

## **The Leading Edge Leadership Institute – An Overview**

The Leading Edge is a Leadership Institute that focuses on both leadership and the skills needed to become leader coaches. Course content focuses heavily on personal awareness, interpersonal awareness, leader impact, and the development of specific coaching skills.

During their experience in The Leading Edge students have the opportunity to experience coaching as they are paired with a faculty coach and participate in actual coaching sessions. They also have the opportunity to apply the coaching skills they develop by coaching someone else through multiple coaching sessions.

The coaching model we use is called “co-active coaching”. It is not specifically about performance coaching or executive coaching, it is a holistic approach to coaching that focuses on individuals’ strengths rather than deficits. The model suggests that people are creative, whole, and resourceful and have the ability to discover their own solutions. The coaches’ role is to be present, ask powerful questions to help coachees gain insight, acknowledge who they are, and to be there to help support coachees’ change efforts and to provide accountability. The coaching experience is very much about personal growth. This coaching model focuses on being coaches who truly care about and connect with people to help them become more of who they want to be.

The Leading Edge consists of four courses completed in sequence over four terms. It is a capstone requirement, which means that it is the culminating experience for students in the Master of Arts in Management program and should be taken at or near the end of students’ programs.

**Bus 785** is the preparation course. It is a zero credit course, however the work completed in Bus 785 is graded as part of the next course. The class only meets one time, at the beginning of the course, to get acquainted and learn about the course requirements and assignments. Students spend the remainder of the term completing the assignments. In this course, students read three texts and complete extensive reflective writing assignments and exercises. The texts are excellent – they are:

- Leadership from the Inside Out: Becoming a Leader for Life (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) by Kevin Cashman
- Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people toward success in work and life by Laura Whitworth, Karen Kimsey-House, Henry Kimsey-House, & Phillip Sandahl
- Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the power of appreciative inquiry in daily living by Jacqueline Stavros and Cheri Torres

The focus of Bus 785 is extensive personal reflection and self-awareness. In his book Cashman asks, “Who are you? Where are you going? Why?” and describes the importance of leaders being self-aware...and understanding their personal mission and how this links to their core values. This self-awareness and students’ work in Bus 785 is foundational for the remainder of the course.

**Bus 786 and 787** include the classroom component of The Leading Edge. Cohort groups meet four times for Bus 786 (every other week) and one full weekend for Bus 787. The classes focus on issues such as:

- defining coaching, leadership impact and leader coaches
- contrasting coaching, counseling, mentoring
- identifying types of coaching
- identifying specific models of coaching including the co-active coaching model
- identifying our type preferences and how those impact us and our relationships
- identifying our internal saboteurs and learning how to notice and let go of them
- learning key coaching skills (such as being present, listening at deeper levels, asking powerful questions, acknowledging others for who they are rather than what they do)
- understanding our intercultural sensitivity and ways we can become more culturally competent
- discussing the impact of coaching and our leadership legacy

In class, students have several opportunities to practice the coaching skills they are developing in a safe environment and receive feedback from their peers.

Mid-way through Bus 786, students meet with their faculty coach to co-create their coaching partnership, and meet at least three times for one-on-one coaching sessions. Typically students leave their coaching sessions with one or more “action items” to complete prior to the next coaching session, and the coach provides support and accountability to help students move forward in areas they have identified for growth.

Near the end of Bus 787, students begin applying their learning. They select someone to coach and meet for the first time with that person to co-create the coaching partnership. They meet three times for one-on-one coaching sessions, which allows students to apply the skills they have been learning to real-life coaching. These coaching sessions extend into the final term of The Leading Edge, Bus 788. The final class session in Bus 787 includes a celebration of The Leading Edge experiences.

**Bus 788** is the fourth and final term of The Leading Edge. There are no formal class meetings. During this term students complete their coaching with another individual. They also complete a culminating final project that synthesizes their key learning through each part of The Leading Edge. The final project also has a second component that includes the design of a product or project that is focused on the application of learning. The final project incorporates two key criteria: 1) creating something that demonstrates how students’ key learning will be sustained after completion of The Leading Edge, and 2) identifying the “leadership legacy” students want to leave (i.e., the impact they want to have on others/their organization) and creating something for that specific audience.

The final experience in The Leading Edge is an oral presentation, where students share a synthesis of their Leading Edge journey with others. Students have approximately one hour each to present their reflections, typically over two to three evenings.