deliberately integrates distinct ideas, voices, and skillsets into discussions and decision-making processes, utilizing multiple perspectives to foster an environment where all can make meaningful contributions. Collaborative leaders play a critical role in ensuring every voice is heard, leveraging a wide range of strengths to produce more impactful and effective outcomes.

PRE-WORK

Read: *"How to Manage Decision-Making in Collaborative Leadership"* by Voltage Control.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use this space to jot down thoughts during group discussion:

- What stood out to you most in the article? Was there a concept, strategy, or example that resonated with your experience?
- What challenges have you faced in ensuring all relevant voices and perspectives are considered during decision-making?
- What tools or techniques have helped you ensure broad participation in decision-making without sacrificing efficiency?
- How does your definition of collaborative decision-making compare to the approach presented in the article?
- Do you see fatigue in your teams/department or in yourself? How have you addressed it?
- In what ways does your college/department support or hinder collaborative decision-making?

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAYS

One key idea I'm taking from today:

One way I can apply collaborative leadership in my role:

LOOKING AHEAD

Next session will focus on the **Emotionally Intelligent** attribute.

PRE-WORK

Read: "*How to Raise Your Leadership EQ*" by Jacob J. Ryder, Nicolas C. Burbules, BrandE Faupell, and C.K. Gunsalus. Inside Higher Ed.

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4 | EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT

DEFINITION

An emotionally intelligent leader is aware of their own emotions and the emotions of others, adjusting their interactions to demonstrate empathy and understanding. This strengthens trust, communication, and overall effectiveness in relationships and departmental outcomes.

PRE-WORK

Read: "*How to Raise Your Leadership EQ*" by Jacob J. Ryder, Nicolas C. Burbules, BrandE Faupell, and C.K. Gunsalus (Inside Higher Ed).

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use this space to jot down thoughts during group discussion:

- What do you think are the most important components of emotional intelligence?
- How do you recognize your own emotions and their impact on others?
- How do you identify the emotions of others?
- Can you share a time when you adjusted your approach based on someone else's emotions?
- How do active listening and separating your own emotions from work improve interactions and outcomes?
- How would you respond to a colleague who says, "Emotions don't belong at work"?

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAYS

One key idea I'm taking from today:

One way I can apply emotional intelligence in my role:

LOOKING AHEAD

Next session will focus on the **Integrity** attribute.

PRE-WORK

Read: *"Why Integrity is the Backbone of Great Leadership"* by Cam Cruickshank. Endzone Leadership.

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5 | INTEGRITY

DEFINITION

A leader with integrity consistently upholds honesty, transparency, and fairness in decisions and actions, responsibly managing resources, and treating others with respect. Integrity strengthens trust, credibility, and organizational culture, especially during times of uncertainty or crisis.

PRE-WORK

Read: "*Why Integrity is the Backbone of Great Leadership*" by Cam Cruickshank (Endzone Leadership).

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use this space to jot down thoughts during group discussion:

- How do you personally define integrity in leadership, and how does it show up in your daily decisions?
- What are the risks of compromising integrity for short-term gains in a leadership role?
- In a public university, how can leaders maintain transparency during budget cuts or policy changes?
- How does integrity influence trust between administration, faculty, staff, and students?
- What systems or practices can ensure active and meaningful feedback loops in a large institution?
- Can you recall a time when you had to choose between what was right and what was easy? What guided your decision?
- How can leaders model integrity in environments where it may not be the norm?

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAYS

One key idea I'm taking from today:

One way I can apply integrity in my role:

LOOKING AHEAD

This concludes the Leadership Circles series.

Take time to fill out the **Leadership Circles Series Reflection.**

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LEADERSHIP CIRCLES SERIES | OPTIONAL REFLECTION

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Use this space to reflect on your overall experience in Leadership Circles. These prompts are here to support your continued growth, but feel free to engage with them in whatever way is most meaningful to you.

One key insight I gained about myself as a leader:

One key insight I gained about leadership in general:

One behavior I want to start, stop, or continue as a result of this series:

How will I continue to practice and develop these attributes over time?

Who can support me in maintaining accountability for my leadership growth?

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