

Whole Person Leadership

Whole Person Leadership is grounded in one's character, commitment, and collaboration with others and allows us to leverage our individual gifts and talents to bolster personal and professional development.

Despite the widespread existence of systems created to develop and advance women of color in corporate America, research has shown that more than 75% of these women leave their current employers within 5 years. This turnover creates a tremendous loss for businesses and leaves these women to seek new employment situations where they may, in fact, face these same obstacles once again.

In 2009, Catalyst Inc., a leading organization working globally to build inclusive workplaces, issued a report entitled "Women of Color in U.S. Law Firms", which documented how women of color face particular obstacles that may significantly decrease their job satisfaction and increase the likelihood of their departure from their current firms. The study examined how the intersectionality or the combined impact of marginalization based on the dual status of being both female and of color, puts women of color at a unique disadvantage in the workplace.

The report identified a number of specific challenges unique to women of color working in the corporate profession:

- *A greater sense of "outside status" and limited growth opportunities*
- *Racial and gender stereotypes and more reported feelings of sexism in the workplace compared to white women*
- *Lack of access to high profile client assignments and important client engagements*
- *Missed opportunities for candid feedback*
- *Women of color were more likely than their white colleagues to have a more expansive definition of family (i.e. more people to whom they had personal commitments to fulfill) and a stronger commitment to religious and cultural activities.*

Whole Person Leadership offers an integrated way for individuals to contribute their authentic selves and be more successful in an increasingly complex and diverse workplace and more fulfilled in their daily lives.

Whole Person Leadership emphasizes the value of leading from one's center with genuineness, generosity, and trust, and draws upon one's talents, gifts, and skill sets, whether those include managing a diverse team, strategic planning, or motivating one's family. This framework also recognizes the importance of self-monitoring, self-correcting, and self-tuning. With a better understanding and ability to coach and teach oneself, both personal and professional growth becomes an ongoing, multi-dimensional process. Whole Person Leadership is essentially about enhancing leadership at the **individual**, **interpersonal**, and **institutional** levels. All three promote the idea of interconnectedness at work, in one's community, and at home, and develop accountability for one's own skill development and well-being in mind, body, heart, and spirit.

The challenges documented in the Catalyst report emphasize: (1) the importance for the type of personal and institutional exploration and development that Whole Person Leadership offers and (2) that a one-size-fits-all approach to tackling workplace inclusion cannot meet the needs of an increasingly diverse talent pool.

The Center for Asian Pacific American Women’s APAWLI Program (“**Asian Pacific American Women’s Leadership Institute**”) both utilizes and embraces the Whole Person Leadership model. Through self-awareness and self-reflective exercises, group dialogue, skills-building workshops, coaching, physical practice, and leadership assessment tools, we gain greater clarity and focus on who we are as authentic leaders and how we can translate our gifts and assets into successful outcomes at work, in our communities, and in our families.

INDIVIDUAL

Whole Person Leadership starts by focusing on self-awareness and self-reflection, always returning to the central question of “Who am I at my core?” What is the cultural context in which I have grown up and continue to develop, and how does this influence how I see the world and how I approach leadership? What are my own personal biases, and how does this shape my interactions at work or in my community?

INTERPERSONAL

At the interpersonal level, Whole Person Leadership helps us to articulate and experience the fundamental ways in which we relate to others at work; understand our strengths, blind spots and leadership styles to learn about our impact on and relationship with others; and identify the behaviors that align best with fostering team/community goals, motivating others, and managing oneself to produce quality results.

INSTITUTIONAL

Lastly, Whole Person Leadership connects our personal development and interpersonal skills with the broader community in which we live, work, and thrive. By understanding how our workplaces and personal lives fit into this broader framework, we are better able to lead with vision and values that reflect our ethics, creativity, and spirit. We recognize that knowing oneself and promoting cultural competent relationships with others is essential to building a beloved community.

Leadership Requires the Whole Person

The heart for loving yourself and others.
The stomach for courage to face yourself and outside adversity.
The head for critical thinking.
The eye for looking within and ahead.
The tongue for listening to yourself and others.
The hands for applauding your work and the work of others.
The arms for embracing yourself and others.
The back for lifting yourself and others up.
The knees for bending in service to others.
The feet for the journey.
The soul for going down deep within in search of meaning.
The spirit for soaring to the heights of higher purpose.

Adapted from Terrence Seamon,
http://learningvoyager.blogspot.com/2006_04_01_archive.html