



COLLEGE PREVIEW

LEADERS WANTED

How to become the leader
employers will want



Recent grad, **Jordan Miller**,
chooses Stanford over
12 other prestigious offers

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Careers in IT and Security

By Jacqueline Bodnar

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, “There is, deep down within all of us, an instinct. It’s a kind of drum major instinct – a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first.” This motivating man was also named by Time Magazine as one of the “15 Great Leaders Throughout History.” Although we may all have that instinct, few hone their skills to act on it. Yet, in today’s business world, those who take the time to do so will find countless opportunities, in all careers.

Leaders Wanted

“Leaders are critical in all fields. Society needs leaders, not just in government but in education, business, and non-profit organizations,” explains Veronica Vargas Stidvent, a lecturer and

program director in the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, Austin. “We need to think of leadership and responsibility broadly.”

Stidvent helps to spread the message of how important leadership is in today’s world, through the Subiendo Academy, located on the University campus. The Academy focuses on prepping the next generation with leadership skills by providing training that features speakers and hands-on learning experiences.

Just what does it mean to be a good leader? The ability to lead involves being able to motivate others. Effective leaders can inspire, motivate, take initiative, focus on the positive, and help a group to reach a goal. All of these skills takes practice to master,

LEADERS WANTED

**GREAT LEADERS ARE NEEDED
IN EVERY FACET OF LIFE AND
YOU CAN BE ONE TOO**



and all are in demand across all career fields. Good leaders empower others and help them leverage their strengths. In order to do so, one of the most important components is to have great communication skills.

Communicating and Beyond

One thing all great leaders have in common, is that they must be able to convey their message. That message is what will motivate others to help in carrying out a task or making changes. Therefore, it is crucial to hone communication skills. But, in addition to learning how to give a good speech or resonate with the audience, it is equally important to become an effective listener. And the good news is that these skills, all of which can help someone become a more effective communicator, can be gained on any college campus.

“Students should seize opportunities – both formal and informal – to develop their leadership skills in college,” says Stidvent. “And students should not discount the importance of learning to lead (and follow) in group settings, to impact a discussion, and to make choices that show others the way. These can be some of the most important learning opportunities for aspiring leaders.”

Gaining leadership skills on a college campus can be as easy as first taking an assessment test to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Academic advisors can arrange for these tests. You can find similar assessment tools online.

Once you know where your leadership skills weaknesses are, you can seek out opportunities that will help you strengthen those areas. Whether it is joining campus organizations, running for a



Omar Ochoa
3rd Year Law Student
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

For Omar Ochoa, a third-year law student at the University of Texas at Austin, honing his leadership skills is something he has taken seriously, right from the start. While earning his undergraduate degree in business honors accounting and economics, and his master's in professional accounting, all at the same university, he put his leadership skills into action.

Omar became the first Latino to serve as the university's student body president. Now in law school, he serves as the editor-in-chief of the Texas Law Review, another Latino first. He has also served as co-chair of the Latino Leadership Council, where he helped plan and carry out campus events.

“There are at least two key impacts from these activities. One is that I have gained valuable skills in working with and leading a team,” says Omar. “In every profession, you have to work with

and get along with others in order to be successful, both as an individual and as an organization. Another is that the relationships I have made will serve me throughout my life.”

Omar advises students never to lose sight of what's most important while in school, which is academics. He recommends studying just as hard, if not harder, as anything else you do.

“Second, never be afraid to speak up, but always be respectful,” adds Omar. “Work hard and be successful, but always be respectful, because you can never accomplish anything on your own. You always need the support of those around you, as well.”

student government position, or helping to plan an event, there are plenty of ways you can hone the skills you will need in order to lead.

Putting Leadership Skills into Action

“To position themselves for a valuable career, college students need to demonstrate how they can add value to a prospective employer,” says Bruce Bachenheimer, clinical professor of management and director of entrepreneurship at Pace University. “They need to be able to solve problems creatively and to effectively implement solutions in a rapidly changing environment. To accomplish this, they will need to think entrepreneurially and take on a leadership role early in their career.”

No matter what career field one is in, those who use their leadership skills will get ahead. They are the ones who will be



Leadership Academies

Just about every college campus has a Leadership Academy or Institute offering bright students the chance to hone their leadership skills. These are great resources so do your research and don't miss out. Also, check out off-campus opportunities like Corporate Bound Academy (www.corporateboundacademy.com), a 3-day leadership academy that prepares you to lead in corporate America, or the YP4 Leadership Academy (<http://www.youngpeoplefor.org>), a program for future leaders in civil rights and social justice.



Shannon Allport
Biology Major /
Spanish Language Minor
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

Shannon Allport, a junior at the University of Texas at Austin, is pursuing a bachelor of arts in biology, with a minor in Spanish language. She plans to go on to medical school and become a doctor. During her last three years on campus, she has seized the opportunity to gain valuable leadership skills.

“I started by pursuing issues that I was passionate about, and the leadership titles came much later, as a result of my actions,” says Shannon. “I gained the skills required to be a leader by being humble, learning from my mistakes, and knowing when someone else was better for the task at hand.”

In addition, she worked at developing relationships with administrators, and tapping into their wisdom. Absorbing all that information, she used it to help shape her own leadership style.

Her advice to other college students looking to gain leadership skills is to find a mentor and a group of people who can support you, yet still keep you grounded. “You can learn from them throughout your college career.” To identify areas where you can improve your skills, she suggests that you pay attention to the leaders around you, to see when they are successful and when they aren't.

“Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone for something you care about,” adds Shannon. “Don't ever settle for mediocrity and ambivalence. If you see something that needs to be changed, be the one to start the movement. The rest will come!”

promoted to management positions, have access to the best opportunities, effect change, and (coincidentally) usually go home with the best salaries. Leadership skills are something that just about every employer looks for, when determining who to hire.

Because of this, it is important that every college student take steps to gain or hone their skills, in order to get the most out of their chosen degree and career field. It is every bit worth the challenge of tapping into, and strengthening, your leadership instinct.

"The role of a leader is to take people to a new place, to inspire them to do something they otherwise would not have done or even thought they could do," adds Bachenheimer. "Think about how you can inspire fellow students and motivate them to take action!"

15 Ways to Gain Leadership Skills While in College

1. Run for a student body office.
 2. Coach a little league team.
 3. Get involved in or start a campus organization.
 4. Find an internship in your desired field.
 5. Do volunteer work at a charity.
 6. Help plan and carry out events.
 7. Take a speech class.
 8. Learn all about body language.
 9. Network with others.
 10. Engage in leadership seminars and conferences.
 11. Attend the speeches of leaders.
 12. Find a mentor.
 13. Attend the National Young Leaders Conference (<http://www.cylc.org/nylc/index.cfm>).
 14. Focus on maintaining integrity.
 15. Remain persistent and optimistic.
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Nikki Shonoiki
Intercultural Communications
Major / Social Justice Minor
University of Wisconsin
River Falls, Wisconsin

When it comes to learning leadership skills, Nikki Shonoiki could write the book. A University of Wisconsin-River Falls student majoring in intercultural communication studies and minoring in social justice, she has had a wide variety of leadership experiences.

Nikki has participated as a student senator and a director of diversity, and has served as a senator for women's initiatives, among many other experiences. She also co-founded Rise Up for Women's Rights on campus.

"I flew all over the country to attend conferences on leadership skill building, effective grassroots organizing and education on reproductive justice and rights," she says. "I also flew to DC a lot and lobbied the US Senate and House of Representatives five times on issues of Reproductive Justice and Women's Rights."

The skills she has developed, such as planning, organizing, delegating, time management, and political advocacy, will all be put to use in her career. After her May 2011 graduation, she will be moving to Seattle to undertake a position with Americorps, working with children to help them better their educational performance, and setting up social-justice and civic-engagement service projects.

"Figure out what you care about, then figure out what campus or community organization is focused on that value or issue, and get involved with them," adds Nikki. "I would also suggest joining your student government, volunteering at a local non-profit or getting an on-campus job. Leadership positions are everywhere, and you can gain relevant leadership skills in virtually any field or area you choose."