The Eustace-Kwan Family Foundation’s generosity enabled SFSU to launch the Emerging Leaders Program. Using a specialized tool—the 6-box whiteboard—the university assessed individuals’ potential and the nominees participated in 6, half-day sessions and a campus project.

In 2014, the Emerging Leaders Program was introduced to San Francisco State. Individuals are nominated to participate in the program based on their potential to advance to enhanced leadership roles.

The 6-box whiteboard (Figure One) was introduced throughout the campus to identify emerging or developing leaders, based on the SFSU Leadership Model (Figure 2). The half-day sessions, reinforced learning assignment, sponsored events and group projects support the university’s strategic values.

The program’s class design (Figure 3) incorporates best practices for adult learning. At the conclusion of the 6 monthly sessions, program participants work on a campus project together with a SFSU graduate student. The projects are identified by the participants and fall into one of 3 categories: cost saving, campus improvement or cost avoidance. The program’s success is measured using Kirkpatrick’s Training Evaluation Model.

Participants are held to high standards, including:

- Committing to their leadership journey.
- Engaging with fellow participants to create a strong network of cross-campus colleagues.
- Sharing what they learn to build capacity across campus.
- Being present.

One of the program’s main goals is to bridge the typical faculty/staff divide. The program provides faculty and staff members with the opportunity to learn from classes, events, projects and from one another. The program and instructors provide structure for individuals to bond with one another through commonality, diversity, and collaboration. Successfully meeting this goal is evidenced by these metrics, which are representative of the 2015/2016 participants who completed the post-test evaluations for Emerging Leaders Program:

1. 100 percent of the participants have built a positive professional relationship with at least one person from the program.
2. 96 percent of the participants utilized the newly formed relationships they have established for guidance, contacts, resources or mentoring.
3. 88 percent of the participants have a greater appreciation for the role diversity plays in organizational effectiveness.
OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

The Emerging Leaders Program provides opportunities to SFSU to foster future leaders. Recruitment and retention of talent is a challenge across higher education, but it is particularly so in San Francisco due to its high cost of living. Investing in leadership not only mitigates recruitment expenses, but provides campus stability and a fulfilling career path for employees in multiple disciplines. Program visibility and networking, in conjunction with project management immersion, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the university’s future problem-solvers.

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

The Emerging Leaders Program has been well-received by participants and the campus. The organizational effectiveness and success of the program can be summarized with metrics of the 2015 participants, which show that:

- Approximately 49 percent received either an in-range progression or promotion.
- 41 percent received a promotion.
- 12 percent received an in-range progression.

The following statistics are representative of the 2015 participants who completed the post-test evaluation of the Emerging Leaders Program:

- 100 percent of the participants agree the Emerging Leaders Program was valuable and applicable to their professional development needs.
- 100 percent of the participants would recommend the Emerging Leaders Program to a colleague.
- 96 percent of the participants have effectively delegated work and are comfortable stepping back and allowing their direct reports or team to step in, collaborate and lead.
- 96 percent of the participants use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic and Time-Bound) goals for themselves.
- 70 percent of the participants incorporate the skills they learned in the Inspiring Performance class to have more effective performance discussions with their direct reports and supervisors.
- 79 percent of the participants are influential managers and are able to use the skills they learned from the Emerging Leaders Program to influence an employee or team.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

The 2015 program participants and six SFSU graduate assistants were assigned to one of six projects: Career Pathing, Digital Workflow, Solar-Powered Emergency Phones, Water Conservation, Wellness Application or Van Pool. All of the projects corresponded to sustainability—working together to create solutions to environmental, social and economic issues. The sustainability theme focused on positive change within the university community.
The following statistics best summarize the student impact and benefits of the Emerging Leaders Program:

1. 100 percent of the student assistants would recommend the Emerging Leaders Program to a colleague.

2. At the program’s conclusion, approximately 67 percent of the graduate student assistants received new job or internship offers.

Graduate students provided these impact statements:

“The Emerging Leaders Program was a great way to exercise the skills we learned in the classroom and put them to real use. I'd recommend the program to anyone looking to be creative, gain experience, and work with talented faculty and staff--or just to network with fellow students you normally would not get the opportunity to meet.” – Ryan Zulewski, MBA, Sustainability

“The Emerging Leaders Program provided me the opportunity to learn from and build relationships with faculty and staff from all different backgrounds and experiences. I was really inspired watching how everyone successfully contributed to the group and supported one another.” – Emma Curran, M.S. Industrial/Organizational Psychology candidate

“As a student assistant, I experienced first-hand how the ELP created diverse teams across different departments that worked in unified fashion on one specific project. My takeaway is the importance of synergy, which occurred by forming those multi-disciplinary teams.” – Max G. Zschoch, MBA, Finance

“I not only met many talented, bright individuals in my team, but also other graduate students in this Emerging Leaders Program, which offers me a lot of connections in the industry. The program is a great opportunity for me to learn, apply and utilize my academic and professional learning into real life-enriching experience.” – Himanshu Mahadik, MBA candidate

“Working on the ELP Project was one of the best experiences for me at San Francisco State. I implemented a lot of the managerial and technical skills that I learned from my MBA program, which was the most valuable part.” – Savan Mandalia, MBA, Information Systems

QUALITY, COST, OR DELIVERY

The Emerging Leaders Program can be scaled to be almost cost-neutral, with the exception of the time invested in development, delivery and class participation. The quality of the program is largely dependent on the engagement of the participants and the ability of the facilitator to reinforce key points.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. It is important to schedule sessions that permit participants to attend on alternate dates in different weeks.

2. Because the participants’ outcomes are largely unpredictable, it is critically important the session facilitators be adept enough to adapt and reinforce key learning points.

3. The third cohort is scheduled to coincide with the academic year in order to encourage increased faculty participation (i.e. not over the summer months).

4. Future efforts are focused on altering the program so it’s not dependent on a single facilitator. Video, structured facilitator guides, and standardized agendas will enable alternate delivery.
High Potentials
(ready for promotion now or soon)

Developments focuses on immediate preparation for a promotional assignment. High-visibility project assignments, structural changes, if feasible, etc.

Emerging or Developing Leaders
(currently developing in a leadership role or is identified as having potential leadership characteristics)

Development should focus on leadership roles identified as needing improvement: mentoring, targeted cohort development, job shadowing, knowledge and skill practice.

Unknown
(new to role, uncertain career aspirations, conflicting reports regarding talent potential)

The development effort here is to identify the individual's potential and aspirations such that they can be placed elsewhere.

Strong Professionals
(A-players: strong depth or breadth of expertise, no aspiration toward leadership or missing leadership characteristics)

Development for these employees revolves around maintaining their discipline expertise, or mentoring others.

Contributors
(B-players: low-maintenance, good employees, may never rise in their career, or no ambition beyond current role and performance levels)

Development in this area is largely devoted to core skills (communication, customer service, technology, etc.) and recognition of contribution.

Concerns
(C-players: high-maintenance, poor performance, work-life conflict, maybe a poor job fit)

The development effort here is to manage the employee's work performance or remove the employee from the position or the institution.

Figure 1: 8-Box Whiteboard Developmental Approaches

Emerging Leaders Program – 1st Cohort 2015

Inspiring Performance: 1st Class Session, March 2015

Figure 2: SFSU Leadership Model

Figure 3: Class Design

Figure 3: Class Design
Pictures with
San Francisco State University’s President, Leslie E. Wong,
Senior Associate Vice President of Human Resources, Ann M. Sherman,
and four program participants Nick Kordesch, Michael Behrens, Robin Bates and Grace Yoo