



Catalysts of Change: Igniting Future Leaders in the Clinical Laboratory and Beyond

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BACKGROUND

U.S. laboratories perform approximately 14 billion tests annually with approximately 20,000 professional vacancies nationwide.¹ Healthcare organizations face staffing shortages and resource limitations, which can impact leadership development and negatively affect productivity, work culture, succession planning, and staff retention. An imperative exists to develop leaders while maintaining clinical prioritization and excellence.

OBJECTIVES

Create a leadership development program in a structured, skills-based environment where students learn key leadership skills, build meaningful relationships, and apply knowledge learned from real-world scenarios all while meeting clinical patient care needs.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

"I now see myself as a more well-rounded leader. Through the program, I've gained a deeper understanding of the various elements essential for leadership growth. This has helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses, allowing me to focus on areas for improvement while leveraging my existing skills. I feel more confident in my ability to lead effectively, make informed decisions, and inspire others."

Curriculum Plan

Leadership Fundamentals

Leadership Self-Assessment
Basics of Leadership

Leadership in Action

Giving & Receiving Feedback, Conflict Resolution, Problem Solving, Public Speaking, Project Management

Career Development

Resume Building, Mock Interviews
Career Development Panel

Figure 1: Curriculum Plan

PLANNING

A team was assembled to establish the core curriculum of the leadership program. Curriculum content was identified from recently promoted employees and their leaders. Such content included:

- Effective communication and leadership
- Self-assessment of their leadership style
- Resume writing and interviewing

The program consists of 10 monthly classroom sessions, 2-3 hours per session, and the completion of online assignments. The course curriculum is divided into three modules as shown in Figure 1: Leadership Fundamentals, Leadership in Action, and Career Development. Specific topics within curriculum divisions range from conflict resolution to public speaking, as well as resume building and interviewing. This program design was presented to senior leadership, physicians, and supervisors to gather feedback, support and buy-in. The program launched in 2019 and enrolls up to 20 new students each year.

METHODS

The program was advertised via email and informational sessions were coordinated. A webpage was created so applicants could apply online. Application requirements included basic demographics, current work unit and role, supervisor approval, and open-ended questions to ascertain the individual's level of interest and commitment to the program. Course faculty reviewed applications and selected qualified candidates.

Core faculty and invited guests deliver content in both face-to-face and virtual settings, and actively provide opportunities for collaboration, personal reflection and networking as part of their instructional methodologies. Course faculty also provide ongoing synchronous and asynchronous feedback throughout the program.

RESULTS

- To date, 58 students – including a blend of bench technologists and salaried specialists – have graduated from the program and 19 (33%) of them have since been promoted. (Graph 1).
- Pre- and post-program surveys are completed by students, consisting of 11 skill-based self-assessment questions. Survey administrators utilize a 1-10 scaled ranking system, with 10 considered excellent.
- Completed surveys show that average scores improved by 19%, from 6.3 to 7.6 (Table 1). Analyzing specific domains, graduates of the program are better prepared for leadership roles and have increased skills and knowledge in several areas.
- Several students have shared how the program has positively impacted them and increased their confidence to pursue leadership roles. This feedback has also led to the ongoing successful recruitment of new program participants.

Student Self-Assessment Scores

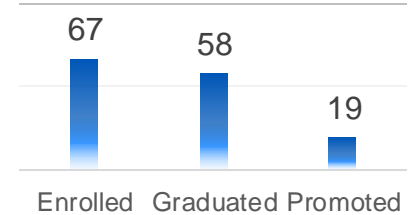
Skill	Increase %	Before	After
Interviewing	32%	5.1	7.5
Public Speaking	31%	4.7	6.8
Conflict Resolution	26%	5.3	7.2
Giving Feedback	20%	6.1	7.6
Confidence as a Leader	17%	6.3	7.6

Table 1: Knowledge Domains

CONCLUSIONS

Effective leadership is essential in healthcare. This program demonstrates how collaboration, intentionality, and teamwork can shape the leaders of tomorrow and facilitate leadership succession. While this skills-based program was designed for laboratories, it can be applied broadly across and within healthcare organizations to foster personal growth and improve leadership abilities.

Four Year Graduate Success Rates: Number of participants



Graph 1: Success Rates

REFERENCES

1. [2023 Lab Trend Report: Volume and Cost of Clinical Lab Tests Expected to Rise – Avalon Healthcare Solutions](#)

*Developing
the Leaders
of Tomorrow*