

*Notes on the Founding
of the
Jepson School
of Leadership Studies*

*An Abridged
Draft No. 4*

The fabric of democratic civilization depends upon citizens who understand that leadership means service and that their very citizenship carries an obligation to lead when circumstances demand.



Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond

www.richmond.edu/jepson



transformation
innovation
service

Preface

Today's global citizen must have the knowledge, ability, and imagination to anticipate, adapt to, and drive change. Modern democracy requires citizens who can think critically, reason ethically, and effectively participate in determining the future. Successful organizations in our pluralistic world must be populated by individuals who understand group processes and how to guide them effectively while maintaining the proper respect for all participants. The Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond was founded with these needs in mind.

Planning for the creation of the School began in 1987. On September 28, 1988, the planning committee and faculty finalized a proposal for the School. This draft proposal, the fourth draft, to be precise, set forth guiding principles and discussed the needs in society that the School would meet. This monograph, an abridged version of the original document, is published in connection with the 15th anniversary of the School, which was inaugurated September 8 and 9, 1992, and graduated its first class in spring 1994. The full text is posted on the Jepson Website.

Abridged
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A Proposal *for the* **Jepson School of Leadership Studies**

In May of 1987, Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Jepson, Jr., announced their intent to provide the University with a \$20 million challenge gift to develop a leadership studies program. In the past fifteen months this remarkable possibility has received considerable attention by the University's administration and faculty.

During May and June following the announcement of the challenge gift, an administrative committee worked briefly with the donors to explore the framework of their thinking and the University's capacity to respond. In October and November of 1987, Provost Zeddie Bowen worked with a committee of faculty and administrators to generate a proposal that was accepted by the faculty and forwarded to Mr. and Mrs. Jepson. Our most recent interaction with Mr. Jepson, one that led to the writing of this draft proposal, began in March of this year when Rector Joseph A. Jennings asked Chancellor E. Bruce Heilman to engage Mr. Jepson in conversation about the leadership studies program. This invitation to Dr. Heilman has resulted in a series of meetings with Mr. Jepson, a host of visits to individuals and campuses across

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the nation involved with leadership education, and the writing of [this] *Proposal for the Jepson School of Leadership Studies*

This document serves as a starting point for our continued conversation about leadership studies at the University of Richmond....

The fabric of democratic civilization depends upon citizens who understand that leadership means service and that their very citizenship carries an obligation to lead when circumstances demand. Not all who have borne the name of leader are to be emulated. Indeed, our country

began with the rejection of one model of leadership and its replacement with another. But the need for leadership, properly understood, has not disappeared. Our nation and the world remain in urgent need of compassionate, knowledgeable, and dedicated men and women in such roles.

Many scholars believe that the emergency of eighteenth-century America produced a generation of unparalleled leaders. Indeed, the role played by Virginians in the early shaping of our nation was profound. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Wythe, Harrison, Braxton, and others of nearly equal significance provided leadership to a nation that was at the time more vision than substance. Abigail Adams in a 1790 letter to Thomas Jefferson wrote, "These are the hard times in which a genius would wish to live. Great necessities call forth great leaders." She wrote with great wisdom. But it was also true that those great necessities called forth thousands of leaders from among the men and women of the colonies, leaders whose names are seldom recorded, but

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without whose efforts the more familiar pantheon of our nation's founders could have accomplished little.

Today's world, for better or worse, is more complicated. The need for leadership in all facets of our culture has multiplied. There is a continuing call for men and women who are prepared to assume responsibility in all walks of life—individuals who will "consult and listen, who have respect for human possibilities, who help us to help ourselves and help us to grow,...who help us remove obstacles to our effective functioning [and] who help us see and pursue shared purposes" (Gardner, 1987, p. 18).

Higher education has long asserted a claim that it prepares young men and women for the responsibilities of leadership, but until recently only isolated scholars have given much attention to the characteristics of the effective leader. Although the nature of leadership is now being examined in many institutions, there remains considerable debate over the contributions education might make in enlarging the pool of ethical, civic-minded persons who are prepared and willing to assume responsibilities of leadership.

The Nation's Response in Higher Education

An increasing number of colleges and universities have begun to offer courses in leadership studies and to expand the opportunities for students to exercise their leadership abilities in projects and organizations on campus and within the wider community....

Our greatest strength in considering the development of a leadership program is the University's undergraduate liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

In the research that has been done and the countless conversations that have occurred regarding the possibility of developing the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, it has become very clear that no institution is doing what we are proposing to do at the University of Richmond.

There are scores of academic and student-life programs across the nation. The study of leadership has emerged as a valid interdisciplinary area of study, and many institutions are moving to develop major and minor programs.... Thinking about the ways in which colleges and universities might elect to be involved in leadership education calls to mind a quote from John Gardner, former president of the Carnegie Corporation and U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, who is the founder of the Independent Sector and will be appointed as a professor in Stanford University's leadership program.

“So part of our task is to develop what is naturally there but in need of cultivation. Talent is one thing; its triumphant expression is quite another. Some talents express themselves freely and with little need for

encouragement. Leopold Mozart did not have to struggle to uncover buried gifts in little Wolfgang. But generally speaking, the maturing of any complex talent requires a happy combination of motivation, character, and opportunity. Most human talent remains undeveloped. It is wrong to suppose that we can design a process that will start with a specific group of young potential leaders and end with finished products. What we can do is to offer promising young people opportunities and challenges favorable to the flowering of whatever leadership gifts they may have. Some will become leaders, partly from what we enabled them to learn and from challenges

we set before them, partly from the self-knowledge we helped them achieve. Beyond that, time and events will teach them. Mistakes and failures will teach them. And with respect to the final outcome, especially in the case of the greatest leaders, a decent humility should remind us that their emergence is a marvel and a mystery” (Gardner, 1987, pp. 3-4).

Gardner and others are confident that higher education has an important role to play in leadership education, and the University of Richmond possesses a unique opportunity to consider such a venture.

The University's Opportunity: The Study of and Preparation for Leadership

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in an address at Oglethorpe University in 1932, stated that “...the country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation.” In the research that has been done and the countless conversations that have occurred regarding the possibility of developing the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, it has become very clear that no institution is doing what we are proposing to do at the University of Richmond.... Roosevelt's call for “bold, persistent experimentation” could be given life in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies....

Our greatest strength in considering the development of a leadership program is the University's undergraduate liberal arts and sciences curriculum. This educational core provides the crucial foundation for the study of leadership.

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Our mission in the creation of the Jepson School is to develop a program that will allow students to realize their potential and responsibility for leadership.

As observed by the late Frank Pace, Jr., former chairman of the National Executive Service Corps, “... leadership studies must be multidisciplinary.... No single scholar can claim a mastery of such a subject. Together scholars from the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences, can complement insights of reflective practitioners and then share their scholarship with larger audiences. The very act of sharing what we know of leadership becomes an occasion for the study of leadership” (Pace, 1987, p. 3). Our established reputation as a high-quality, small university with a commitment to

teaching an undergraduate liberal arts and sciences curriculum is, in fact, a primary reason why a school of leadership studies has real promise for success in our setting.

The proposed Jepson School of Leadership Studies is ... a bold experiment that involves some risk, but the concept is solid and the risk acceptable for our University.

The Jepson School of Leadership Studies

Our mission in the creation of the Jepson School is to develop a program that will allow students to realize their potential and responsibility for leadership. The University’s program must be one that will benefit the total institution; offer our students a rigorous, disciplined education with a focus upon ethical and responsible leadership; and create an environment where leadership qualities will be more likely to flower because of what the students have encountered here.

The University’s goals for the Jepson School are to

1. develop a School of unquestioned academic excellence,
2. strengthen the entire University by creating a resource for both academic and student-life programs,
3. expose the University of Richmond to the world and the world to the University,
4. change the lives of our students by broadening their perspective on leadership and responsibility and deepening their understanding of moral and contemporary issues, thereby shaping their growth as leaders who will make a lasting impact for the good of society,
5. serve society by promoting productive interaction among people in business, government, social institutions, the professions, and the academy....

The Educational Program

Our nation needs ethical and imaginative leaders at every level of government, business, and society, whose education enables them to cope humanely and intelligently with the complex problems of our rapidly changing world. The rationale for the Jepson School’s existence is the recognition that programs commensurate with the nation’s needs can and must be developed....

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The Jepson School curriculum will offer students a challenging educational experience that will have a lasting impact on their lives and prepare them to deal effectively with the wide range of social, political, economic, and ethical problems that challenge the United States and the international community.

The School's academic and co-curricular mission will be accomplished by bringing together students, faculty, and distinguished visitors who believe that technical skills, managerial expertise, and cultural literacy, however necessary, are not sufficient virtues for leaders whose lives are dedicated to public service. The School's unique course of study will integrate the various disciplines in order to produce new generations of leaders—men and women of integrity, compassion, and imagination.

The primary task of the School is to provide a rigorous and disciplined education with a focus upon ethical and responsible leadership. The University's students will be challenged to recognize their obligation to serve [society] by solving the problems and building the potential of their community. Through study, research, argument, role modeling, and practical experience, students involved in the School's activities will develop the skills of analysis, interpersonal relations, planning, and decision making essential to significant participation in contemporary events....

The proposal continued to spell out operational matters of finances and timing and personnel. Faculty, trustees, and administrators refined plans for the creation of the Jepson School over many months. Work on this proposal was finalized September 28, 1988. The board of trustees approved the creation of the School on October 7, 1988. Members of the University attended a groundbreaking ceremony for Jepson Hall, which would house the new School, on October 5, 1989. The seventy-thousand-square-foot building completed the academic quadrangle existing in this area of the campus. As planned and outlined in Draft No. 4, the first class entered in 1992. The School was officially inaugurated September 8-9, 1992, and graduated its first class of thirty-eight students in May 1994.

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