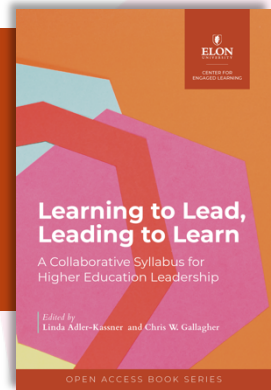


# Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn

Collaborative Syllabus for Higher Education Leadership

Edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Chris W. Gallagher

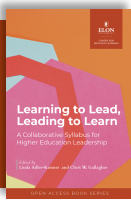


# The Playbook

We've urged you to keep your focus on a few things as you've engaged with mentors in *Learning to Lead*: on *how* these contributors learned to lead and on their *principles*; on their *theories of leadership* and *theories of change*. We've suggested that you use their examples as you consider your own leadership principles and identity, how you can adapt what you know about leadership to new situations, and what your own learning aims are for this engagement.

As much as we've urged, though, we're cognizant of something we repeat often: *People learn; we can't learn for them*. The contributors here have learned through experience and reflection—what they've *done* and how they *think* about what they've done. The latter has involved attention to dynamic interactions among principles, identities, and experiences.

Reflection that facilitates learning isn't accidental. Instead, it's a skill, something that takes practice. It's a habit. We referred to John Dewey often throughout the course, and we'll turn to him again here because we find his thinking about habits to be generative. For Dewey, habits aren't unthinking, repeated actions; they are "demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self" (1922, 25). Habits are cultivated through the interactions of the individual with the environments and cultures they inhabit. They



become productive—in the sense of helping us become who we are and act purposefully in the world—when “they are cooperating with external means and energies...when they enter into organization with things which independently accomplish defined results” (1922, 26). Productive habits, far from being individual behavioral tics, are actions directed toward aims in contexts of practice.

This Playbook is intended to help you cultivate your own productive habits, starting with reflection, through which you can *facilitate your own learning*. Using the Playbook in conjunction with the mentors whose voices you’ve read and heard in *Learning to Lead* will, we hope, create a context, an “organization” of others that we’ve tried to help you experience.

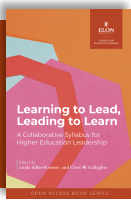
The reflective habit that we are focusing on here is especially important (and especially hard to get at) because it is an essential component of what we think of as “infrastructural” leadership activity. Here, we rely on the idea of “infrastructure” developed by Susan Leigh Star (1999). By “infrastructure,” Star isn’t referring to physical structures and facilities (or not only those). She sees infrastructures as the dynamic interplay of actions, tools, relationships, and structures. Infrastructures “reach beyond a single event or a one-site practice;” are “learned as part of membership;” are developed through interaction; are embedded in the expectations of the sites where they are developed and used and are modified to accommodate those expectations, and typically only “become[] visible upon breakdown” (1999, 381–382). They aren’t static objects. Instead, they are “*relational*: part of human organization” that are part of the “truly backstage elements of ... practice” (380). We are arguing, then, that the *habit* of reflective leadership is infrastructural in the sense that it runs underneath everything else that you might do as a leader—beneath your aims, actions, identities; beneath the decisions that you make or will be asked to make.

As reflective teachers and leaders ourselves, we know how difficult it can be to turn our attention to the kind of infrastructural activities we’re asking you to think through— we’ve been there. In the midst of busy lives, when there are many (many, many) people asking for our attention, it’s hard to take time to turn inward, even for a moment. As we become more expert leaders, too, we forget that building our abilities through leadership has, in fact, come through reflection. What we know becomes “commonsense,”



## The Impetus for *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*

**Linda Adler Kassner** and **Chris Gallagher** (Editors) discuss how their experiences shape their view of leadership as an ongoing process of learning, reflection, and institutional engagement.



things we think we've always known, ways we've always functioned. That's why infrastructures typically become visible only when they fail.

Another challenge learning researchers have pointed out is that experts often have trouble identifying the constituent elements of their expertise, especially when it comes to teaching others (Bransford et al. 2000; Ambrose et al. 2010). One helpful reflective habit—it's one we asked the contributors to try as they crafted their contributions—is to try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who is just learning what has become “obvious” to you. The “learner’s mindset” we discussed in the introduction to this book isn't just for beginners!

So, then, developing a reflective practice is not easy, and it does take time and practice. But as our contributors show, it's possible. We also want to emphasize that what we're describing is reflection *in* practice, not reflection *versus* practice. To be sure, it's nice to get outside of our everyday routines to think deeply about what we're doing and why we're doing it. But we can also braid reflection into our practice, as the concepts of habits and infrastructures imply. While this playbook is intended to give you time and space to think through your leadership aims, theories, and identities, our ultimate goal is to help you embed the habit of reflection into your leadership practice.

We've designed this playbook as a series of engagements to help you write a leadership statement. This is a document of no more than 2–3 pages that, extending from your identity as a leader, outlines:

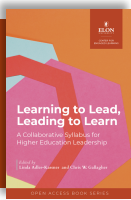
- the personal and professional principles that form the foundation of your approach to leadership;
- your theory(ies) of leadership and theory(ies) of institutional change; and
- your strategies for transferring knowledge as a leader.

A leadership statement can be helpful for personnel reviews, applications for leadership positions, or other “official” purposes. But *writing* a leadership statement *will be* helpful, whether or not you use this statement in those ways. That's because writing is more than a way to represent your ideas; it's a mode of formulating and thinking through them.



## Metacognition and Leadership

**Heidi Estrem** ([Chapter 4](#)) explores how leadership can become automatic over time, and why stepping back to question “common sense” is essential for reflective, metacognitive practice.



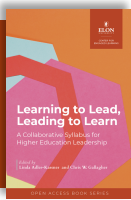
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## Cite this Resource

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## ENGAGEMENT 1

# Your Personal and Professional Principles

In the **Introduction Course Overview**, we spend some time referring to John Dewey's definition of principles, because we appreciate his idea that *principles serve as a foundation for action*. As we say in the introduction, principles help us decide “when to say yes, when to say *okay, but...* and when to say (*oh hell*) *no.*”

Your foundational principles are deeply embedded in your identities, beliefs, and experiences. Surfacing them can be the project of a lifetime, of course. For the purposes of this Playbook, though, we'll focus on strategies you can use to identify your personal and professional principles as they apply to your own leadership. Before starting this activity, you might want to review videos from some of the contributor mentors who have spoken very eloquently about acting from principle. Elaine Maimon, Elizabeth Wardle, Stacy Perriman-Clark, Chris Blankenship, and Sheila Carter-Tod all discuss their foundational principles and how they have acted on those principles as leaders in challenging situations.

The structured heuristic (thinking tool) below may be helpful for you to begin accessing your own principles. While your principles will likely be much more complex than what you'll create using this brief activity, this can provide a start on that thinking. We've put a sample response in the first row to illustrate. As with all these engagements, we encourage you to return to these principles occasionally to refresh and refine your thinking.

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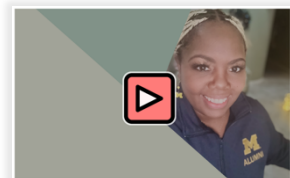
## Cite this Resource

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Chris W. Gallagher, eds. 2026. “Engagement 1: Your Personal and Professional Principles.” *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn: Playbook*. Center for Engaged Learning. <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa11>.



### Values and Principles Guiding Leadership

**Elaine Maimon** ([Chapter 1](#)) highlights how her core values guide ethical leadership and the responsibility to protect students and employees.



### Guiding Principles for Leadership

**Staci Perryman-Clark** ([Chapter 6](#)) explains how ethics and transparency guide her leadership, stressing accountability even when faced with difficult consequences.

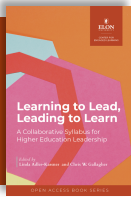


Table 1.1. Your Personal and Professional Principles

Scenario	Initial Response	Why/Principle
I am my best leadership self when...	<i>I can collaborate with others to come up with new ideas</i>	<i>I am committed to shared knowledge-building</i>
I am at my best leadership self when...		
I most enjoy leading when...		
I struggle to lead effectively when...		
As a leader, I will always...		
As a leader, I will never...		

## ENGAGEMENT 2

# Institutional Context

If you look across the chapters in this collection, you'll notice that every leader describes how they have applied what they have learned *in their specific institutional context*. "Institutional context" refers to (a) the mission and values of the college or university (and, if you are interested in a unit within the university, of that unit); (b) the ways mission(s) and value(s) are enacted through language; and (c) an understanding of who is more and less invested in the mission and values and why. Getting a sense of these three components of institutional context provides a way to understand how the system of the institution is constructed: what it is; how it is maintained, by whom, and why; and who is invested in maintaining and not maintaining it and why.

While a leadership statement doesn't need to define a *specific* institutional context, it is useful to include (explicitly or implicitly) the idea that you know how to learn about institutions; to adapt what you know to different institutional contexts; and how to learn what more you need to know. These abilities, in fact, are characteristics of expert learners, i.e., expert learners understand how to make knowledge within specific contexts; how to adapt what they know from other contexts; and how to learn what they don't know (Bransford 2000).

A leadership statement might refer to *your learning strategies*—it's unlikely to refer to your specific context. But to practice developing these strategies, we recommend conducting a brief analysis of your current context, then *annotating how you have conducted this analysis*. We emphasize *annotation* here because this *how* is what you'll emphasize in a leadership statement. It's a description of *how you know how to learn about institutional context*.

The table below outlines some possible *artifacts to analyze* (column one) and *analytical strategies* (column two) for this engagement. In column three, list *questions you might ask in order to situate what you're noticing* in context. Finally, in column four, record what you have noticed in your analysis and *how you noticed what you did*. Again, we provide a brief example in the



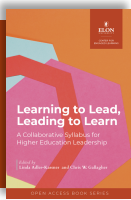
### Navigating Institutions

**Staci Perryman-Clark** ([Chapter 6](#)) explores the realities of institutional leadership, urging leaders to follow their values, understand risks, and be ready for change, including stepping away or planning what comes next.



### Observational Leadership and Learning About People

**Emily Isaacs** ([Chapter 2](#)) focuses on how leadership skills transfer across roles and how leaders develop through changing institutional contexts, emphasizing observation, reflection, and growth in understanding people and organizations.



PLAYBOOK

# Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn

first row. The ideas in column four—what you might attend to as you learn about an institution—are what you might include in a leadership statement in order to describe how you go about learning about institutions.

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## References

Bransford, John D., Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cockings, eds. 2000. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition*. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.7226/9853>.

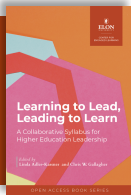
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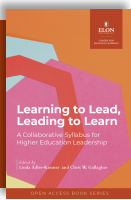
Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Chris W. Gallagher, eds. 2026. "Engagement 2: Institutional Context." *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn: Playbook*. Center for Engaged Learning. <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa11>.

Table 2.1. Analyzing Institutional Context

<b>Artifacts</b> Possibilities: Mission statement, strategic plan, accreditation documents, public facing websites	<b>Analytical Strategies</b> Possibilities: Content analysis: look for repeated words or phrases across documents	<b>Situating in Context</b> Questions you might ask about repeated words/phrases	<b>What You Noticed / How You Noticed It</b> Possibilities: Brief notes on observations, patterns, or analytic moves you made
<p><i>Mission: ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the community it serves</i></p>	<p><i>Inclusive language (...measured by whom it includes and how they succeed); service orientation (...the community it serves)</i></p>	<p><i>Who feels served by this mission? (Which students, departments, units, etc.?) Who does not? Who has most productively used the mission to benefit within the institution and who has used it less productively? What are the internal mechanisms by which it is enacted, from policies to processes, for each constituency in the campus community? Whom does the university serve? How does it support the "health" of that community?</i></p>	<p><i>I noticed key terms in the mission (not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes). I noticed that I started asking questions about how this is enacted at different levels (colleges, divisions) and by different people (students, faculty, staff, admin). I noticed I asked about infrastructure (policies, processes).</i></p>



<b>Artifacts</b> Possibilities: Mission statement, strategic plan, accreditation documents, public facing websites	<b>Analytical Strategies</b> Possibilities: Content analysis: look for repeated words or phrases across documents	<b>Situating in Context</b> Questions you might ask about repeated words/phrases	<b>What You Noticed / How You Noticed It</b> Possibilities: Brief notes on observations, patterns, or analytic moves you made



## ENGAGEMENT 3

# Your Theory of Change

Readers who come from fields like education, organizational theory, sociology, community organizing, leadership, or management will likely be familiar with the extensive body of research on theories of change that has been developed over the last sixty years. We won't review that literature here, but we will provide references to overviews that we've found helpful for this activity in the Playbook notes.

For people outside those fields—or even for those familiar with the literature—it's sometimes surprising to make the connection between *theories* of change and *putting those theories into practice*. We'll use ourselves as examples: we consider ourselves quite familiar with the literature; we try to be very reflective; we've both done a great deal of research and have a great deal of experience on institutional change-making and leadership. And yet we regularly find ourselves veering toward actions that are not aligned with our own theories of change, like wishing we could simply make a decision or set a direction for others to follow. In our case, we have to resist such temptations because we operate from ideas aligned with sociocultural theories that emphasize shared sensemaking, attention to context, community and consensus building, and a great deal of dialogue.

As we've worked with teams, we've recognized how important it is to surface the theories of change that key members hold, too. If different people operate from radically different theories of change—say, one person believes that change is made by leaders and others fall in line, but another believes that change comes from the bottom up—that's something that needs to be addressed. The activity that we'll outline here, which borrows heavily from Adrianna Kezar's fantastic book *How Colleges Change* (2018), can be used just as well with a team as with an individual. And of course, we encourage you to modify the activity for your own purposes.



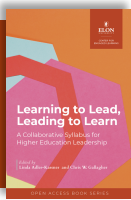
### Observational Leadership and Learning About People

**Emily Isaacs** ([Chapter 2](#)) focuses on how leadership skills transfer across roles and how leaders develop through changing institutional contexts, emphasizing observation, reflection, and growth in understanding people and organizations.



### A Moment Requiring Leadership for Transformational Change

**Linda Adler-Kassner and Chris Gallagher** (Editors) argue for leadership that is adaptive, reflective, and grounded in learning, rather than relying on static “best practices.”



PLAYBOOK

# Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn

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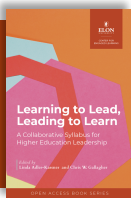
## References

Kezar, Adrianna. 2018. *How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change*. Taylor & Francis Group.

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## Step One: Reflecting on a Change

The first step in this activity is to reflect on a change that you felt was successful because it led to a desired result. You'll use the responses you generate from this brief reflective activity to help name elements of your own theory of change in steps two and three.

### **Goals**

Identify a project that you felt was successful.

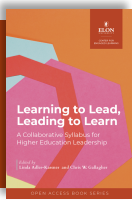
- a. What was the project?
- b. What were its goals?
- c. How were these goals developed and by whom?
- d. Why were the goals developed?

### **Stakeholders**

Who else did you involve, or who else was involved in the project? What were the interests of other stakeholders? How did you learn about them?

### **Tactics**

What steps did you take to work toward the goals of the project? List these as sequentially as possible. (Where did you start? What did you do next? What after that?)



### ***Approach***

Why did you approach the stakeholders and use the tactics that you did? What factors did you take into consideration?

### ***Outcomes***

What were the results of the project?

### ***Impacts and Analysis***

How do you think the results of the project will be implemented or will occur? Who benefits, how, and why?

## Step Two: Considering Existing Theories of Change

The next step is to try to see where and how your ideas about change align with elements of existing theories. We find Kezar’s “Theories of Change” (a chapter in *How Colleges Change*) a useful overview. That chapter includes a chart outlining (briefly!) characteristics associated with six dominant theories of change, which we’ve adapted in the table below.

### Directions

Read over your own examples and start to highlight the characteristics that best align with your approach in each row. Don’t fret if these aren’t in a straight line— they probably won’t be! The idea is to start to attach some names to your idea(s) about change: why and how you think it happens, through what processes, with what outcomes and effects, through what tactics.

Table 3.1. Learning Theories and Leadership Practices

	<b>Scientific management theories</b>	<b>Evolutionary theories</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Social cognition</b>	<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Institutional/ neo-institutional</b>
<b>Examples</b>	Organizational development; strategic planning; reengineering, total quality management	Resource dependency; strategic choice; population ecology	Empowerment; bargaining; political change; Marxist theory	Single- and double-looped learning; organizational learning; paradigm shifting; sensemaking	Interpretive strategy; paradigm shifting; process change	Isomorphism; institutional entrepreneurship (see DiMaggio, 1988 <sup>1</sup> , e.g.); academic capitalism
<b>Why change occurs</b>	Motivated by leaders/ supported by internal environment	External environment	Dialectical tension of values, norms, or patterns	Cognitive dissonance; appropriateness	Response to alterations in environment	External pressure combined with institutional norms
<b>Process of change</b>	Rational, linear, purposeful. Motivated by leaders/ organizations, not externalities/ context	Adaptation, slow, gradual, non-intentional	First order, then occasional second order, negotiation, and power	Learning; altering paradigms or lenses; interconnected and complex	Long term; slow; change in symbolic processes; non-linear; unpredictable	Exchange of adaptations and schemas; norms

<sup>1</sup> DiMaggio, Paul. 1988. “Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory.” In *Institutional Patterns and Organizations*, edited by L. Zucker, 3-21. Ballinger.

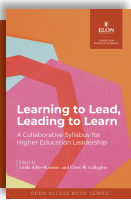
<b>Outcomes of change</b>	New structures and organizing principles (e.g., new “org chart”)	New structures and processes; first order	New organizational ideology	New frame of mind	New culture	New schema and norms
<b>Type of change</b>	Planned, organizational, first order (see Kezar, <i>How Colleges Change</i> ; also see Wardle, this collection)	Unplanned, external	First and second order; organizational and enterprise	Second-order and more individual in focus	Second-order; organizational; planning and unplanned	Unplanned; organizational changes tied to external environment
<b>Tactics</b>	Create infrastructure to respond to changes; strong steering committee; nimble/flexible structures	Create infrastructure to respond to changes; strong steering committee; nimble/flexible structures	Create coalitions; identify allies; build agenda; create collective vision; negotiate	Create data teams; build data infrastructure; enhance systems thinking through training; facilitate interaction	Appeal to values; examine history and context to understand underlying values; alter mission; create new rituals	Understand external forces; buffer institutions; analyze schemas and norms; align external interests
<b>Context</b>	Largely ignored	Systems approach with emphasis on external pressures and interactions with organization	Different settings/different politics, but politics are transcendent of some contexts to some degree	Context largely ignored	Historical, social, environmental, organizational; multiple levels and types of context explored	Internal environmental schema and interaction with external environment are focus of context
<b>Key metaphor</b>	Change master	Self-producing organism	Social movement	Brain	Social movement	Iron cage (isomorphism) (see DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Criticisms</b>	Lack of human emphasis; deterministic	Lack of human emphasis; deterministic	Deterministic; lack of attention to environmental	Deemphasizes environment and overemphasizes	Impractical to guide leaders; focus on universalistic	Hard to document external forces; does not account for agency; often

<sup>2</sup> DiMaggio, Paul and Powell, Walter. 1983. “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields.” *American Sociological Review* 48 (2): 147-160.

			concerns; little guidance for leaders	ease of change; ignores values and emotions	culture; mostly untested	overemphasizes lack of change or static nature
<b>Benefits</b>	Environmental emphasis; systems approach	Environmental emphasis; systems approach	Change not always progressive; irrationality; role of power	Emphasizes socially constructed nature; emphasis on individuals; habits and attitudes as barriers	Emphasizes context; irrationality; values and beliefs; multiple levels of change	Attention to macro context; norms and power, irrationality; fields and complexity of power

Adapted from Kezar, Adrianna. 2018. "Theories of Change: A Brief Overview," in *How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change*, 2nd ed. Routledge. 42–64.

If you find that you need more information on theories of change than what's included in the adapted chart above, we strongly encourage you to read Kezar's "Theories of Change," a chapter in *How Colleges Change* (2018). This excellent synthesis also includes references to multiple other papers on change theory.



## Step Three: Analyzing Your Change

Having completed two steps intended to facilitate intentional reflection, the penultimate step is to try to start to attach names (from Kezar's diagram) to the change you've described. We find fill-in-the-blank exercises helpful for this kind of thinking because they provide a structure, even if it's clunky (and maybe *because* it's clunky). Try using the exercises below or create your own.

### **Exercise A**

#### **I think change at**

---

*(where you are a leader or would like to be a leader)*

#### **occurs because**

---

*(your version of "why change occurs")*

#### **Once change is motivated by**

---

*(your version of "why change occurs," which may involve reference to "context")*

#### **, the process begins:**

---

---

*(your explanation of "process of change," including stakeholders and how you involved them)*

#### **The tactics that I or others use are**

---

*(your summary of tactics, including steps or approaches used to involve people)*

#### **I find this approach to change to be beneficial because**

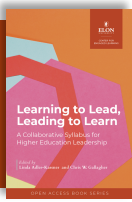
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*(your analysis of why this works—what about it resonates with you)*

#### **Its effects lead to**

---

*(your description of what you consider meaningful change)*



## **Exercise B**

**I find this approach to change to be problematic because**

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*(your analysis of what is challenging about it)*

**Its effects are**

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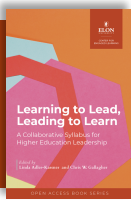
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*(your description of what you consider less meaningful change)*



## Step Four: Your Theory of Change

The final step is to synthesize your analysis to create a draft of your own theory of change. If the change process you analyzed in step three is aligned with your own values, you're probably close. But even if it didn't, identifying things that *aren't* in your theory of change can help you get to what *is*. Note that you want to focus on what you *want to see/have happen*, not what you don't want. A theory of change about what *shouldn't* occur is not motivating.

Again, we'll provide a fill-in-the-blank for this structure. While you'll of course want to modify this when you write your leadership statement, this can provide a helpful starting point.

### **Exercise C**

**As a leader, I see myself as a**

---

*(your metaphor for yourself as a leader/changemaker)*

**I believe change occurs when**

---

---

---

*(your version of "why change occurs")*

**The process for change starts with**

---

**, then moves to**

---

**, and includes**

---

*(the process, stakeholders, and tactics you think are involved with change)*

**The outcomes of this kind of change are meaningful because**

---

---

*(your explanation of the connection between outcomes and stakeholders, process, and tactics)*

**Its benefits are lasting because**

---

## ENGAGEMENT 4

# Describing Your (Leadership) Identities

Higher education leader Marjorie Hass describes moving into leadership, especially for women, as “the jump... a new way of understanding yourself and your relationship to your work” (2021, 15). Hass delineates the transitions that many leaders experience: from colleague to employee and/or boss; from individual to symbol; from “front of the house” (professor) to “back of the house” (facilitator), and more (18–19). We, along with every contributor to this collection, have had moments where we have had to think carefully about how our personal and professional identities can work together, or, in some instances, they may not be able to (see, for instance, chapters by Perryman-Clark; Kynard; Charlton; and Alexander.)

You probably won’t want to point to the inevitable ambiguities associated with leadership identities in a leadership statement. But you will want to describe your identity as a leader. If you interview for positions as a leader, you will very likely be asked questions about that identity. Writing about the following questions can help you clarify your own leadership identity as you consider the question: As a leader, who am I? How is this identity reflected in my leadership practices?

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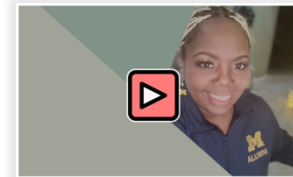
## References

Hass, Marjorie. 2021. *A Leadership Guide for Women in Higher Education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

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## Cite this Resource

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Chris W. Gallagher, eds. 2026. “Engagement 4: Your Personal and Professional Principles.” *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn: Playbook*. Center for Engaged Learning. <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa11>.



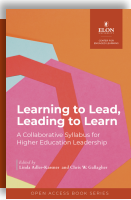
### Developing a Leadership Identity

**Staci Perryman-Clark** ([Chapter 6](#)) traces her leadership identity to a long-standing commitment to DEI, emphasizing authentic self-advocacy, ethical practice, and aligning leadership decisions with her values over time.



### Collaborative Leadership

**Beth Brunk** ([Chapter 8](#)) reflects on her decision-making styles, exploring how listening to colleagues gathering perspectives, and navigating conflict shaped her approach to leadership.



## ***Reflection Exercise: Leadership Identity***

Complete the prompts below to clarify how you understand and practice leadership.

When deciding whether a leadership opportunity is for me, I consider...

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When I need to have a tough conversation with a supervisor, I...

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When I need to have a tough conversation with someone who reports to me, I...

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When a team project stalls, I...

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When my team succeeds, I...

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When my team fails, I...

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When I am praised for my leadership, I...

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When my leadership is called into question, I...

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When aspects of my identity are called into question or are in tension with institutional expectations, I...

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When I recognize institutional inequity or injustice, I...

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When I realize something is beyond my power to change, I...

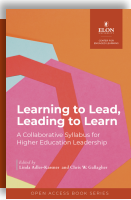
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I am my best leadership self when...

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I most enjoy leading when...

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I struggle to lead effectively when...

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As a leader, I will always...

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As a leader, I will never...

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As a leader, I need to work on...

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As a leader, I want to learn more about...

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## ENGAGEMENT 5

# Your Leadership Statement

You can start drafting your statement simply by setting up four sections and working with the ideas you've generated through these engagements. But as you form and refine your ideas, it's likely the material will guide you to an arrangement that makes the most sense for what you want to say and how you want to say it. Some people start with broad statements of principles and then show how they enact them in practice; others begin with a key aspect of their identities and how it has shaped their leadership; still others prefer to open with a specific experience that sets the stage for the ideas to come.

While your leadership statement might be the culmination of thinking as it's developed from interacting from *Learning to Lead* and these engagements, if your reaction to summative documents is anything like ours, you'll realize that a leadership statement (like the very best exam) isn't the end of learning. We'll return to our pragmatic roots one more time to point to what has become a commonplace phrase in education: *it's a process*. As we and our contributors have done here, we need to continually revisit our influences and our own thinking as we make our leadership journey. As higher education leaders, the paths we walk and the futures they lead to are different—and they are often chaotic, tumultuous, and complicated.

Your leadership statement, ideally influenced by the mentor texts in *Learning to Lead* and these engagements, can outline *your* method and *your* aims as you seek to create this path for yourself and with others. Use the exercise below to begin.

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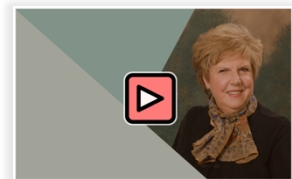
## Cite this Resource

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Chris W. Gallagher, eds. 2026. "Your Leadership Statement." *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn: Playbook*. Center for Engaged Learning. <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa11>.



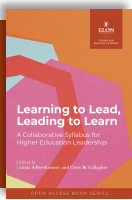
### Why Lead?

**Sheila Carter-Tod** ([Chapter 15](#)) reflects on leading as a response to her drive to solve problems. Drawn to challenge and growth, she values autonomy, trust, and the freedom to develop her leadership plan over time.



### Forging Your Values for Leadership

**Elaine Maimon** ([Chapter 1](#)) connects leadership to lived experience, showing how personal history, mentorship, and values shape strategy.



## **Exercise: Synthesizing Engagements 1–4**

*Use the text below to synthesize your insights from the four engagements, designed to help you organize and articulate your reflections as you begin drafting your leadership statement.*

### **1. Principles in Action**

My personal and professional principles that guide my leadership are:

I enact these principles by:

### **2. Learning and Adapting to Institutional Context**

I understand and learn about institutions by:

I adapt my leadership to different contexts by:

### **3. My Theory of Change**

I believe change occurs when:

The process of change involves:

Key tactics I use or have used are:

The outcomes of these efforts are:

### **4. Leadership Identity**

As a leader, my identity is shaped by:

I am most effective when:

I face challenges when:

I aim to grow in my leadership by: