

## Domain 4



### Engaging

Scholars established and forged relationships with significant others including other scholars, senior colleagues, institutional leaders, mentors, and coaches. The opportunities and activities that facilitated engagement in these relationships enabled the scholars to participate in dialogue that encouraged a deeper understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities.

#### Project Findings

In reviewing and evaluating the activities and experiences that comprise this domain, scholars reported that:

- Scheduling formal and informal meetings ensured they committed time to engage in the project and in relationships with others,
- Cross-institutional collaborations that might not otherwise have been possible were forged. The relationships that developed and subsequent dialogue that transpired enabled scholars to gain a wider perspective of leadership in higher education.
- Face to face meetings were the most effective and productive means of engaging with others.



- Opportunity to engage with the other scholars, senior colleagues, institutional leaders, mentors, and coaches helped elucidate strategies and skills for effective leadership.

*“The most beneficial discussions I’ve had is with people involved in our group.” (2008 Scholar)*

- Implementation of the faculty-based project and involvement in the organisation and facilitation of the roundtable enabled connections with individuals that may not have otherwise been possible or considered.

- Engaging with the institutional and cross-institutional networks (e.g. scholar groups, mentors, senior colleagues) encouraged sharing of relevant resources on both leadership and assessment.
- The institutional scholar meetings were the primary means for accessing feedback on faculty-based projects.
- Sharing progress, achievements and challenges often influenced how other scholar’s responded to challenges and exercised leadership in the context of their own faculty-based projects.

# Domain 4

## Underpinning Theories and their Practical Application in the Project

Theories of social constructivism and communities of practice underpin the activities and experiences that comprise this domain. The relationships and communities of practice that the scholars engaged in created a social context of leadership. This context provided a framework for discussions about leadership strategies, skills, styles and practices that were often then employed by scholars in their faculty-based projects.

The dialogue and interactions that transpired within the communities of practice were the catalysts for leadership capacity development.

Scholars forged relationships with:

- strategic leadership coaches;
- institutional leaders;
- project facilitators;
- senior colleagues;
- senior academics from other institutions;
- mentors;
- past scholars;
- peers; and
- each other.

Activities that initiated these relationships included:

- regular formal and informal institutional and cross-institutional meetings;
- facilitation of the national roundtables;
- coaching; and
- mentoring including the mentoring that occurred in the cascading stage of the project between past and present scholars.

*“It’s allowed me to tap into the knowledge and skills of the other scholars and fellows.” (2008 Scholar)*

## Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews with Scholars

1. Ensure that there are opportunities for scholars to identify and establish connections with other scholars at the retreat and workshop.

*“The retreat and workshop really helped to identify the people you could share your project with and get feedback on your project and collaborate with.” (2008 Scholar)*

2. Assist scholars to identify appropriate mentors.
3. Negotiate meeting dates and times at the beginning of the project and ensure the significance and importance of attending these is clearly communicated to all involved.
4. Establish an agenda and desired outcomes for formal meetings.

## Domain 4

### Key Challenges

Getting engagement from all scholars in cross-institutional communication and collaboration.

Acquiring an effective tool that can be used to facilitate cross-institutional communication and collaboration.

Time constraints and the impact this had on scholars being able to engage in activities that facilitated engagement with others.

There is a need to develop a critical distance for the day to day operations of the project in order to avoid taking too much personal responsibility for it. While this is very difficult, it is important for leaders to develop a couple of tactics for stepping back and recognising that the project is not the top priority in everyone else's lives.

*"I needed to realise that not everyone was going to share my passion and that with the things that I am passionate about I needed to not take it personally that others maybe chose not to engage as much as I hoped." (2008 Scholar)*

Geographical distance or isolation may hinder engagement. Email communication is time consuming and the tone or intent of the email may be misunderstood.

Selection of appropriate mentors to suit the scholar.

Scheduling of the mentoring meetings. This was the responsibility of scholars but in many instances this was not managed and consequently the mentoring relationship did not eventuate.

Staffing changes had an impact on a few mentoring relationships.

Scholars' confidence to engage with more experienced/senior academics.

*"I felt within the group probably one of the least experienced, in terms of teaching background so therefore probably not in the strongest position to make a valuable contribution. So doubting my abilities there has probably held me back a bit or rather slowed me down in terms of involving myself more." (2008 Scholar)*



# Domain 4

## Future Considerations

Create opportunities throughout the implementation of the project for formal discussion and input about leadership theories and practice.

*“I probably hoped for some more theoretical input along the way and more discussion about the leadership development theories. It would have been good generally to have had more theoretical material provided.” (2007 Scholar)*

Establish an online repository or endnote library for the joint collection of relevant resources both on leadership and assessment.

Resources developed to enhance engagement and for related activities are available at:

[www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership](http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership)

## Associated Project Activities

**Activity 4:** National Roundtable: Facilitation.

**Activity 5:** Mentoring and Coaching

**Activity 7:** Cross-Faculty, Institutional and Cross-Institutional Communication and Collaboration

**Activity 8:** Cascading

## References:

Palincsar, A. S. (1998), Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning *Annual Review of Psychology*, .49, 345-375.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978), *Mind in Society*, MIT Press Cambridge, MA.

Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge University Press, New York

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002), *Cultivating communities of practice*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Additional information about social constructivism and communities of practice and an annotated bibliography is available from the GREEN Website at:

[www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership](http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership)