

Bystanders to Upstanders: Using the Social Change Model of Leadership to Embrace Educational Reform

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Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice.¹

The Leadership Model for Social Change²⁻³ encourages leadership and service to create positive change through an inclusive process. This iterative model (Figure) emphasizes the role of the community, group, and individual values in the change process. This cyclical model draws on the citizens to create a community that embraces change. The group is responsible for collaborating with civility to reach a common goal even in times of controversy. The role of the individual is to reflect commitment and congruence to that common purpose through self-reflection.

This model emphasizes seven C's of leadership: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship.⁴ Consciousness of self requires intimate personal awareness of beliefs, values, and emotions that drive action and is anchored in the premise that in order to develop a strong understanding of others, one must ultimately be acutely aware of oneself. Next, congruence requires both personal and collective congruency determinants as reflection on individual strengths, and limitations are considered against collective beliefs. Commitment, another integral component of this model, requires intensity and passion to bring an initiative to closure. Through motivational factors to serve and collective efforts to pursue a common purpose, commitment drives collaboration. Through collaboration, groups come together to explore differences and commonalities to further develop the pathways for reaching the desired outcomes. Through a clearly communicated and well-developed common purpose, a collective analysis of the issues promotes group engagement and consideration of multiple solutions. As with all change initiatives, controversy may arise. Key to this model is the construct of treating each other with civility despite differences of opinions. Through positive, open-minded dialogue, the common purpose will ultimately be realized. Last, citizenship requires engagement, not just membership, in group activities if social change is to be realized. Through

active, reflective engagement at all levels of the model, positive change can occur.

Clearly, the Social Change Model of Leadership has broad implications for educational reform, and athletic training reform is no different. From an individual perspective, athletic trainers are encouraged to reflect on their own personal values and determine whether these values are consistent with the common purpose of the current educational reform. Are you prepared to and do you firmly believe in the intended outcomes of this change process? Are you able to strip your biases to fully consider all potential alternatives to make the transition to the masters' degree a reality? Can you generate creative passion to promote positive change, or are you stuck in negative perceptions regarding this reform initiative? From a group perspective, have all potential opportunities to commit to this common purpose been investigated? Has there been collaboration to bridge individual and group perspectives? Has there been controversy with civility? Having a voice is important, and agreeing to disagree is acceptable. However, communities thrive on respectful and civil treatment even in times of uncertainty and change. Through responsible citizenship reflected in active engagement in the process, all members of the profession can ultimately affect the educational reform initiatives currently challenging the profession.

Contemporary educational initiatives^{5,6} as well as corporate marketing⁷ have emphasized the role of becoming an upstander rather a bystander to promote positive change. Social change, closely connected to social justice initiatives, promotes positive leadership by engaging all individuals involved in the change process to actively participate. Anchored in three critical roles—upstander, bystander, and perpetrator—each profoundly affects the end result and can or cannot create victims in the process. By role, upstanders take a proactive role in engaging in change despite personal risks and biases. Bystanders, on the other hand, typically are resistant to change and tend to disengage from the change process. As a result, bystander apathy generates silence, tacitly implying agreement. Perpetrators tend to be the initiators of change and are typically in positions of power or authority. Victims

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Figure. Social Change Model of Leadership Development.



are those individuals either directly or indirectly affected by the process. In athletic training education reform, the Strategic Alliance has announced a major reform initiative. These perpetrators are viewed by some as those in power who drive decisions. Bystanders are athletic training educators and clinicians who choose not to engage actively in the process to promote positive change. Bystanders complain yet fail to engage in proactive steps to affect the reform initiative. Upstanders engage in substantive dialogue to create a sense of community and commitment in hopes of influencing the common purpose, which will affect all athletic trainers in the profession. And, of course, the students may or may not become the victims.

How can athletic trainers become upstanders rather than bystanders in this educational reform initiative? Athletic trainers can carefully consider creative curricular innovations as they redesign master's-level educational programming so that it is uniquely customized to prepare graduate students to emerge as cutting-edge professionals. Athletic trainers can positively and actively engage in all open forum opportunities (open comment periods, town hall meetings, educational conferences) to provide substantive feedback to the Strategic Alliance partners so that all concerns and alternatives can be considered. Athletic trainers can reach out to other health care professionals to evaluate and consider alternative curricular design programs as new programs are designed so that interprofessional and innovative models emerge. Last, athletic

trainers can become engaged and informed creators and consumers of educational research to promote best practices in clinical and didactic education.

Should athletic trainers fail to engage in the seven C's of leadership, students will be the ultimate victims. Processes are in place to encourage active participation of all constituents in the profession in this change process. As members of a professional discipline, careful consideration of our individual, group, and community roles as defined in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development can provide tremendous insight into whether we will emerge from the change process as an upstander or a bystander.

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