

# THE POWER OF MENTORING IN DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS IN U.S. INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Abstract

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Through a basic qualitative research design, the study explored the power of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders in U.S. institutions of higher education (HEDs). For this purpose, the individual opinions of 18 directors of leadership were solicited to explore the role of mentoring as instrumental in cultivating future leaders in HEDs, where academic excellence and innovation flourish. The findings suggested that developing the next generation of leaders is a strategic imperative and cannot be overstated, in the context of HEDs, where exemplary, ethical, adaptable, and visionary leaders are born. HEDs can play a major role in upskilling and cultivating them through mentoring from fostering a sense of community, to modeling behavior, and embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Effective mentorship is of paramount importance in guiding and professionally developing future leaders to steer the complexities and the dynamic realm of U.S. HEDs. This study can help U.S. universities understand the power of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders. An improved understanding of this power will help American colleges and universities, academic leaders, board members, faculty, and policymakers, to better allocate their human, financial, and physical resources in order to meet the needs of the next generation of leaders and to develop them. This research paper is one of the first research studies to explore the power of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders, from the experiences and perspectives of directors of leadership in U.S. HEDs. Therefore, 18 directors of leadership from various HEDs were identified and interviewed about their perspectives and experiences pertaining to the role of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders. Data collected from directors provide narratives that expand the body of literature.

**Keywords:** Developing the Next Generation of Leaders, Leadership Development, Mentoring, U.S. Institutions of Higher Education, Inclusive Environment, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Collaboration, Effective Leadership, Mentorship, Sense of Community, Belonging

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is vital in guiding organizations and the world toward prosperity and success, by mentoring, inspiring, innovating, and empowering the next generation of leaders to face the complexities and challenges that arise. Leaders are scarce, and employers are struggling to find ready leaders who can adapt to handle the rapid transformations and help them in their survival (Development Dimensions International [DDI], 2023). Based on the Global Leadership Forecast of the year 2023, leadership development of new leaders and upgrading current leaders' skills is paramount for their success and institutions' well-being (DDI, 2023). Based on that report, 50% of chief executive officers (CEOs) considered developing the next generation of leaders as their top challenge and concern, showing acute awareness of the future leaders' role in driving success and prosperity. Leaders are more aware and have a responsibility to develop the next generation of leaders because it is crucial for the company's success (Tamayo et al., 2023), and it is known to be a main objective of institutions of higher education (HEDs) (Andenoro & Skendall, 2020). Agirdag and Muijs (2023) emphasized the importance of schools in allocating their resources to developing the next generation of leaders professionally whether for administrators or faculty.

In a continuously changing world, leaders' success in the 21st century necessitates upskilling and new competencies to effectively face the new challenges of the external environment, technology, innovation, and competition. Higher education institutions need to be ready to prepare leaders to weather change, navigate shifting markets, and cope with rapid changes and the pressure of innovation, which are major concerns for leaders today (Bok, 2013; DDI, 2021). Additionally, organizational leaders and boards of directors know full well that colleges and universities are a major source of candidates for their businesses (Armache et al., 2022, p. 176). Thus, mentoring is instrumental in developing the next generation of leaders (Kamarudin & Adams, 2023). Maxwell (2007), in his book "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You", affirmed the impact of effective mentors in developing the next generation of leaders, and stated, "More than four out of five of all the leaders that you have ever seen will have emerged as leaders because of the impact made on them by established leaders who mentored them" (Maxwell, 2007, p. 134). Future leaders are developed through mentoring (Day, 2000; Day & Thorton, 2017; Hastings & Sunderman, 2019; Yukl & Gardner, 2020), which plays a pivotal role in preparing them to navigate the challenges of academic life.

This study is important since it sheds light on the significant role of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders. To that end, 18 directors of leadership were interviewed to gain insight into their experiences and perspectives on the role of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders at U.S. HEDs.

This qualitative study sought an explanation that may advance the body of knowledge and

research on how mentoring affects the development of the next generation of leaders in U.S. HEDs.

The structure of the study is as follows. Section 1 contains an introduction. Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 provides data analysis and findings. Section 5 discusses the results of the study. And the study ends with Section 6.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores previous research in order to develop a foundation of understanding on this topic.

Mentoring, according to Bozeman and Feeney (2007), is defined as a process of transferring knowledge, sharing experiences and insights, and passing on social connections and relationships between a mentor and a mentee (the protégé). Mentoring comprehends psychological and emotional support (Rinfret et al., 2023). It aims to foster the personal and professional development and success of the mentee (Rinfret et al., 2023).

Researching the effects and importance of mentorship remains critical in promoting personal and professional growth within the context of higher education, for it is a keystone in developing faculty and students and advancing them (Rinfret et al., 2023).

Effective leaders must work on developing other leaders' skills and developing relationships (Grayson & Baldwin, 2007). Long-term development of the next generation of leaders and institutions is the most important value leaders can provide to succeed and adapt (Kouzes & Posner, 2019). Agirdag and Muijs (2023) affirmed the importance of allocating resources for continuous effective professional development of the next generation of leaders such as faculty and academic leaders in educational institutions.

Considering the new strains on universities (e.g., competition and globalization), policymakers plea campuses to consider the importance of community and incorporation of technology, and called to re-educate and upskill stakeholders in higher education for leaders to be more successful (Bensimon et al., 1989). They also emphasized the importance of being proactive in updating their programs and curricula to match students' needs (Armache et al., 2020).

Exemplary leaders play a significant role in developing the next generation of leaders, by offering the support needed (Kouzes & Posner, 2019), which results in higher job satisfaction and greater effectiveness in performance (Deci et al., 2017). The economy is to benefit when leadership competencies are developed, and HEDs will have to act (Bok, 2020) to upskill the next generation of leaders through its leaders, to be ready to weather the changes, face this intense competition, and succeed (Armache et al., 2020). It is incumbent on educational leaders to take action, especially since boards of directors, and boards of trustees in organizations depend heavily on higher education institutions as main suppliers of highly qualified talents that employers truly need (Armache et al., 2022).

Developing the next generation of leaders can be done through "parenthood, teaching, sharing cultural understanding, mentoring and leadership" (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019, p. 2), which benefits

society, workplaces, and communities. Subsequently, it is associated with socially responsible leadership (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019).

Additionally, Armache et al. (2020) highlight the importance of U.S. HEDs to embrace an inclusive culture by adopting DEI policies. Hiring high-diversity faculty that have leadership capabilities is critical for academic leaders to be effective and for the success of HEDs (Rehbock, 2020). Moreover, in order to avoid shortcomings in mentorship experiences, faculty members' gender or race must not be overlooked to ensure customized effective mentorship that considers diverse individuals' needs (Rinfret et al., 2023). Moreover, colleges have succeeded in developing interpersonal skills in students by using collaborative projects that improve their teamwork skills, and through courses and workshops to promote diversity and overcome any sort of prejudice (Bok, 2020). This approach promotes an inclusive environment that contributes to everyone's success and professional growth (Rinfret et al., 2023). It is a requisite to have equitable, inclusive mentoring programs that conform to the specific needs of women faculty, adjuncts, and non-tenure track faculty (Rinfret et al., 2023).

"Great leaders do not just lead. They also collaborate, partner, and bring people with them" (DDL, 2021, p.13). By thinking win-win, one of Covey's (1989) "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic", everyone benefits, and interaction becomes collaborative and interdependent between a leader and a follower, the collaborator. Covey (1989) stressed the importance of developing student's and faculty's leadership skills and qualities and encouraged collaboration and proactivity. Networking is also vital for a leader to be effective in accessing human resources to find solutions and face the challenges in an organization, in which "Leadership networking is about building relationships and making alliances in service of others" (Grayson & Baldwin, 2007, p. 7).

Kouzes and Posner (2019) emphasized the role of leaders who can ignite their subordinates by walking their talks and being consistent through their actions. Kouzes and Posner (2019) stated leaders are viewed as role models through their deeds and behaviors which are louder than words. They explained that exemplary leaders who have self-confidence and have the best expectations for subordinates to succeed can bring out the best in their followers. Moreover, by setting a good example and acting ethically and responsibly, academic leaders, faculty, and staff can develop students' moral character (Bok, 2020). Cavagnaro and van der Zande (2021) argued that academic leadership education's objective was to develop the leaders of the future.

Preparing students to be leaders is crucial, but at first, faculty must be cultivated to be leaders, who can transfer their leadership to students and be role models (Cavagnaro & van der Zande, 2021). Faculty must be empowered for their considerable role and their contributions must not be demarginalized (Lutz, 2021). Their role is "animating and humanizing higher education's mission of knowledge production

for the social good" (Neumann, 2009, p. 15). Yukl (2010) argued that faculty are increasingly required to be developed as leaders, to be able to influence others in HEDs and work collectively to achieve the pursuit of the goals, that will lead to HEDs' success. However, Bok (2020) argued that academic leaders, in prominent universities, are slow to change and introduce reforms that professors resist implementing, where more focus is on research than students and classrooms. Most professors in those universities are research-focused for "they are hired, promoted, and paid primarily for the quality of their publications rather than their ability in the classroom" (Bok, 2020, p. 147).

Mentoring and its types proved to be beneficial in developing the next generation of leaders, based on research in higher education (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019). It is associated with positive outcomes on the academic, developmental, and learning levels within the context of higher education (Lorenzetti et al., 2019). Studies reveal that faculty mentoring type impacts leadership values and self-consciousness (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019), other researchers have suggested that it is also associated with positive outcomes, such as an increase in job knowledge and skills, career satisfaction for faculty and an increase in retention and promotion rates (Lunsford et al., 2017). Professional organizations, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), mandate formal mentoring programs for faculty as part of their accreditation purposes (Lunsford et al., 2017). Additionally, as strategic goals, university administrators advocate formal mentoring programs to address issues of turnover, retention, job satisfaction, and workforce shortages, especially in the nursing field (Lunsford et al., 2017). They also support those mentoring programs to boost and sustain specific academic areas like grant writing and publishing which are underrepresented (Lunsford et al., 2017).

Peer mentoring type impacts the next generation of leaders' commitment and collaboration (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019) and has positive developmental outcomes on academic, social, psychological, and career graduate learning (Lorenzetti et al., 2019). Moreover, Hastings and Sunderman (2019) argued that students who mentor and guide the next generation of leaders (i.e., peers) work to a build strong community, in which mentoring is considered a way to develop leadership qualities and success in the next generation. Additionally, Grund (1997) confirmed the effectiveness of mentoring and supporting mentees. Mentoring is beneficial to undergraduate students and it is proven to improve their academic achievement and grade point average (GPA), their leadership skills, their cognitive growth, and their sense of belonging (Lunsford et al., 2017). As for graduate students, a growing body of evidence proves that mentoring contributes to their socialization and academic support, program satisfaction, scholarly productivity and research, and their self-efficacy (Lunsford et al., 2017). Refer to Table 1.

**Table 1.** Outcomes of mentoring for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members

<i>Beneficiaries by category</i>	<i>Outcomes of mentoring</i>
Undergraduate students	Academic achievement and grade point average (GPA), leadership skills, cognitive growth, and sense of belonging (Lunsford et al., 2017).
Graduate students	Socialization and academic support, program satisfaction, scholarly productivity and research, and self-efficacy (Lunsford et al., 2017). Leadership values and self-consciousness (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019).
Faculty members	Job knowledge and skills, career satisfaction for faculty, and an increase in retention and promotion rates (Lunsford et al., 2017). Workforce shortages (i.e., nursing field) (Lunsford et al., 2017). Grant writing and publishing (Lunsford et al., 2017).

Source: Adapted from Lunsford et al. (2017, pp. 316-334).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A basic qualitative research study design was applied to complete this study. It is described as “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The focus of this study was the lived experiences of directors of leadership programs at HEDs in the U.S. as they pertain to the practices or approaches used in the development of the next generation of leaders.

#### 3.1. Sampling and recruitment

We considered or employed purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants for this study. Purposive sampling enabled us to recruit participants who would best provide in-depth information about our research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was limited to directors of leadership programs in the disciplines of leadership studies and/or organizational leadership at U.S. HEDs. Potential participants were initially identified using the International Leadership Association database. Programs were identified using specific search criteria: 1) be located in the U.S., 2) have a graduate leadership program, and 3) offer blended programming or face-to-face. The initial list was then narrowed down to established institutions that aged at least 60 years. These criteria are valuable because such HEDs have a record of accomplishment in the educational arena due to their graduate and advanced study, institutional longevity, student preparation and output, and involvement in leadership research. Snowball sampling, also named chain referral sampling, was implemented as a means for us to verify, prioritize, and further solicit interviewees in our study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researchers contacted potential participants via email to request participation. The study consent form was attached to provide further information about the study. A second email was sent, as a reminder, after two weeks, to those who did not respond. Those who agreed to participate signed the consent form and returned it to the researchers who then scheduled the interview.

#### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

Virtual interviews were conducted as the source of data for the study. Interviews provide the researcher with more information about participants’ unique perspectives, opinions, feelings, experiences, knowledge, values, and behaviors (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were conducted synchronously via Microsoft Teams, as a web-based platform. This

provided “the researcher and respondent an experience similar to face-to-face interaction insofar as they provide a mechanism for a back-and-forth exchange of questions and answers in what is almost real time” (Lune & Berg, 2021, p. 80). The choice of virtual interviewing of participants was proper because of their geographical dispersion across the U.S.

Based on the literature, a researcher-created semi-structured interview protocol was formed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It included 12 open-ended questions designed to gain specific information from those interviewed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and support the interviewer in delving more into the behaviors, experiences, feelings, rich descriptions, and interpretations (Merriam, 2009). Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The interviews were video recorded and transcribed using the transcript feature of Microsoft Teams, in conjunction with interviewer field notes. The transcripts were checked for accuracy by the interviewer and, during this check, any identifying information was removed to maintain participants’ confidentiality. After the individual transcripts were reviewed for accuracy, member checks were conducted by sending them to the respective interviewees, requesting feedback regarding accuracy, and providing them an opportunity to edit and clarify any responses. The recordings were destroyed after the accuracy checks. When no new insights were formed from the data collection and analysis, the point of saturation was reached and data collection was terminated (Merriam, 2009). This resulted in 18 participants. Each participant was randomly assigned a code (Director 1-Director 18) for reporting purposes.

The responses of participants were structurally coded and analyzed using comparative methods to identify emergent themes. Structural coding “applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 67). This initial coding serves “as a starting point to provide the researcher with analytic leads for further exploration” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 81). Within these codes, comparative methods were used to further identify themes and sub-themes. As it relates to comparing and contrasting, Tesch (1990) stated that it is used for all “intellectual tasks during analysis ... The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns” (Tesch, 1990, p. 96). This process gives meaning to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The analysis resulted in many emergent themes which were then compared to the literature to draw conclusions and recommendations.

### 3.3. Trustworthiness and ethical practices

Thorough qualitative research is based on trustworthiness, which Sandelowski (1993) elaborates on, it involves credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

Credibility was maintained by verifying the accuracy of researcher and participant transcripts and subjecting them to peer review (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To minimize individual biases and validate identified themes, the researchers did a peer review of data categorization. The employment of multiple investigators for data analysis served as a form of triangulation, offering different perspectives and a deeper understanding of the studied concept, as supported by Patton (2014). Lune and Berg (2021) elaborate that triangulation contributes to a better understanding of reality, presenting a “richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts” (p. 14).

The transferability component demonstrates the applicability of the findings to different contexts. Through purposive sampling, the selection of a specific sample contributes to rich information related to our topic searched. The reader can also judge its transferability to different contexts. By using a rich and thick description, detailed descriptions of the findings, and shared experiences, “the results become more realistic and richer” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). A thick description of participants and including their direct quotes gives them a voice and supports credibility and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations are taken into consideration concerning the human’s well-being when interviewing in qualitative research (Seidman, 2005). The Institutional Review Board approval was obtained as evidence that we conformed to the professional and ethical regulations for research, to protect the welfare of human participants.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Through this qualitative study, we sought to advance the discussion about the role of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders at U.S. HEDs. Eighteen directors of leadership at HEDs were interviewed and themes emerged from their responses. Findings are reported in narrative form as the foundation for explanation and interpretation, including relevant quotations.

The findings provide new insights into how U.S. HEDs are developing the next generation of leaders through mentorship. Specifically, the findings show that HEDs can play a significant role in cultivating them by having a sense of community and belonging, through modeling behavior, and by promoting diversity and equity in an inclusive environment (refer to Figure 1).

Mentorship by exemplary leaders guides the next generation of leaders, shares experiences with them, and supports them with insights for the new roles they seek or aim to fulfill.

### 4.1. Sense of community and belonging

Mentoring promotes a sense of community and belonging. Directors 1, 8, and 9, stress the importance of fostering an environment where leaders support

and learn from each other by sharing their experiences and building a sense of community and camaraderie. Director 1 expresses “inviting real people from the community and real people, from the corporate organizations on to our college campuses to work with our students and then have our students wrestle with really tough problems in that space” (personal communication, November 17, 2022) and foster group problem-solving. Director 8 particularly focuses on citizenship, community engagement, solving complex problems, and capacity building as fundamental for good leadership development and engagement of students (personal communication, November 23, 2022). Further, Director 9 highlights the usefulness of extended programs over time, which involves socialization within the community, continuous development, “learning together”, and “building that social network” that individuals can rely on throughout their careers. “The socialization and the community, the sense of community, they are very important in developing the next generation of leaders” (personal communication, December 21, 2022).

Director 4 explicitly considers mentoring as an effective approach in cultivating leaders, and contributes to the development of future leaders, by equipping them with tools, and strategies, and offering them support through conferences and training, and states, “coaching and mentoring along the way” and creating “a network for leaders to lean on each other” and added, “in addition to them being able to work with their mentor coach, they create a bond, a synergy as a group” (personal communication, November 23, 2022). Moreover, Director 7 argues that developing the next generation of leaders is to “walk with them”. Directors 5 and 11 highlight the importance of supporting their faculty in their research journey by providing the resources needed. Director 5 expresses commitment to support them in the research that aligns with their personal goals and offers them networking opportunities that contribute to informal leadership development. Additionally, Director 15 stresses the importance of “building rapport with teams, through active listening and engagement, and endorses servant leadership” (personal communication, December 19, 2022) Director 15 indicates “management by walking around” on campus to find out improvement opportunities from people working with them.

### 4.2. Modeling behavior

Mentors act as role models for their mentees by offering professional guidance and support based on respect and trust through meetings and providing constructive feedback, in order to overcome the challenges and reach their high potential. Directors 7, 13, and 15 stress the significance of setting a good example, and modeling behavior in developing the next generation of leaders. Director 7 expresses “modeling and setting a good example matter”, “practicing what we preach is important”, and “together making decisions” (personal communication, December 9, 2022). Director 13 emphasizes the importance of collaboration and expresses the desire of everybody especially students to see this cohesiveness between departments. “We just want to make sure that we’re

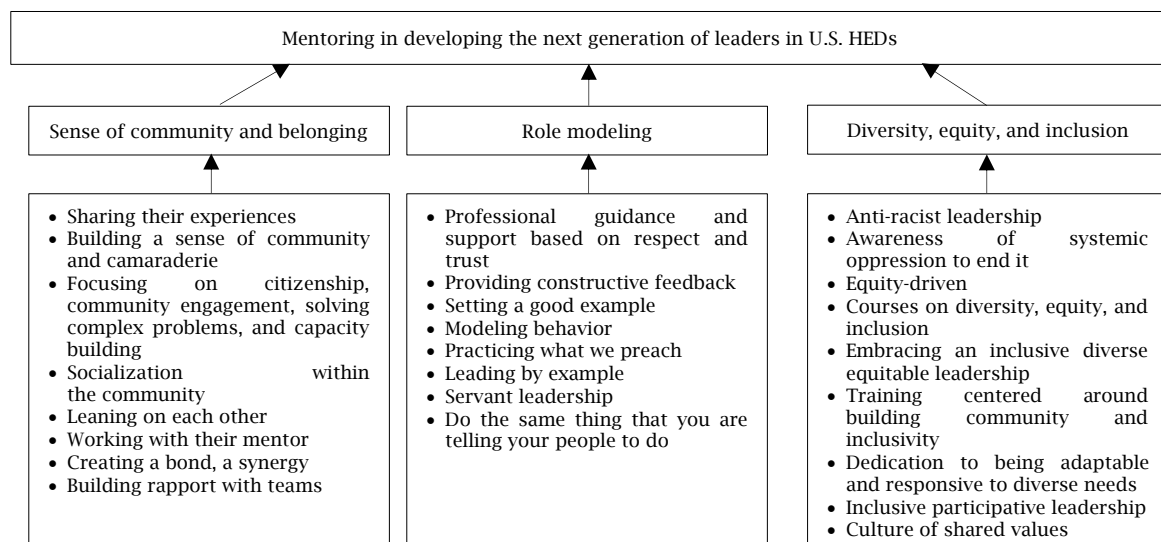
leading by example, and that everybody feels like one cohesive team” (personal communication, December 22, 2022). Further, Director 15 underscores the importance of providing feedback and answering questions, and states, “servant leadership is the way to lead people because it allows them to see that you are willing to do the same thing that you’re telling your people to do” (personal communication, December 19, 2022).

### 4.3. Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Mentoring fosters an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and different perspectives in higher education institutions. Anti-racist leadership is significant, according to Director 10, in their program, which involves awareness of systemic oppression and marginalized individuals to direct all the efforts to upend it and to face barriers to excel academically and professionally. The purpose is to shape leaders to be equity-driven and committed to ongoing learning-focused and collaboration, “at all

levels, families, adults, teachers, students themselves” (personal communication, December 16, 2022). Director 17 emphasizes that emerging leaders must take courses on DEI, regardless of their fields or backgrounds, learning theories, and their applications in embracing an inclusive diverse equitable leadership (personal communication, January 5, 2023). Moreover, Director 13 mentions that a lot of their “training is centered around building community and inclusivity” and ensuring that they “are sort of creating programs and implementing programs through an equitable lens” and are dedicated to being adaptable and responsive to diverse needs (personal communication, December 22, 2022). Furthermore, Director 15 endorses “an inclusive participative leadership style”, and mentions that “walking and engaging with next generation of leaders, lead to a culture of shared values and encourage others to be part of the decision-making, collaborate and continue to grow” (personal communication, December 19, 2022).

Figure 1. Emerging themes based on the directors of leadership responses



## 5. DISCUSSION

This study can benefit academic leaders and HEDs who can allocate their resources optimally, giving them a maximum return on their investment. The next generation of leaders will be more satisfied and productive, and turnover rates will decrease. As Director 16 mentions, there is an increase in “competition for talent” to hire and retain them, which “has never been more challenging” (personal communication, December 23, 2022), which aligns with the Global Leadership Forecast’s latest report stating that it is CEOs’ top concern to focus on attracting and retaining top talent (DDI, 2023). This challenge was selected by 59% of CEOs (DDI, 2023).

This study is significant in learning more about the topic and how it is carried out at HEDs and is more understood. It highlights the importance of mentoring in leadership development.

In developing the next generation of leaders, directors emphasize the power of mentoring through leading by example and modeling behavior. Findings reveal that the next generation of leaders can be developed by learning from their leaders who

can set a good example, who can model their way — in practicing what they preach, who can lead by example, and be servant leaders to act consistently as they ask others to act. The findings align with Hastings and Sunderman (2019) who indicate that parenthood is a modeling behavior and Yukl and Gardner (2020), who note that training programs such as role-playing, and behavior role modeling are offered. Further, Kouzes and Posner (2019), Bok (2020), and Cavagnaro and van der Zande (2021) emphasize the role of leaders, as mentors, in developing their subordinates by walking their talks and suggest that leaders can set a good example and be role models, through actions and not just words, in igniting the next generation of leaders.

Many directors reveal in the findings that having a sense of community, working collaboratively, and considering campus constituents as a family strengthens the bond built between mentors and the next generation of leaders to help them grow and develop. Academic connections are deepened in HEDs, where departments, instead of working in silos, coordinated their activities and provided training and expertise to those in need of it.

In addition to that, open communication, active listening, and providing feedback help in building rapport between all members. This theme seemed to align with the literature. Grayson and Baldwin (2007) emphasize developing relationships with others. Moreover, Luthans and Lockwood (1984) emphasize the significant role of feedback use. The findings seemed to align with Hastings and Sunderman (2019), Yukl et al. (2002), and Saari et al. (1988) who emphasize mentoring's impact on the next generation of leaders' commitment and collaboration and development.

Directors reveal that any sort of systemic oppression must be eliminated to direct the efforts to be equity-driven and be focused on embracing an inclusive environment, dedicated to being flexible and responsive to diverse needs and experiences. Findings seem to align with Rinfret et al. (2023) and Armache et al. (2020) articles that emphasize the importance of an inclusive environment and its contribution to everyone's professional success, as well as the success of HEDs. Findings are also consistent with Rinfret et al. (2023) who stress the need to steer equitable, inclusive mentoring programs to conform to the needs of women faculty, adjuncts, and non-tenure track faculty.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Interviewing directors of leadership brings data to life, and findings provide evidence that extends the existing body of literature around the pivotal role of mentoring in developing the next generation of leaders at U.S. HEDs. This study is significant in learning more about the topic of mentoring and how it is implemented at U.S. HEDs. It highlights the importance of mentoring in leadership development. Indeed, this study has policy, practical, and research implications for U.S. universities and academic leaders who strive to excel and compete on both domestic and global stages. It can benefit academic leaders and HEDs who can allocate their resources optimally, giving them a maximum return on their investment. The next generation of leaders will be more satisfied and productive, and turnover rates will decrease. The scope of this research paper is limited to directors of leadership at U.S. HEDs. This may affect the generalizability of the study since the sample did not include academic leaders who work outside

the U.S., and might have different experiences and perspectives. As for the data analysis, we admit the possible limitations of our interpretations of the data. To mitigate these limitations, we followed Saldaña's (2009) procedures of the data analysis and utilized many investigators as a means of triangulation to prove or establish credibility (Patton, 2014).

As for future research, it is recommended that this study be replicated on a larger and more representative sample that could include not only U.S. HEDs but also other international HEDs outside the U.S.

Developing the next generation of leaders is a core competency of effective and successful leaders and mentors. Directors of leadership cannot just be experts in leadership as faculty members. They must also practice leadership and be exemplary leaders and mentors, which are not as easy as they appear to be. An effective leader mentor, inspires, develops, models, encourages, supports, empowers, mobilizes, challenges, shares his experience, and walks with the next generation of leaders to passionately have the confidence and self-efficacy to achieve and rise higher and higher, as Director 15 stated, "reaching higher and higher". It is crucial to develop the next generation of leaders by equipping them with the skills and dispositions to excel and strive in a highly globalized competitive environment.

In a continuously changing world, in which the only constant is change, learning, and development are continuous lifelong processes in which higher education institutions can play a key role in upskilling and cultivating the next generation of leaders or campus constituents (e.g., students, faculty, staff) and who will shape our future.

A successful effective leader is a mentor, a role model, whose actions are louder than words. Director 18 highlighted that developing the next generation of leaders is about cultivating any individual who is trying to help shape the world and make a difference, and is not restricted to future CEOs and top-level managers (personal communication, January 11, 2023).

In short, effective mentors are those who build and sustain the human infrastructure of the next generation of leaders in higher education institutions.

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