Leadership and Citizenship
A panel session on how to define, identify, seek and report

~Takeaways~

Having good leadership and citizenship qualities is an important attribute for academic researchers which is why “Leadership and Citizenship” is one of the five pillars academics at Macquarie University have to address when applying for academic promotion.

The ECR Network invited five academics (a mixture of senior and mid-career) to discuss with Professor Lesley Hughes how they defined leadership and citizenship, how they were able to gain leadership and citizenship experiences, and some tips on how to talk or write about these experiences when applying for academic promotion.

A recording of the panel discussion is available on the ECR Website Past Events page. Below are some takeaways from the panel discussion.

Definition of (Good) Leadership

Leadership is about how you work with others (relationships) to influence and serve others (impact)

In a structured setting (e.g. committee member, grant investigator) leadership is what you specifically bring to an organisation and what impacts and outcomes your involvement results in

In a more unstructured setting, it is about identifying the gaps and creating a space to address that gap – instigating a leadership position versus taking on that leadership position

Good leadership:

- is about being an agent of positive change
- combines a higher purpose with a better society
- inspires people to do the impossible: provides a safe place for individuals to go beyond the expected

Leadership is NOT:

- about your title (or position in the academic hierarchy) but rather your mindset: showing up with a positive attitude and really wanting to make a difference in people's lives
- not necessarily doing a lot of stuff nor directing people to do lots of stuff (i.e. management)
Definition of (good) citizenship

At minimum citizenship is to obey the rules and live by the values of the society to which you belong.

Citizenship is choosing to belong to the community, investing in the community and actively seeing yourself as part of the community.

**Good citizenship is:**
- becoming a “beacon of light” for the university's values and for what we're trying to achieve
- volunteering to be involved in activities that go beyond their job description
- being the sort of person that you yourself would want to work with

**Citizenship is not:**
- volunteering to be on a committee or work group but not contributing to the work

Advice for obtaining/creating leadership and citizenship opportunities

Look for opportunities available in professional organisations

Volunteer for roles even if you think you may not get selected – you will at least get recognised as being willing to contribute and may be considered in future applications

Look for gaps that need addressing and suggest/initiate ways to address that gap

Create opportunities for others (for example see time stamp: 32:11)
Advice on when to say yes or no to leadership and citizenship opportunities

*Strategies to balance your research priorities with your leadership and citizenship commitments.*

Align it with your research interests and needs (for examples see time stamps: 19:50; 28:02; 37:19)

- Determine your “major uber goal” for your career or research and/or have an idea of your long-term goals
- Then take the time to reflect on an opportunity and consider if it will also enhance your long-term/uber goals

Map out your research goals for the year along with any unmoveable time requirements (e.g. teaching workload) and fit extra opportunities within that time frame

**Also consider:**

- What is the time commitment? And do you have time to contribute properly?
- What visibility will you gain from it? (particularly if you are considering applying for promotion)

**Examples of the “soft no”**

*If you struggle with giving an outright “no” to opportunities then consider a “soft no”*

The “five minute favour” - instead of just saying no see if there is an alternate favour that could be achievable within 5 minutes. e.g. if asked to participate on a panel, suggest someone else who could be approached or provide some insights on the topic

Ask if it could be rescheduled. e.g. “I'm a bit over committed at the moment but could do it next session/year...”

Similarly, when talking to a direct report (supervisor, department head), *in a respectful way*, ask the direct report what should you prioritise in order to complete the newly asked task. e.g. “I'd be happy to do X to contribute to the department in that way, but I am fully committed at the moment, so what is it that you don't want me to do that I’m currently doing to give myself time to do X”

Repurpose the request to align more with your goals. e.g. if asked to help out with teaching ask if to take on the topic that you are most interested in. It may be a topic you need to revisit for your own research and by teaching that component you will cut down on the work by aligning the request with your research goal
Tips on Reporting your Leadership

Know your outcomes - be clear and understand the outcomes of what you achieved, not just describe what you did

Know what it is that you did – what was your unique contribution that led to a specific outcome. This is particularly important when often leadership opportunities come from group settings. Need to distinguish between what you did and what the team did and make sure you talk about it in that way i.e. “I” vs “We”

Also you don’t need to be named the leader (or the Chief/Lead Investigator or the committee chair) in order to demonstrate leadership within a group. e.g. you could be named “only” as an associate investigator on a grant application but you could claim leadership within that group if you provided the main expertise for a particular technique and became the “go to” person on the research team for all of the activities related to that technique which was integral to the success of that research

If you are not sure what you can write, or unclear about your specific input, ask a colleague – they often see things that you may take for granted

Things not to do:

- Leave off your outcomes
- Be unclear about your contribution (use “we” too often instead of “I”)
- Overstate your contribution
- List things that are considered part of your job description, e.g. “I showed leadership by convening a unit that I was employed to be a unit convener for.” – leadership needs to go beyond your job description

Additional Resources (recommended by the panellists)

Books:
- Give and Take by Adam Grant
- Leaders Eat Last by Simon Sinek

Podcasts:
- Lead with Love with Jadah Sellner
- Bregman Leadership Podcast
- Robin Sharma’s The Mastery Sessions