

On Leadership

Leaders are not above those they lead; they stand shoulder-to-shoulder with peers who just happen to look to them more often.

To leaders in the Michigan Region of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society:

Once there is direction, a path is easy enough to follow. But what happens when no path has been forged, when no signpost points the way to progress? That's where you come in. *You* will erect the signposts; *you* will lead others down the road to accomplishment. If not, then who will?

There are no prerequisites to being a leader. All that is necessary is a willingness to make the first step towards a goal. Don't simply assume that someone else will make that first move. If a student organization you are interested in has become inactive, then be that spark that rekindles student involvement. If you would like to see a change on campus or in your community, then, to paraphrase Gandhi, be that change!

The first stage in leadership is to **identify a goal** and taking that first step towards fulfilling it. After moving towards fulfilling a vision, others will want to follow, and you will be recognized as helping lead that movement. As others come on board, they too may have great ideas to contribute to the mission. Listen to them—attentively. While progressing in leadership, you will definitely encounter people with different opinions and advice to offer. It is a leader's job to sift through these voices and search for the underlying message, collect the remains, and decide what to do with them. But this is not to say that as a leader, your own goals should not flourish—this was, in fact, the reason you took that first step, right?

When looking at a leader, we should not see them; we should see they whom they serve and the mission at hand.

A leader isn't just a figurehead talking about the positive change that's coming; there comes a time when they have to **deal with challenges**. If someone has an idea that just won't fit within the larger scheme of things, tell them that the input is respected, but there may be a better alternative. When criticizing input, however, never criticize the person giving it. Approach any corrections with seriousness, but respect—we all make mistakes and need a little correction now and again.

Like a teacher, who merely facilitates the learning process, **a leader's job is to reveal to others that the power lies in their hands.** Yet many new student organization members are hesitant to step into a leadership position because they feel like they lack the knowledge or they've never held such a position before. They should know that a leader could lie in us all, waiting to be awoken from its slumber. It does take time to fully wake up to great leadership, but if you stay asleep and inactive, that time may never come! Ultimately, practice is the greatest teacher. But it is up to you to make the first move towards gaining that experience—the path to leadership is always open.

Leadership is a class in the university of life. Will you sign up?



Ryan Austin Palmore
International President, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society

