



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Alumni Mentor Program

BEING A GREAT LEADER: Exploring Servant Leadership

First Meeting Instructions

The goal of this activity is to help students develop an understanding of what it means to be an effective leader and introduce them to the principles of servant leadership. Through self-reflection, discussion, and practical exercises, students will explore the qualities that define strong leaders and how to lead by serving others. By the end of this activity, students will have identified actionable ways to apply servant leadership in their personal and professional lives.

REFLECTING ON THE SERVANT LEADERSHIP STYLE

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf. He described servant leadership as “a philosophy and set of practices that enrich the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and ultimately creates a more just and caring world”.

To kick off your meeting, both mentee and mentor should take 10 minutes to watch this YouTube video on the [10 Principles of Servant Leadership](#).

The 10 principles of servant leadership include Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the Growth of People, and Building Community.

Reflecting on the content of the video, ask yourself:

- Which servant leadership principles resonate most with me, and why?
- Who is someone in my life who models servant leadership? Why do I feel they are a servant leader?
- Which of the 10 principles of servant leadership do I feel is an area of strength for me?
 - Provide an example of a time you have modeled that principle.
- Which principle(s) do I feel I could improve as a leader?

Think about your current leadership approach and experiences, and answer the following questions:

- What qualities do I admire in leaders I look up to?



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Alumni Mentor Program

- How do I typically approach leadership situations? Do I focus more on tasks, people, or a balance of both?
- What areas of my leadership style do I want to develop further?
- What motivates me to take on leadership roles?
- How do I ensure I am serving the needs of my team while also achieving organizational goals?

QUICK TIPS

Here are some foundational tips to help cultivate a servant leadership mindset:

Prioritize Active Listening: Focus on truly hearing the needs and concerns of your team members.

Encourage and Empower Others: Support your team's growth by helping them build their skills and confidence.

Lead with Humility: Put the team's goals above your personal ambitions, valuing each member's contribution.

Practice Empathy and Understanding: Seek to understand others' perspectives, especially when conflicts or challenges arise.

Serve as a Role Model: Model behaviors that reflect integrity, respect, and commitment to team success.

LEADERSHIP EXERCISES WITH MENTOR

Work through the following exercises with your mentor to deepen your understanding of servant leadership and explore practical applications:

- **Exercise 1: Identifying Leadership Strengths and Areas for Growth**
Begin by discussing your strengths and areas you wish to develop as a leader. With your mentor, identify specific servant leadership qualities—such as empathy, stewardship, or active listening—that align with your values. Set one or two personal goals to work on these qualities.
- **Exercise 2: Practicing Servant Leadership in Team Settings**
Imagine a scenario where you are leading a team facing a challenging deadline. Discuss how you would apply servant leadership principles, such as supporting each team member's unique needs or encouraging open communication. Explore with your mentor any potential obstacles and ways to overcome them.
- **Exercise 3: Resolving Conflict as a Servant Leader**
Describe a past or hypothetical conflict situation within a team setting. Reflect on how a



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Alumni Mentor Program

servant leader would address it by focusing on understanding and reconciliation. Role-play this scenario with your mentor, practicing how you might resolve the conflict while prioritizing trust and respect.

- **Exercise 4: Creating a Vision for Your Leadership Legacy**

Spend a few minutes imagining the type of leader you aspire to be. Share with your mentor the impact you hope to have on those you lead. Define one action you can take immediately to start working toward this vision.

DEBRIEF

After completing the exercises, take some time with your mentor to reflect on the experience:

- What feedback did your mentor provide on your strengths and areas for growth?
- How can you start incorporating servant leadership into your daily interactions with others?
- What aspects of this activity were challenging, and how can you work to overcome those challenges?

This activity is designed to encourage self-awareness, empathy, and the practice of servant leadership, laying the groundwork for becoming an impactful, service-oriented leader.