

LDI Teaches Leadership Inside and Outside of the Classroom

by Kirk DICKEY



Collin College's Leadership Development Institute (LDI) provides a structure for the hard work of becoming a leader. For the students who choose LDI classes, though, that work is rewarded with both greater knowledge of leadership principles and a deeper understanding of subjects at the core of modern education.

A sister program to the Leadership Empowerment and Development (LEAD) program profiled in last month's edition of *Allen Image*, LDI takes a subject-centered educational approach to leadership training. The classes offer a leadership development emphasis in core courses including government, history, psychology, speech communication and English.

Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work.

—Vince Lombardi

Where LEAD takes the approach of drawing students in with fun extracurricular activities that offer opportunities for leadership education, LDI uses a mix of teaching methods, in-class exercises and extra-class assignments to bring the ideals of leadership to life.

That is what happened for

Gonzalo Munoz Zivkovic

Photo: Nick Young, Collin College

Gonzalo Munoz Zivkovic. An immigrant from Chile, Munoz Zivkovic is pursuing an associate of arts degree and is considering permanent residence in the United States. In addition to being a core course for his degree, he thought the government class would be a good way to learn how the U.S. political system operates. Munoz Zivkovic said he realized after he got into the class that it was more than a collection of facts about the country's government.

"It had a special flavor from the start," he said. "I was expecting more or less a classic government course. I was expecting 'This is the Congress. This is how it's made. This is the voting process,' etcetera."

However, the leadership emphasis of the class provided for a more in-depth exploration of how people viewed the political process throughout history. Discussing the motivations of the major actors and going through their decision process allowed for a fuller understanding for him.

"It helped you to realize the 'why' of some of these decisions, and it also helped you understand how your decisions should be focused through leadership," he said.

In addition to their normal government studies, Munoz Zivkovic and his fellow students examined case studies including the Apollo 13 disaster, a civil war battle, a Wall Street trading scandal and more from a book titled *The Leadership Moment*, by Michael Useem. By digging into the case studies, the students saw how good leadership can mean the difference between a tragedy and a triumph.

Themes like problem solving, teamwork, decision-making and ethics were explored, and the students expanded on the research, ultimately presenting their findings to the rest of the class.

LDI students are encouraged to take their studies beyond the classroom as well, including assignments to interview community leaders, attend Collin College Board of Trustees

meetings to see leadership in action and participate in the extracurricular activities offered through the LEAD program. LDI and LEAD complement each other, and students are encouraged to make the most of both.

"Rather than having standard government class assignments, they have experiential learning and get to go out into the community," LDI Director Dr. Debra St. John said. "We all know that some of the things that you learn outside of the classroom are

the most important things; the things that you hold on to."

Dr. St. John asks that her LDI students complete three extra-class assignments of the five options offered. These activities are reflected not only in the students' grades, but also in a co-curricular transcript, which allows students to track their service hours and organizational involvement while attending Collin College. The transcripts are becoming popular tools to demonstrate

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