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Essay on Leadership Growth

Throughout my time in the American University School of Public Affairs Leadership Program, my definition of leadership has changed immensely, as I have learned the importance of adaptive leadership both in theory and practice. Foremost, through study of leadership case studies, I became more aware of the need to be responsive to the challenges at hand more so than being caught up in fundamental leadership identities. Though they are not without their merits (e.g. being a transformational leader), it is important to also understand that flexibility is important for crises that require immediate decision making and delegation. I have developed a better understanding of this balance and that I believe true definitions of leadership are best defined by a response to a situation with an underlying principle rather than a principle in and of itself.

I have been fortunate enough to experience an increase in awareness of myself and others through my internships at a political fundraising firm and work on American University campus. During my internship, I have worked with both campaign and public selector leaders in order to ensure that information is communicated effectively and in a timely manner while executing different fundraising initiatives. On American University's campus, I have had the opportunity to have leadership roles both in the American University School of Public Affairs Leadership Program as a co-director of finance and as the budget manager for our Invent2Prevent team. In both instances, I have understood the importance of proper finances in goal setting and the

important need to have proper trust between those executing the task and those in the finance area.

Similarly, I have been able to demonstrate the communication and team-work skills necessary to work collaboratively. In both on campus and other organizations, I have played an important role in supporting other leaders, and I have learned that the best solutions come from collaboration with others who have different areas of expertise - whether it be that they work closely on the campaign or work on executing a project on American University's campus.

In addition to my extracurricular activities, my academic experiences have allowed me to build the theoretical and practical knowledge about leadership. In the classroom, I have been able to develop a robust understanding of both leadership theories in and of itself and the development of theories against changing social expectations/norms. By analyzing Peter Guy Northouse's works against both current events and examples of (in)effective leaders, I have been able to understand that effective leaders take a practical approach to problem solving and follower development.

From this knowledge, I have grown to understand leadership as a process, not a position. Many of the leaders that I personally admire - including writer Stan Lee, U.S. Senator Cortez Masto, and Economist Raj Chetty - have not only conveyed effective leadership in their unique areas of expertise, but they have achieved such leadership by taking unique approaches to the unique challenges at hand. Therefore, they demonstrate that leadership is a process by which originality and normality must be balanced to push the area (regardless of what this is) ahead without sacrificing effectiveness.

Yet, I have been fortunate enough to have been able to seek out opportunities to enhance my leadership development and engage in leadership behaviors. Not only was I able to develop

my leadership skills through the aforementioned groups on and off campus, but I have been fortunate enough to be employed as a finance assistant for Senator Cortez Masto 2022 senate campaign. Not only will I be able to apply the leadership and campaign finance skills that I have been able to develop, but I will be able to continue to learn leadership skills hands-on through working with the Senator and her campaign staff.