

Essays on Student-Leadership from the top minds of America's Universities

The Student Servant Leader: Essays

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# The Student Servant Leader: ♦Essays♦



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The greatest test of any man is found when he is faced with the choice of placing the well-being of others before himself, whether this includes letting go of his pride and just listening, or finding the strength to work with those he does not like. To be a servant leader is to go beyond yourself and work towards something greater, without sacrificing the dignity of others. In many ways, it is like being the CEO of a company, and doing so in a manner that respects your coworkers, your customers, and the community around you.

“Achievement without contribution is achievement without significance.” It is this saying that separates leaders from leaders of men. Servant leaders take charge and lead, yet humble themselves when a coworker has a good idea for the team. I often find that the attributes of a good servant leader mimic the attributes of a strong warrior. He is aware and always on the lookout for threats, yet comfortable with his own security. He pushes himself to excel, yet takes time to give to others. A leader is formed by the approval of the people, and it is those very people on which he should always keep his focus. Throughout history there have been many leaders, but very few had the strength and character to become servant leaders.

Perhaps the greatest example of them all is Jesus Christ. He placed others above himself while staying true to his mission. The compassion, confidence, love, conviction and patience he possessed helped him gain flocks of followers. As we look at world leaders today, we must ask ourselves if they are placing the needs of the people above their own personal agendas. It is our duty as citizens to make sure that we elect officials who not only possess the qualities of a leader, but also the qualities of a servant. It is through the combination of these two qualities that great men and women are born and the needs of the people truly come first.

Jason Cross  
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The philosopher Ayn Rand wrote in her book "Atlas Shrugged" that, "Every man builds his world in his own image .... He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice. If he abdicates his power, he abdicates the status of man, and the grinding chaos of the irrational is what he achieves as his sphere of existence - by his own choice" (735). These words embody the internal workings of any individual that feels the desire to live their life to its fullest potential. This is the actualization that one must take to truly become a leader, not just of other people, but of ones own life and ability. It is the embodiment of the sphere of existence that one has to come to terms with to be a servant leader. Servant leadership is more than obtaining a position in command. It is being able to know yourself, your surroundings and your ability to do what is right for the world around you. There is a definitive correlation that is present in the transformation of an individual coming to terms with who they are and the ability to understand one's surroundings. It is only after coming to grips with the reality that reality does in fact exist, a sort of Cartesian "cogito ergo sum," is someone able to grasp the fundamental nature of right and wrong. It is only after this is understood that an individual has the responsibility required to be a leader of any kind. It takes leaders of all magnitudes to keep the world functioning. It is, however, the servant leaders who are the backbone of the structure. They are the ones who, through interpersonal relations, build the world, not with sky scrapers and communication towers, but with the ability to work together as a collective to solve a social problem, work with the environment, or even offer a smile and a friendly "hello" to a stranger that they pass on the street. Being a servant leader is having the ability to be in charge of one's own life and in doing so, be able to better the lives and environment for which said individual is in contact with on a daily basis. Servant leadership is crucially important in a college or university environment. The university setting is an area of extensive cultural and social diversity. This alone makes it a breeding ground for individuals with bigoted ideas and intentions. It takes people with leadership ability to move beyond these differences, whether it is starting an awareness organization on campus or just talking with students who seem to have ill-conceived perceptions towards certain ethnic and/or social groups. In general though, the university setting creates an environment that is prime for any student looking to be a servant leader in their own right, even if this means just coming to terms with who they are and what they want to do with their lives.

Kristina Fillian  
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Servant leadership is a vital aspect in any community. In my opinion, the single greatest example of servant leadership can be found in the Bible in the person of Jesus Christ. He was one of the greatest leaders that the world has ever known, and he was also a very humble servant. To me, his example embodies the true definition of servant leadership. We are called to serve others and to make the world a better place than we left it. True leadership stems from serving others. I feel that servant leadership emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and trust. One of the most important aspects of servant leadership is that it fosters the ethical use of power. Since leadership is typically associated with power, it can often lead to avarice and malice. However, the addition of the servant aspect before the leadership aspect changes the entire face of leadership into an example that the leaders of the world would do well to follow. Servant leadership means that the individual is a servant first and foremost, and then he or she accepts the opportunity to lead because he or she wants to become a better servant, not because the individual desires power. In my own experience, I have found servant leadership to be more rewarding than already having a leadership position and doing service after being granted the position. I was President of the National Honor Society of my high school, and this was a position in which I had very little power, yet I was responsible for organizing all the community service events for 72 fellow students. One of the four pillars of the National Honor Society is service, and there is much emphasis placed on this pillar. By serving as President for a year, I learned a great deal about the value of volunteering and I also gained knowledge and experience in organizing volunteers to do community service. Now in my college community, I plan on practicing it by participating in volunteer associations and being an active member in the community by attending functions such as the MS walk and volunteering for music workshops hosted by my college. I also have organized students to make Christmas Cards for residents at a local nursing home, and then we distribute them, along with cookies, and sing Christmas Carols to the residents with my parents Cub Scout troop. I also plan on organizing a group of volunteers at my college to regularly help out at the Rochester Soup Kitchen, a tradition started by my youth group several years ago. Servant leadership is a type of leadership that more individuals need to participate in. This type of leadership teaches humility while also shaping students and people into leaders with integrity. Servant leadership creates models for society to look up to. This type of leadership empowers individuals and inspires them to be better human beings; as well as inspiring them to do good deeds simply for the greater good, and for the joy of knowing that they played a part in making the world a better place.

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