

Social Change According to John Wooden

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When it comes to providing lessons regarding leadership, few did better than the late John Wooden. Aside from an impressive basketball legacy, Wooden left behind advice on leadership which can be readily applied outside of the sport he loved so dearly. Wooden believed the following 12 items were quintessential aspects of effective leadership both on the court and off: good values attract good people; love is the most powerful four-letter word; call yourself a teacher; emotion is your enemy; it takes 10 hands to make a basket; little things make big things happen; make each day your masterpiece; the carrot is mightier than the stick; make greatness attainable by all; seek significant change; do not look at the scoreboard; adversity is your asset (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). While some items on this list may seem to center around basketball, the ideals behind them do not.

In fact, many of the ideas put forth by Wooden match up nicely with the Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership and have direct applications to ways we should be helping our fraternity and sorority communities to achieve. The SCM focuses on three specific areas of growth: development of the self, the group, and contributions to the greater community (Komives & Wagner, 2009). In developing the self, defined as the individual members of our chapters, the SCM concentrates on three main aspects: gaining consciousness of the self, creating values congruence and achieving a personal commitment to the organization. As individuals begin to grow and develop, the focus shifts to how the group, or the individual chapters, can further their goals by establishing collaboration, a common purpose, and approaching controversy with civility. Once the self and the group are operating effectively, the group can shift focus towards doing good for the greater community, which in our case would be the fraternity/sorority and greater campus community.

By looking at aspects of the SCM in conjunction with Wooden's lessons on leadership, we begin to see parallels that can bring focus toward what our fraternities and sororities should be striving.

Do not Look at the Scoreboard – Consciousness of Self

So often we get caught up in comparing ourselves to others when the only person with whom we really should be competing is ourselves. It is important for members to understand the value in developing themselves and the opportunities that exist within a fraternal organization for that to happen. Being conscious of themselves and their capabilities is the first step to creating members who are more valuable to the organization and themselves.

Good Values Attract Good People – Congruence of Values

The concept of values congruence has gained popularity in the ideology of many fraternities and sororities, and for good reason. When fraternal organizations are clear about the values their respective organizations hold, and when they recruit in a manner that attracts others who also share those values, it creates consistency within the organization and between members. When values congruence is implemented as a recruitment tool, more time can be devoted to creating trust and meaningful connections between members of the organization, instead of working to mold and alter the beliefs already held by members to be in line with the organization's values.

Little Things Make Big Things Happen – Commitment

Typically, when an individual makes the decision to affiliate with a fraternity or sorority, it is because they expect to gain something from it: a sense of belonging, life skills or an outlet to have an enjoyable collegiate experience. There are a plethora of small, seemingly

unimportant actions an organization can take to foster many of the outcomes their new members and current members are seeking. These actions can go a long way in creating commitment among the members and providing a sense of pride and belonging which will in turn push them to do more for their respective chapters.

It Takes 10 Hands to Make a Basket – Collaboration

Often times in fraternities and sororities it is easy to become competitive within the organization, especially when conflicting ideologies clash. What we should strive to help our chapters understand is collaboration often works better than conflict. This is not to say conflict does not have its place within an organization, on the contrary it certainly does, but there also has to be some degree of collaboration and a general understanding of what the overall values and purpose of the organization are. Collaboration is precisely why values congruence becomes such an integral issue where the very basic foundations rely on sisterhood and brotherhood. Leadership, after all, is a group process which relies heavily on relationships. Chapters must understand how to encourage group members to transcend their individual groups, interests and behaviors in order to achieve what is best for the organization as a whole.

Make Greatness Attainable by All – Common Purpose

It is important to utilize the values and the vision of the organization to inspire a common purpose which allows each individual within the chapter to feel like they are part of the organization and, even more importantly, have a say in what is going on. Common purpose is about more than just creating the illusion that individuals have a voice, but actually utilizing their collective voices to understand and gauge what the group needs and wants. This is more easily achieved through the formulation of a shared vision and active participation by every member of the organization, from the president down to the newest of the new members.

Adversity is Your Asset – Controversy with Civility

As stated earlier, conflict has its place within an organization, whether it is good or bad. It is vital we educate our chapter members about how to manage conflict and channel it into something positive which pushes the chapter forward, instead of paralyzing it and creating an internal struggle for power. Given the familial nature many of our fraternal organizations tout, it is important members understand how to utilize conflict in a way which is beneficial for the whole organization. They should learn how to deal with conflict with civility. The key is to teach our students how to disagree without being disagreeable.

Seek Significant Change – Citizenship

As chapters begin to produce stronger members, which in turn create strong chapters, they can begin to concentrate on fostering a fraternity/sorority community which is supportive of one another and seeks to create opportunities for interaction as opposed to reasons for adversity. They may also be able to chip away at the image that has stigmatized fraternity and sorority members by reaching out to the greater campus community, as well as the surrounding community, to create a stronger bond and provide positive service and change to both communities. By supporting chapters to become values-focused, inclusive and positive in their interactions with one another, we create communities which affect positive change around them through active engagement in their community and a sense of civic responsibility.

References

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- Wooden, J. R., & Jamison, S. (2005). *Wooden on leadership*. New York: McGraw-Hill.