JCAPS

The RISE Model: A New Model Shaping College Student Leadership Learning

Joshua K. Taylor, Oklahoma State University
Tashia Cheves, Oklahoma State University
Yokolanda Speight, Oklahoma State University

Effective student leadership development in higher education requires a strong theoretical foundation to cultivate competent, empathetic, and adaptive leaders. The newly developed RISE model—relationships, identity, skills, and efficacy—offers a structured, theory-based approach to leadership growth. The authors provide examples of the student-centered approach to developing the RISE model and how the leadership learning domains interact to create dynamic leadership growth. By prioritizing relationships, the model addresses gaps in empathy, inclusivity, and the ability to lead diverse teams. The authors argue that, by implementing the RISE model as a roadmap, student leadership development becomes a clearer, more impactful process, shifting leadership from an abstract concept to a structured, meaningful journey.

Introduction

One day, a student leading one of the largest student organizations on campus sat down with one of the authors to talk about her experience leading this influential group. She shared joys and frustrations. She had successfully led a large group of student leaders to execute dozens of community and campus events. To those on the outside, it seemed like a huge success, and she was proud of her work. Yet, she still struggled with a central issue, saying, "Am I really a better leader after this experience? I know I did a lot, but I am not sure what I learned." As authors, we fear that this is a common refrain among student leaders in higher education. They have led organizations, meetings, tasks, events, philanthropies, fraternities, sororities, and more. However, are they better leaders, or are they just maintaining the status quo? What have they learned about leadership from their college experience?

In 2021, the authors' university launched a leadership institute to support the development of student leaders. Early in its implementation, it became clear that while students were eager to become "better leaders," the term itself lacked definition. The desire for growth was strong, but without a shared understanding of what "better" and "leader" meant, there was no clear target to guide their development. Therefore, the institute's staff began a long process of defining that target

so that students had a clear picture of how to develop as leaders. The result was the RISE model, a new theory-based student leadership development model.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to share the developmental process undertaken by a university leadership institute in designing a comprehensive model for leadership development, and second, to introduce the RISE model as a dynamic and practical tool that supports student leaders in deepening their leadership practice. The RISE model creates a process that translates leadership development from an abstract concept to a structured, meaningful journey. By outlining both the origins and applications of the model, this article aims to contribute to the broader conversation on effective strategies for cultivating contextually and theoretically grounded leadership learning in higher education settings.

A Theory-Based Design Process

The context for the development of the RISE model was a large public land-grant university in the Mid-South. The university recently founded a centralized leadership development institute with the mission of creating access to leadership education for all students and furthering the field of leadership studies.

When developing leadership learning content, Taylor et al. (2025) emphasized a student-centered approach. Based in this framework, content creation was an iterative process informed by feedback from hundreds of student leadership learners and the institute staff. One of the institute staff's early experiences with students, similar to the experience shared in the introduction, helped clarify a need among leadership learners. While teaching a leadership class of about 125 first-year students, one of the authors asked the seemingly innocuous question, "How can we become better leaders?" There were a variety of answers, and class continued. At the conclusion of the class, a group of six students approached the instructor and asked for the right answer to the question. A discussion ensued, and the students expressed that they were uncertain how to become better leaders. They wanted to learn, but they did not know how to orient their growth. One shared, "I know all these new leadership theories from this class, but I don't know how to put it all together. I just feel overwhelmed and paralyzed by how complicated leadership is."

The class taught the social change model (Komives & Wagner, 1994) and Northouse's (2021) leadership anthology to familiarize students with a range of leadership theories, and other programs focused on adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) to help student leaders tackle adaptive challenges. However, students still felt overwhelmed by the complexity of leadership without specific direction, prompting an iterative process of content development that highlighted the need for a clear model to structure their growth. Similarly, the authors spoke with hundreds of students who were leading campus activities such as homecoming, student government, fraternities and sororities, student activities boards, and more, and the students echoed a similar refrain. *How do we actually become better leaders?*

Developing a New Leadership Learning Model

When the institute first launched, staff taught various leadership theories and frameworks. Over time, it became clear that students responded most to concepts of identity and personal growth. As Komives et al. (1998) noted, college students are at a critical stage for identity development. Therefore, staff started primarily teaching the leadership competencies of identity, capacity, and efficacy (Guthrie et al., 2021). While teaching this framework, the staff considered how it could extend and contextualize prior leadership work for the students they were serving, allowing content to be shaped by both the learner and the environment.

For example, during a campus activities retreat designed to build community for first-year undergraduate students, one returning student serving as a peer mentor reflected that they quickly judged a quieter first-year student as "uninterested." However, after a one-on-one conversation, the mentor learned that the student was navigating extreme anxiety with the transition to college while knowing they would also need to work a significant number of hours per week to support their family back home. The peer mentor later shared that this moment shifted their perspective: "I realized I had been equating leadership with being in front and visible. But leadership can also look like quiet resilience." This experience reminded both students—and the staff facilitating the retreat—that leadership development must be grounded in empathy and relational awareness. Building authentic relationships, what some models may frame as interpersonal skills (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Komives et al., 1998) and others as relational competencies (Komives et al., 1998; Seemiller, 2013), is central to supporting leadership growth.

This one experience served as a microcosm of the greater challenge: leadership learners must understand how to build and sustain healthy relationships to lead effectively. Therefore, the RISE model insists that leadership growth starts with the skill of building healthy relationships. Scholars and practitioners alike emphasize the importance of relationships in leadership (Drath et al., 2008; Keyton et al., 2002; Komives et al., 1998). Furthermore, the ILA (2021) *General Principles for Leadership Programs* and the LCD framework (Taylor et al., 2025) highlight the importance of knowing the leadership learner and the context when developing leadership content. Thus, through ongoing analysis and reflection of this and similar experiences, the leadership staff developed the RISE model to complement and extend existing approaches to guide leadership learners. Recognizing that no singular leadership theory, framework, or model can meet every leadership learner's needs in every context, the RISE model offers a path to leadership development that helps students visualize leadership growth and answer the question of how they can become better leaders in their context.

The RISE Model

Figure 1 illustrates the RISE model, which integrates four critical areas for leadership development: relationships, identity, skills, and efficacy. These four domains are integral to the leadership process and to personal leader development. The following sections will detail the four leadership learning domains and depict how they organically interact with each other.

Figure 1

The Rise Model
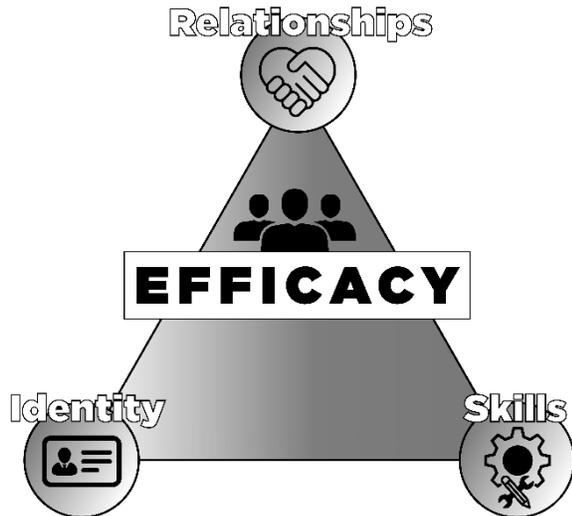
Reprinted with permission from Taylor, Cheves, and Speight, Copyright 2025

The RISE model has gone through several iterations throughout the years. One day, during a capstone leadership course, an instructor was explaining the model when a student raised their hand and asked, "Why do you keep calling it the *IRS* model?" At the time, identity sat at the top of the triangle, and efficacy was a lesser part. The instructor admitted that "IRS" was not the most inspiring name for a leadership model.

Without missing a beat, the student suggested, "Why don't you call it the RISE model? Just put relationships at the top. You always tell us that relationships are the most important part of leadership, so it should be on top anyway." And with that simple yet insightful suggestion, the RISE model was born.

The authors designed the RISE model by drawing on both empirical work and practitioner experience to identify the concepts most essential for leadership development in a collegiate context. Relationships were included as a foundational element due to extensive scholarship highlighting the significance of relational processes for effective leadership (Drath et al., 2008; Keyton et al., 2002; Komives et al., 1998). Building and sustaining authentic relationships enables leaders to foster trust, navigate group dynamics, and create collaborative environments. Identity was incorporated to reflect decades of research indicating the significance of a leader's identity and leadership identity development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Komives et al., 2006; Owen 2023). Skills were selected as the actionable, observable capacities that allow students to translate their identity and relational understanding into practice, encompassing a range of interpersonal and strategic abilities that contribute to leadership. These are the leadership skills often discussed in specific contexts like business leadership, community leadership, and situational leadership theory. Finally, efficacy is what drives leadership development (Guthrie et al., 2021). It was incorporated into the model because of its foundational role in whether a person takes initiative to lead and in their posture toward leadership.

Relationships

The leadership learning domain of relationships asserts that effective leadership is inherently relational. As detailed earlier through multiple vignettes, student experiences and reflections consistently led to the inclusion and emphasis of relationships as a leadership learning domain. Drath et al. (2008) and Seemiller (2013) emphasized the importance of relationships in leadership, highlighting that successful leaders must navigate diverse social dynamics, demonstrate empathy, and engage inclusively with others. Komives et al. (1998) developed the relational leadership model (RLM), which included inclusivity, empowerment, purposefulness, ethical practice, and process orientation as keys to building and maintaining successful leadership relationships. Leadership books often geared toward the business world have long emphasized the importance of relationships (Brown, 2018; Carnegie, 1936; Cialdini, 2021; Covey, 1989; Sinek, 2014).

Relationships are at the heart of effective leadership. Trent (2016) calls for leadership that is heart-led, fueled by empathy and relationships. Arguing from a critical theory perspective, Trent (2016) asserted that it is only through this framing of leadership that leaders will act ethically and make decisions that uplift all, especially the historically marginalized and overlooked. Guthrie et al. (2021) call for leadership learners to improve emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills as a part of capacity building. However, leadership learners still widely struggle with relational aspects of leadership, including empathy, inclusive practices, and cross-cultural awareness. These gaps hinder and sometimes curtail one's ability to lead effectively, especially in diverse, global communities.

Therefore, the RISE model places a strong emphasis on relationships, particularly in the context of building trust and empathy and fostering inclusive leadership practices. The relationships domain also includes networking, but rather than emphasizing what the leader can extract from their network for personal gain, the focus is on cultivating healthy relationships that value people. The model also emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant relationship-building, ensuring that students develop the skills and insights necessary to lead in increasingly global and diverse environments.

The Sub-domains of Relational Leadership and Application to Campus Activities

As Table 1 outlines, there are three sub-domains for developing healthy and strong leadership relationships: building influence, demonstrating empathy, and developing emotional intelligence.

Table 1
Relational Leadership Learning Sub-domains

Relationships	
Influence	Influence affords one the opportunities to lead without a title or position. Influence is invaluable to leaders; it is the relational power to make a difference and affect change. Teaching students how to

	gain and maintain influence is a key component of leadership learning.
Empathy	Empathy is the key to ethical leadership that involves making decisions with compassion and understanding. Empathy development—often through developing perspective taking—is a critical pathway to developing influence and leading diverse groups of people.
Emotional Intelligence	Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) is essential to relational leadership, as it enables leaders to understand, manage, and connect with the emotions of themselves and others. By fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation, emotionally intelligent leaders can build collaborative relationships that inspire trust, collaboration, and positive change in diverse environments.

For leadership learners involved in campus activities, understanding that one of their first steps to successful leadership is building positive relationships with university staff, their leadership teams, and the people they are leading is an invaluable reframing. If students can gain relational influence, they can develop the trust necessary to achieve their organizational goals or lead a successful student program. Moreover, guiding student leaders to recognize that their leadership growth depends on building healthy relationships helps focus their campus activities on cultivating these connections. Altogether, by building influence, demonstrating empathy, and developing emotional intelligence, leadership learners will develop the competency of relational leadership, a fundamental aspect of highly effective leadership.

Identity

Identity serves as another fundamental leadership learning domain. According to Guthrie et al. (2021), leadership is rooted in self-awareness, which requires understanding the intersections of one's social identities and how they shape values, biases, lived experiences, and worldviews. In a student leadership course, all the Black students—just 3% of the class—requested the opportunity to present for Black History Month. Their powerful presentation highlighted the history of Black leaders and the distinct leadership approaches often found within the Black community. However, during the question-and-answer time of the presentation, one student asked, "Why are we even talking about this? This isn't a history class." This moment highlighted the need for students to learn about the role of identity in leadership. The student asking the question likely had not considered how their identity, or the identity of their classmates, shaped their leadership experiences and development.

Developing a strong sense of self involves navigating the delicate balance between personal identity and societal influences. Fuselier and Beatty (2023) argue that for meaningful leadership identity development to occur, leadership educators must give learners the freedom to deconstruct and reconstruct their social identities. This process is especially crucial in light of historical leadership norms that have excluded marginalized identities. Expanding identity-centered leadership frameworks to encompass race, gender, sexual orientation, neurodivergence, ability status, and

other historically marginalized identities fosters a more inclusive and equitable leadership landscape. The interconnectedness of these identities is particularly significant for marginalized leaders as they navigate compounded experiences of oppression (Dugan, 2017).

Leadership identity is an individual's superpower, their unique voice in the world. In some contexts, student leadership learners have been forced to hide, mask, or guard their full identities; however, studies show that the most effective leaders and the healthiest leadership cultures create space for all to lean into their full identities (Fuselier & Beatty, 2023). For leadership learners, embracing their full identity, including cultural background, is essential to leading authentically. Nevertheless, the authors recognize that, tragically, there are spaces in the world in which this ideal is not a reality. In these spaces, it is crucial for leadership educators and those with influence to assume the risks and responsibility of creating brave spaces and safe environments where individuals can fully embrace and lean into their identities.

The Sub-domains of Identity in Leadership and Application to Campus Activities

The RISE model highlights the centrality of identity in leadership development, emphasizing that leaders must engage in critical reflection (Volpe White et al., 2019) and identity exploration to cultivate authenticity and build trust. Table 2 details the three sub-domains that comprise identity in the RISE model.

Table 2

Identity Leadership Learning Sub-domains

Identity	
Personality	An individual's personality is deeply intertwined with their social identities and lived experiences, shaping how they engage with the world and approach leadership. Through self-reflection and an awareness of how identity and personality shape leadership, individuals can develop a more authentic and effective leadership approach.
Social Identity	Social identities—such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background—interact with one's personality to influence communication styles, decision-making processes, and emotional expression. These intersections emphasize that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all formula but a dynamic, evolving journey. By exploring one's social identities, the learner develops a clearer understanding of values, purpose, and motivations, positioning one to lead with integrity and establish meaningful relationships across diverse communities.
Self-Awareness	Self-awareness is a strategic goal of leadership development, serving as the foundation that connects personality, social identities, and leadership efficacy. Without self-awareness, leaders may struggle to make informed decisions, inspire others, and create inclusive spaces. While these traits, experiences, and perspectives influence one's leadership approach—an

	understanding of self empowers learners to foster inclusive spaces where they and the ones they lead can thrive.

Students involved in campus activities have a valuable chance to explore how identity shapes leadership. Many student organizations include an identity-based bond—like the Native American Student Association or LGBTQ+ and Allies. These groups and more offer incredible opportunities for leadership development, but students often do not realize how their own identities influence how they lead. For example, a group frustrated by low engagement from the broader campus community may, with staff support, reflect on how their leadership team shares the same social identities and networks. Using the RISE model, campus activities professionals can help students develop self-awareness, recognize the impact of identity, and make more inclusive leadership decisions. When students acknowledge and integrate their unique lived experiences into their leadership practice, they create inclusive environments that value diverse perspectives and foster belonging. This self-awareness directly influences how leaders engage with others and navigate complex environments. Overall, the intersection of personality, social identities, and self-awareness forms the core of authentic leadership; therefore, it is critical for leadership learners to lean into their identities and learn to create space for other identities as well.

Skills

The third leadership learning domain of the RISE model focuses on skills, which are context-specific and vary depending on the leadership challenges at hand. From listening to hundreds of student leadership stories a semester, the staff noted the range of skills needed, from public speaking and conflict resolution to behind-the-scenes tasks such as organization and coalition building. To best prepare students, the RISE model emphasizes learning agility—the ability to learn from experiences—which enables individuals to adapt to diverse leadership situations. While it is impossible to teach every leadership skill to every student, focusing on learning agility allows for context-driven, individualized leadership development.

Rather than prescribing a static list of competencies, the RISE model invites students to engage in adaptive skill-building—where the emphasis shifts from mastering discrete tasks to understanding how, when, and why to apply particular skills in complex and evolving situations. One student, for example, entered their leadership program with strong public speaking skills and a commanding presence, often taking the lead in group projects. However, when placed in a role that required behind-the-scenes coordination and team collaboration, they initially struggled. Through intentional reflection and guided mentorship, the student began developing new skills in logistical planning, active listening, and group facilitation—areas previously outside their comfort zone. In their end-of-year reflection, they shared, "I used to think being a leader meant being the loudest voice. Now I understand that leading also means stepping back, organizing the details, and helping others shine." This shift exemplifies the RISE model's emphasis on learning agility—developing the capacity to assess the needs of a given moment and apply the right blend of interpersonal and technical skills accordingly. In this way, the skills domain becomes less about accumulation and more about integration—equipping students to lead with intentionality, humility, and adaptability across diverse leadership contexts.

Application to Campus Activities

For leadership learners involved in campus activities, the skills section of the RISE model gives invaluable language to students, helping them translate their campus activity experience to interviews, future careers, or future campus activities. A student leader utilizing the RISE model can articulate that one leadership experience helped them develop the skill of goal setting, which they can use in their next leadership opportunity. Thus, by creating a context-based structure to the skills domain, students can meaningfully connect what they have done with what they have learned, making their leadership growth both visible and transferable. The RISE model, then, becomes a bridge between experience and articulation, deepening both reflection and readiness.

Efficacy

The final leadership learning domain focuses on efficacy. Leadership self-efficacy is the belief or confidence in one's ability to lead successfully. Guthrie et al. (2021) suggest that leadership efficacy is developed through experience, reflection, and engagement in leadership activities that reinforce a sense of competence. The RISE model emphasizes that leadership efficacy grows when students actively engage in leadership learning in the domains of relationships, identity, and context-specific leadership skills. As students refine their leadership skills and engage in real-world leadership experiences, their self-efficacy increases, creating the confidence to face challenges and adapt to changing environments with resilience and adaptability. For leadership educators, the RISE model stresses the significance of focusing on developing leadership self-efficacy, empowering students to lead with confidence, which will enhance leadership learning outcomes.

Application to Campus Activities

Despite the importance of developing leadership self-efficacy, many student leaders—particularly those from historically marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds—grapple with impostor syndrome, which can significantly hinder their perceived ability to lead. Impostor syndrome refers to the internalized belief that one's accomplishments are the result of luck or deception rather than competence or capability (Clance & Imes, 1978; Owen et. al., 2023). Even when students possess the skills and experiences that qualify them as leaders, they may struggle to internalize their success, often feeling as though they do not belong in leadership spaces.

Owen et al. (2023) emphasize that traditional leadership spaces often reflect dominant cultural norms, which can make students—particularly women and those with intersecting marginalized identities—feel invisible or undervalued. When students do not see themselves reflected in leadership narratives, or when their ways of leading are not affirmed, impostor feelings can become more deeply rooted. One student, for example, shared during a reflection activity: "I look around the room and think, how did I even get here? Everyone else seems so sure of themselves. I keep waiting for someone to realize I don't actually belong." Though this student had been selected for multiple formal leadership roles, their internal narrative undermined their confidence and willingness to engage fully. This psychological barrier can limit participation, reduce risk-taking,

and stifle growth in leadership roles. For leadership educators, recognizing and addressing impostor syndrome is crucial; cultivating affirming environments, promoting mentorship, and creating opportunities for students to reflect on their strengths can help mitigate these feelings and reinforce a healthier, more accurate sense of self-efficacy.

In contrast to impostor syndrome, some students may experience the Dunning-Kruger effect, a cognitive bias in which individuals with limited knowledge or skill overestimate their competence (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Within leadership development, this can manifest as students confidently taking on leadership roles without a full understanding of the relational or contextual complexities involved. While confidence is a key component of leadership efficacy, overconfidence without corresponding competence can hinder growth and collaboration. Leadership educators must therefore balance efforts to build self-efficacy with strategies that promote self-awareness and accurate self-assessment, encouraging both humility and a commitment to ongoing learning.

The Organic Nature of RISE

Efficacy serves as the driving force behind growth in relationships, identity, and contextual skills within the RISE model, creating a cycle of leadership development fueled by confidence and action. When students believe in their ability to lead (efficacy), they take initiative, seek opportunities, and engage more deeply in leadership experiences. This engagement strengthens their relational leadership abilities by allowing them to work with new people, build empathy and trust, and develop influence. It deepens their identity by expanding their self-awareness, exposing them to new ways of understanding themselves, and connecting them with people with similar and diverse identities. Additionally, it enhances their contextual skills by fostering adaptability, sharpening strategic thinking, and increasing their learning agility through exposure to new experiences. Therefore, as a leadership learner's relational ability, identity, and contextual leadership skills grow, so does their efficacy, creating a dynamic interaction where confidence fuels competence, and competence, in turn, reinforces confidence.

RISE in Action

The RISE model is not a linear process but an interconnected and repetitive system that shapes one's leadership development. As learners engage with the model, they undergo transformational and lasting growth—not only deepening their understanding of leadership theory but also translating that knowledge into practice that builds confidence, sharpens effectiveness, and amplifies their impact in real-world contexts.

One student entered a leadership scholarship program unsure if she truly belonged in a space full of confident, high-achieving peers. She often hesitated to speak up, feeling that her leadership story did not "measure up" to those with long resumes and polished speaking skills. However, through the RISE model, especially the identity and relationships learning domains, she began to recognize that her strength came from lived experience—growing up as the eldest in a multigenerational household, advocating for herself as a first-generation college student, and navigating cultural intersections every day. With support from her student mentor and consistent reflection in small

group settings, her sense of efficacy flourished. By the end of the year, she was mentoring others—confidently owning her voice and showing peers that leadership was not about fitting a mold but showing up authentically and making others feel seen.

Another student, initially celebrated for his extroverted energy and bold leadership style, came into the leadership cohort eager to "run the room." He could command attention with ease, but early feedback revealed gaps in listening, collaboration, and inclusion. The RISE model challenged him to shift his focus from output to outcome—from *doing* leadership to *being* a leader. Through deepened relationships with his small group and reflection on his own values and impact, he began to realize that leadership required just as much vulnerability as it did confidence. By leaning into the skills and relationships learning domains, he grew into a leader who not only led initiatives but built spaces where others could thrive. In the final class discussion of the year, students were asked to share words of encouragement with peers in their small groups. One of his fellow small group peers wrote, "He helped me believe I had something valuable to offer." That's the power of leadership rooted in empathy, reflection, and growth—hallmarks of the RISE model in action.

In one final example of the RISE model in action, one of the authors frequently works with diverse students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and has observed a common struggle among Black and Brown female students who find it difficult to see themselves as leaders in a male-dominated field. This challenge became especially evident while mentoring two young women who, after facing harsh criticism from their male peers in an engineering course, began to question their place in the program. Discouraged, they even considered leaving STEM altogether.

By drawing from the efficacy and identity domains, instead of letting doubt dictate their path, the institute staff guided them back to their passions, helping them rediscover why they chose engineering in the first place. As their perspective shifted, so did their language—from seeking a way out, to searching for a support system. The staff member connected them with student organizations like the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), where they found a community of peers who shared similar experiences, emboldening their sense of identity and increasing their leadership self-efficacy. This transformation highlights the profound impact of a leadership learning model that integrates identity and self-efficacy development.

The RISE model components function as an organic system, building upon and reinforcing one another. Identity development shapes relational aptitudes, relational leadership competence influences skill development and efficacy, and skill application enhances leadership efficacy and relational aptitude. As leadership learners develop, they refine each component through responses to new experiences and evolving challenges. By recognizing this interconnectedness, learners not only gain technical skills but experience leadership development as a lifelong process of becoming leaders who are relational, self-aware, adaptable, and humbly confident.

RISE Implications

Just as leadership learners are growing, so is the RISE model. There is a need for broader adoption of the model so that RISE can grow and adapt with the contexts and needs of new leadership learners. By integrating this approach into leadership programs, student organizations, and co-curricular initiatives, institutions can create more structured opportunities for students to develop key competencies. Additionally, partnerships with faculty, student affairs professionals, and external stakeholders can provide further resources and mentorship, strengthening the effectiveness of the practice. One of the strengths of the model is that it is flexible enough to be adopted by a wide variety of university stakeholders; thus, a leadership office could partner with an academic department to implement the RISE model and create shared language that enhances student learning. The RISE model can be implemented as a model for student leaders in residential life, athletics, new student orientation, fraternities and sororities, or career development. Additionally, incorporating these practices into first-year experience courses or student government trainings could help cultivate early engagement and long-term participation.

Future research should explore how these strategies can be adapted across diverse institutional contexts to maximize student growth and program sustainability. Additional studies could detail wise practices for implementation of the RISE model and dissect the sub-domains to illuminate the most effective practices for developing these competencies in leadership learners.

Universities should also consider embedding this approach into campus-wide initiatives that emphasize experiential learning and service. For example, integrating RISE into community engagement programs, alternative break experiences, or campus traditions can provide meaningful hands-on leadership development. Establishing cross-departmental collaborations between student affairs, academic affairs, and career services can ensure students gain leadership learning opportunities that are cohesive, maximizing learning and implementation into leadership practice. Lastly, assessing the impact of this practice through surveys, focus groups, and longitudinal tracking can provide valuable data to refine and expand its effectiveness across institutions.

Conclusion

The RISE model offers a comprehensive, theory-based approach to leadership development, addressing key areas of growth specifically designed for college students. The RISE model provides leadership educators with a framework to design student-centered programs that enhance leadership learning outcomes. Furthermore, the model offers a roadmap for student leadership growth in an increasingly complex and diverse world. The RISE model, by integrating relational and identity-based aspects of leadership with contextual skills and efficacy, ultimately seeks to enhance leadership outcomes in diverse settings and challenge students to grow as holistic leaders who can navigate complexity with confidence.

References

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(3), 315–338. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts.* Random House.

Carnegie, D. (1936). *How to win friends and influence people.* Simon & Schuster.

Cialdini, R. B. (2021). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion* (New and expanded ed.). Harper Business.

Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 15*(3), 241-247. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086006

Covey, S. R. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change.* Free Press.

Drath, W. H., McCauley, C. D., Palus, C. J., Van Velsor, E., O'Connor, P. M. G., & McGuire, J. B. (2008). Direction, alignment, commitment: Toward a more integrative ontology of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 19*(6), 635–653. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.09.003

Dugan, J. P. (2017). *Leadership theory: Cultivating critical perspectives.* Wiley.

Eagly, A. H., & Chin, J. L. (2010). Diversity and leadership in a changing world. *American Psychologist, 65*(3), 216–224. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018957

Fuselier, N., & Beatty, C. (2023). Social identities and leadership identity development. *New Directions for Student Leadership. 2023*(178), 45-54. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20553.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ.* Bantam Books.

Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The leadership quarterly, 6*(2), 219-247. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(95)90036-5

Guthrie, K. L., Beatty, C. C., & Wiborg, E. R. (2021). *Engaging in the leadership process: Identity, capacity, and efficacy for college students.* Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world.* Harvard Business Press.

International Leadership Association [ILA]. (2021). General principles for leadership programs: 2021 concept paper. *International Leadership Association.* https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Feb-8-2021_-ILA-General-Principles-Concept-Paper.pdf

Keyton, J., Lichtenstein, G. A., & Beck, K. A. (2002). Relational leadership: A contemporary approach to leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 9*(3), 56-67. https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190200900305

Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (1998). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference.* Jossey-Bass.

Komives, S. R., Mainella, F. C., Longerbeam, S. D., Osteen, L., & Owen, J. E. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(4), 401–418. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2006.0048

Komives, S. R., & Wagner, W. (1994). *The Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook Version 1*. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.

Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999). Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*(6), 1121.

Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Owen, J. E., Shea, H. D., & Renn, K. A. (2023). *We are the leaders we've been waiting for: Women and leadership development in college*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Owen, J. E. (2023). Deepening leadership identity development. In *New Directions for Student Leadership: No. 178* (pp. 11–20). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20550

Seemiller, C. (2013). *The student leadership competencies guidebook: Designing intentional leadership learning and development*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sinek, S. (2014). *Leaders eat last: Why some teams pull together and others don't.* Penguin Random House.

Taylor, J. K., Devies, B. & Guthrie, K. L. (2025). Applying content: Integrating theory, design, and student-centered learning. *New Directions for Student Leadership.* https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.70005

Trent, T. (2016). *The awakened woman: Remembering & reigniting our sacred dreams.* Hay House.

Volpe White, J. M., Guthrie, K. L., & Torres, M. (2019). *Thinking to transform: Reflection in leadership learning*. IAP.