

**COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY'S**

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

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## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined the experiences of various participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program. The primary data collection method was in-depth focus groups with supplemental interviews. The perception data were coded and analyzed according to the research questions. The research resulted in three major categories, along with several themes under each category, which emerged out of the experiences shared by the participants: 1) there was a high level of importance placed on relationships within and among the program; 2) numerous overarching program aspects such as sense of personal growth and skills sets for success were recognized by participants; 3) specific program components such as mentoring and self-awareness materialized as essential for perceive participant growth. The experiences associated with the program participants in this study serve as a framework for discussion about the sustainability of the Servant Leadership Program.

This research revealed the overall perceptions of the program remain positive with only a few program components to adjust. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is the program should not change the foundational aspects or components on which it was built. A high number of participants expressed growth through the mentoring, self-awareness, and academic features. There is not a gap to report between the findings of former participants versus current participants.

Recommendations are offered for current program faculty, university administration, and further research. The recommendations range from practical applications to suggestions for more specific study topics for future research. Areas for improvement and continued research are student retention and religious perceptions.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Bill. While many people in my life have an idea of the amount of sacrifice and determination it takes to complete a dissertation, only Bill can speak first hand. He is my #1 cheerleader, my #1 shoulder to cry on, and my #1 motivator. Thank you for reminding me to work hard, encouraging me to finish so you can “retire” early, and remaining patient as I wrestled with this process through blood, sweat, and tears. I love you, Bill Jenkins.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to Pulitzer Prize winning author and American historian James MacGregor Burns, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (1978, p. 2). One such phenomenon is the philosophy of servant leadership and the induction and sustainability of a servant leadership program at Columbus State University. The researcher recognized the unique attributes of both and aspired to study these occurrences for further enhancement and duplication. It is key to understand the undergirding ideas of this philosophy, as well as understand its role in higher education. The concept of servant leadership has been around since ancient times with historical writings emphasizing stories of leaders taking good care of those that follow them. Biblical characters, government officials, and business experts can be traced to this leadership style. However, it was not until the 1970s that Robert Greenleaf (1970) actually put a name to the idea of serving others as a leadership philosophy. As a result of him coining the term, a great deal of attention has been placed on the implementation and effectiveness of this philosophy in multiple environments. The literature shows a wide variety of exposures to servant leadership. One such environment is the university campus.

A 1998 press release announced the partnership between Columbus State University and the Pastoral Institute with the goal of graduating future business and community leaders (Columbus State University, 1998). These leaders would develop and demonstrate service and leadership. The program was called the Columbus State

University Servant Leadership Program, and the partnership established a campus-based, four-year experience for students. The proposed program included an endowment and was initially privately funded by community donations. Originally, the program consisted of courses, volunteer work, and activities. Students would receive stipends in the amount of \$5,000 per semester and would give back to the community through mentoring in the university's preparatory program for middle and high school students and volunteering at local agencies for 10-15 hours a week. The students would also participate in a two-hour a week internship with a local company (1998).

Since 1999, there have been revisions to the original program. Sixteen years later, the program continues to serve the institution and the community; however, while certain data had been collected each year of the program's existence, there had not been a broad, official examination or analysis of this data. Additionally, certain data points had not been used to provide information to the university. The purpose of this study was to examine program characteristics and data for the first time. The experiences of the stakeholders involved with Columbus State's program provided the basis for the phenomenological study. The analysis was used for program improvement and to report on the affective, social, and cognitive impact on those involved with the program. Additionally, other higher education institutions interested in developing a similar program could use the discussion and synthesis of this study for replication.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Columbus State University's Servant Leadership Program was established in 1999 and has graduated twelve classes of students. The original program was proposed with a dual focus on academic courses and community involvement. While the original

framework is still in place today, the question arises as to the alterations made from then to now. There has not been an examination of the program from implementation to current time, 2015. The researcher proposed to examine if differences have evolved over time from the original proposal for the program. The researcher used a variety of sources to examine if differences occurred to include perception data from past program surveys and program stakeholder focus groups to include administration, faculty and alumni. The focus of the analysis was to examine the perceived affective, social, and cognitive impact using these data sources. The data and analysis gathered by the researcher added to the existing body of research for servant leadership and those interested in developing university-level leadership programs.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching questions guiding the research throughout this study were:

#### **Main Research Question**

1. What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?

#### **Additional Research Questions**

2. To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?
3. What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study examined a leadership philosophy taking roots in many higher education institutions. Servant leadership at Columbus State University began over 16 years ago, and there had not been an examination of program characteristics since

inception. The study was important for a variety of reasons. It added research to the current body of literature, allowed for program improvement, enabled the administration to understand the impact of the program on graduates, and encouraged program replication.

The review of the literature highlighted many studies with a focus on servant leadership at higher education institutions; however, exhaustive research showed no study of this nature on this type of program. The study also created a framework for program improvement by examining the characteristics at implementation with the current program characteristics. The evolution of the components provided insight as to what is effective in the mission and vision of the program. Lastly, those interested in replicating a servant leadership program at an institution of higher education could use the results and implications of the study. The data analysis revealed areas of strength and weakness so that others may utilize best practices in program development.

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is used to develop, account for or describe abstract phenomena (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Characteristics of the program at inception, characteristics of the program currently in 2015, and the examination of the similarities and differences informed the conceptual framework of this study. In order to accurately assess these components, the history of servant leadership and the uses of the philosophy were reviewed along with the current information on like programs and higher education research. The Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program is unlike any program available for undergraduate students in a public, 4-year university. Because of

the unusual nature, the study of the foundational attributes and current evolution of the attributes was key for creating an exemplary servant leadership curriculum model.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Phenomenology engages people with the world and requires one to make sense of it (Crotty, 1998). This engagement, albeit sought after in this type of study, can lead to a subjectivity that is a limitation of the study. Because the data collected was from human beings' perspective and, in this case, human beings' memories, it can be difficult to establish validity and reliability. Additionally, the characteristics and themes of servant leadership also lend themselves toward a subjective viewpoint. Traits like wisdom, kindness, and trustworthiness are highly debatable in terms of measurements and assessment. Bias is also a concern in any research but especially phenomenological studies because the information being collected is individualized and personal to unique experiences (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). The research can be skewed through a judgmental slant that must be withheld by the researcher (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher in this study worked for and attended the university being researched, which is another limitation that could lead to bias. While the researcher was still within year one of employment, the proximity to the topic had to be addressed.

A small sample size and the limited access to certain key people were also limitations for the study. The program had a wide-variety of stakeholders, but the sample was still small for a study of this type. The size could have had an impact on the type of data collected and the responses in the methods. Also, people who were in key positions 16 years ago were either no longer available to contact or had very limited memories of the initial discussions and implementations. Furthermore, given the type of methods of

collection, (i.e. focus groups, interviews) participants' responses could have been misconstrued due to semantic difference or inability to fully express themselves. Given this limitation, it was imperative to collect data from a variety of resources to ensure the quality of the data (Lambert & Loisel, 2008). Phenomenology studies the "lived experiences of the people" (Groenewald, 2004) and those experiences over time can change and become altered. It was the researcher's role in this study to gather rich data and apply solid methodology in order to describe and relate the phenomenon of servant leadership at Columbus University as accurately as possible.

### **Background and Role of Researcher**

The researcher is the Assistant Director of the Columbus State University's Servant Leadership Program and has been in that role since August of 2014. The Assistant Director teaches the courses, maintains student engagement, and recruits students for the program. The researcher was hired to give a fresh perspective on a program that has been in place for 16 years and had not been examined at the level of the study. This perspective is the goal of a phenomenological study (Crotty, 1998), which made the method ideal for the research. Data gathered from the study was used for program improvement and for replication by other universities looking to establish programs like Columbus State University and to understand the perceived, self-reported impacts of the program on graduates.

The researcher had a background of servant leadership from previous experience creating and implementing a program at the secondary education level. The program was established using the same funding source as the Columbus State program and with the guidance of the staff of the CSU Servant Leadership Program. This experience gave the

researcher a depth of knowledge on the topic, but the review of the literature provided a breadth that was lacking. The study was a result of a desire to use the previous knowledge of the topic and use the fresh perspective of a phenomenological approach to improve the program for future students.

### Definitions

The following definitions are provided to ensure consistency and understanding of these terms throughout the study. The researcher developed all citations not notated with a citation.

- *Servant Leadership* – a leadership philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and ultimately creates a more just and caring world (Greenleaf, 1970).
- *Columbus State University (CSU)* – A four-year public university located in Columbus, Georgia. Began in 1958 as a junior college and gained four-year institution status in 1965. (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/aboutus/history.php>)
- *Pastoral Institute (PI)* – A counseling, consulting, and educational resource center located in Columbus, Georgia. The PI was established in 1974 as a result of four local community members to fulfill emotional, relational, and spiritual needs of people (Pilink.org, n.d.).
- *Stipend student* – This is an informal term used by those within the program to describe a student who receives a \$2500 scholarship renewable for four years. The student must complete the academic, service, and program requirements each semester. The original stipend amount was \$5,000. This term will not be found in any additional literature about the program and is not a universal term.

- *Associate student* – This is an informal term used by those within the program to describe a student who does not receive a stipend but participates in the program. The student is required to complete academic and service requirements to maintain associate status. This term will not be found in any additional literature about the program and is not a universal term.
- *Service Learning* – A pedagogical method that combines academic instruction with meaningful service projects. The goal of service learning is to enrich the learning experience, to strengthen communities, and to teach civic responsibility (Zlotkowski, 1998).
- *Dialogue Partner* – A localized term that is used within the program to describe a community partner who engages with a student in the Servant Leadership program for three informal mentoring sessions.
- *Senior Project* – A localized term that is used within the program to describe the capstone project the senior class creates and implements each year. The project is centered on a need in the community and usually involved a community agency.

### **Organization of the Study**

The review of the study is divided into five chapters. The introductory chapter provided a brief background on the phenomena of servant leadership, the Columbus State Servant Leadership Program, the significance of the study, along with other information necessary for the legitimacy of the research. Definitions were also provided to ensure a clear understanding of the terminology used throughout the report.

Chapter 2 established the history of servant leadership from a time before it was named to current day definitions. Greenleaf's (1970) role in the naming of the philosophy

along with the viewpoint of other scholars presented a framework for the study. In addition to the history, research on where and how servant leadership is executed was discussed. This provided a context for a curriculum model and a structure for how it is being used in a variety of environments. In addition to this information, a great deal of research was delivered on servant leadership in higher education. Studies on how the philosophy impacted students, faculty, and staff gave a rich view of the implementation in these institutions. This information was also paired with the examples of programs around the nation including a section on the Columbus State University Program. Finally, a summary gave the overall view of servant leadership and the goal for the study going forward.

The methodology for the study discussed in Chapter 3 gave an overview of phenomenological research and how the method aligned with the research questions. Also, the researcher's role in the interaction and interpretation of the data was discussed. Lastly, information on the data points, the participants, validity and ethical permissions, data analysis, and the limitations/delimitations of the study were presented.

Chapter 4 contained the research findings and organization of research analysis. The researcher described the outcome of the process and reviewed the method by which the data was gathered. Characteristics of the CSU Servant Leadership Program at implementation were presented along with the current 2015 program characteristics. The similarities and differences were examined and analyzed for subtleties, overall impact, best practices and necessary conclusions.

The final chapter provided a summary, discussion of the findings, and questions for further research. The study's contribution to the research and the overall implications were also presented to provide guidance and insight.

### Summary

Leaders have implemented the framework for servant leadership long before the actual phrase was recognized. With the philosophy growing in popularity, it is important to study the phenomena in order to understand how it can be an effective program of study at the university level. What is known is that a program was established over sixteen years ago and it has sustained and grown in its funding, participation rates, and perceived credibility. What is not known were what program characteristics allow for this sustainability, and what characteristics have changed to promote growth and depth or the impact of the program on students. It is the relationship between these elements that the researcher explored and analyzed in this first-ever study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

An Internet search for servant leadership can result in an abundance of material ranging from scholarly journals, dissertations, blog posts, magazine articles, and websites. The leadership philosophy continues to grow in popularity and in research, but it has actually been in practice well before the concept was named in the 1970s. In a study of a program at a higher education institution that was developed around and focused on servant leadership, it is important to know and understand the history and the framework. Providing a historical view of the philosophy gives a sense of the importance of the study and the research.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The overall goal for the study was to describe the experiences with the Servant Leadership Program at Columbus State University. In order to do so, a phenomenological perspective was adopted in order to present the experiences of those involved (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenology requires a fresh look the experiences and cultures related to a topic. Crotty stated that, “To take a fresh look at phenomena is, of course, to

call into question the current meanings we attribute to phenomena” (1998, p. 82). The study examined the current meanings held in 1999 and compared them to the current meaning in 2015 to search for differences and similarities. Within those alterations, the research can implicate ways to improve the program and help others replicate the program at another institution.

The program at Columbus State University was created to be a unique way to approach leadership development at the post-secondary level (Polleys, 2002). This approach has held to its unique status for over 16 years and has graduated executives, teachers, and entrepreneurs who went on to become leaders in communities across the nation. The story of the program and its history had never been examined. While the study was not an evaluation of the program, the time was ideal for a look back while also looking ahead to the future. It was time to examine the experiences of students, faculty, administrators and other stakeholders had with the program in terms of leading, serving and growing. Servant leadership has been a part of Columbus State University since 1998 when it was first introduced to the campus (2002). As a result, this model was one that has become so well-known to the Columbus community (i.e. current students, former students, community member), it was often taken for granted. A phenomenological study allowed the researcher to “make us conscious of what the world was like before we attempted to see it” (Marton, 1986, p. 40). The study reiterated the uniqueness of the program, while also creating an environment for improvement and replication with a set of fresh eyes and open mind. Chapter 2 established the knowledge base needed for such a study and provided a background for the research.

## Overview of Servant Leadership

### History of Servant Leadership

Before looking into the marriage of university education and servant leadership, it is important to summarize the history of servant leadership as a leadership philosophy on its own merit. The foundational aspects of servant leadership can be traced far back in history. Many mistake servant leadership as a Christian concept because there are those who use Jesus as an example of a servant leader (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Engstrom summarized this relationship best when he wrote, “Jesus teaches all leaders for all time that greatness is not found in rank or position but in service. He makes it clear that true leadership is grounded in love, which must issue in service” (1976, p. 37). Chung (2011) agreed with this connection and argued that three main servant leadership characteristics that Jesus displayed were humility, teambuilding, and leading among, not over followers. The story of Jesus’ washing his disciples feet often resonates with those discussing servant leadership from a biblical viewpoint. The characteristics of servant leadership can be found throughout the writing of the Bible and were practiced for years before being given a name.

However, the notion that servant leadership is solely a Christian-based philosophy is a haphazardly drawn conclusion. Many faiths, religions, and beliefs can be traced to servant leadership either through approach or underpinnings. All major faith traditions align with the principles of this leadership philosophy and offer a broad perspective on what it means to lead others (Keith, 2012). This alignment can be seen in the writings of the Jewish Talmud in the statement, “All men are responsible for one another” (p. 2) and the Islamic text from the Hadith of Bukhari writings, “The best of men are those who are

useful to others” (p. 2). Because of this universality, the philosophy of servant leadership neither rejects nor discriminates based on religion. Instead, it allows for leaders and followers to treat each other as human beings as opposed to designated groups with labels. Great thinkers such as Aristotle can be quoted as saying, “What is the essence of life? To serve others and do good” (p. 2). Roman philosopher Cicero said, “Men were brought into existence for the sake of mean that they might do one another good.” (p. 2). Each of these examples, both religious and philosophical, show the extent to which the concept of serving others is grounded. It goes without question to say that service to others dates back thousands of years (Keith, 2012) and is a concept that is valued by many.

Even leaders in government have been studied as great servant leaders before the concept had a label. Abraham Lincoln studied through the lens of servant leadership proved to be another example from history. Those who have studied this leader noted that he led by action, compassion, and no personal agenda (Welborn, 2011). When it came to key political decisions, he often went against the advice of personal advisors in order to keep what was best for the country as a whole. There is evidence that Lincoln wrote numerous letters to soldiers and the family of soldiers expressing his gratitude for their serving in the United State army (Burlingame, 2000). He also just wanted to serve his country and did not seek to serve himself personally through his term as President (Borst, 1974; Burlingame; 2000). These characteristics of leading the way, leading with heart, and leading with the greater good in mind comprised servant leadership traits, and the examples are not just male figures in history but female, as well.

Eleanor Roosevelt took the role of First Lady to a new level with her leadership. Again, while the term “servant leadership” had not yet been defined, Roosevelt put many of the attributes to work to help those in need. In World War I, she served as the Manager of a Red Cross canteen and extended her work in the White House (Conrad, 2013). She championed social causes for women, blacks and other minorities. She connected with those she served, advocated for those who needed a voice, and energized those around her to make a difference (Conrad, 2013; Scharf, 1987). After her role as First Lady came to a close, she continued this service to others through her role in the United Nations (Lash, 1972) on the Human Rights Commission.

These two leaders embodied the attributes of the servant leader philosophy long before there was a way to express the actual concept, and these two leaders are by no means the only two examples. There are countless more examples from historical accounts, political and social writings and business case studies of men and women from all different backgrounds acting in the best interest of others and encouraging those that followed them to be servant themselves. The characteristics of servant leadership are nothing new, but it was not until the 1970s when a businessman from Indiana designated a name for the collective traits of the long-standing philosophy.

### **Greenleaf’s Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership was coined in the 1970s by Robert Greenleaf and according to the literature has only recently really grown in popularity (Sendjaya, 2002). Greenleaf was a businessman with a rich history of experiences in a variety of settings. He worked for AT&T for 40 years and continued for an additional 25 years as a consultant to major institutions, such as MIT, Ford Foundation, B.K. Mellon Foundation and many others. He

founded the Center for Applied Ethics in 1964, and this organization was later renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Spears, 2005). It was his reading of the Hermann Hesse novel, *The Journey to the East* that sparked his idea for the philosophy of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Hesse (1956) wrote of a man who served a group of travelers. The group assumed the man was there to be a servant until he disappeared. The group fell into total chaos without this man's help, and he was nowhere to be found. The travelers later found out he was actually the leader of the group, but he served his subordinates because it is what he was called to do (Hesse, 1956). The central meaning of the story outlined the concept of good leaders started with serving those they lead. Greenleaf used this meaning as the basis of his writings. Don Frick (2004) wrote in his biography of Greenleaf, "This one paradoxical phrase seemed to sum up the goal of his entire career: to lead through service and encourage people and institutions to serve first" (p. 15). Indeed, Greenleaf spent his career and much of his retirement writing about the servant as leader, publishing numerous pamphlets and essays on the topic.

Greenleaf's writings are still used today within the context of learning about servant leadership and how one can apply this leadership philosophy to the corporate environment, but Greenleaf was very concerned with the university environment, as well. He felt that students should be prepared to make a positive contribution to the community and to society. This education should also meet the needs the students had from a cognitive and material perspective (Greenleaf, 1977). He explained that students should learn how to serve, and serve others first. In Greenleaf's opinion, this concept was necessary at the university level. In Larry Spears' (2005) understanding of Greenleaf's thoughts on servant leadership and education, he wrote, "A fifth application of servant-

leadership concerns its use in both formal and informal education and training programs. This is taking place through leadership and management courses in college and universities, as well as through corporate training programs” (p. 6). Servant leadership, as seen in later examples, can now be seen on university websites for add-on programs, graduate program pathways, and undergraduate certificate offerings.

### **Contemporary Definition of Servant Leadership**

Kent Keith (2012) described the idea of servant leadership as looking deeply into oneself and realizing that one really wants to make a difference. The foundation of the philosophy is a serve first, lead second concept. In Keith’s book, he proposed that the earliest form of a servant leader can be found in Lao-Tzu and Jesus. Lao-Tzu’s theory was of the invisible leader, and Jesus modeled leadership by washing his disciples’ feet. In his own words, Greenleaf wrote, “The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first” (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 2). Grothaus remarked in his article on servant leadership that “exceptional leaders shared a common focus: the empowerment of their team, not their gain” (2004, p. 229). Servant leadership provides opportunity to teach from a concept of serving others before ourselves and thereby helping students become, as Brendel, Kolbert, & Foster (2002) note, more empathetic, autonomous, self-aware, and aware of cultural diversity.

What sets servant leadership apart from other forms of leadership development is what is called Greenleaf’s best test:

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that the other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: ‘Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?’ (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 7)

In a multilevel analysis study, it was found through empirical testing that servant leadership in fact had a correlation to the four areas of health, wisdom, freedom-autonomy, and service orientation (Hayden, 2011). The test revealed individual-level relationships while also taking unit-level subtleties into consideration and found that there were relationships that validated Greenleaf’s writings (2011). When those being led are under the care of a leader who intentionally subscribed to the characteristics of servant leadership, they were more likely to have growth or at least not be harmed in the areas that Greenleaf touted as most important (1970).

### **Characteristics of Servant Leadership**

Many authors outline servant leadership characteristics in their writings. These lists vary from author to author, with some being of a more personal nature than others. Dirk Van Dierendonck synthesized the writings of the most influential models developed by Spears (2003), Laub (1999), Russell & Stone (2002), and Patterson (2003) and created a list of six overlapping characteristics (Dierendonck, 2010). These characteristics include empowering and developing people, showing humility, authenticity, accepting

people for who they are, providing direction, and stewarding the work for the good of the whole (2010). These traits can be seen in many other lists created by people writing on the topic in some way (Spears, 2005; Turner, 2000; Keith, 2012; Dierendonck, 2011; Frick, 2004; Greenleaf, 1970; Pilink.org). Many times it is a question of semantics or combining ideas into one characteristic instead of two; however, the ultimate goal is all the same: to think of those who are served, first. William Turner, author of *The Learning of Love: A Journey Toward Servant Leadership*, created a list of characteristics that are much more personal in nature but can be tied back to the Dierendonck list. Turner's list includes: unconditional love, brokenness, self-awareness, being real, foresight, facilitating a common vision, building a community, empowering others, meeting the needs of others and removing obstacles, and being a cheerleader (2000). Because there are multiple lists of characteristics, nailing down a specific résumé of a servant leader proves to be difficult. However, there are still underlying characteristics that can indicate a person or company's desire for servant leadership.

### **Difference between Servant Leadership and Service Learning**

When one mentions the phrase “servant leadership” to someone in academia, there is often the misconception that it is synonymous with “service learning” when in reality they are very different. The most simplistic way to explain this difference is to say that service learning is pedagogy and servant leadership is content (Zlotkowski, 1998). Servant leadership can be taught through service learning but so can many other disciplines, such as mathematics, language arts, and science. There is a plethora of literature available on service learning, which often perpetuates the confusion with servant leadership. Service learning is a very different approach, and when asked, Turner

explained the difference as “service learning is about academics, whereas servant leadership is about the academic” (W. Turner, personal communication, December 14, 2010). Service learning has many components that are like servant leadership but the focus is more on academic learning and related service work to standard-based concepts than on leading others to a particular goal. It helps to develop motivation, skills, and communication, (Zaff & Lerner, 2010) but again the real goal is to develop the skills, not the act of leading the group itself. Many service-learning programs draw from Greenleaf’s philosophy such as the program at Ausburg College (Zlotkowski, 1998). Ausburg Director of Experiential Education Garry Hesser (1998) wrote that a component of the program was to have scholars meet to use Greenleaf’s servant-leadership philosophy alongside the social change model of leadership development to frame their work. Spears noted that while service learning has seen tremendous growth in recent times, there is a connection to servant leadership. The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) published a work in 1990 titled *Combining Service and Learning*, which housed multiple articles on the relationship between the two concepts. Many of the articles discussed servant leadership as the philosophical basis for these types of programs (Spears, 2005). However, the distinction is still apparent that service learning provides an opportunity to learn a subject through service, while servant leadership is about the people being served and the person who is serving.

#### Difference between Servant Leadership and Other Models of Leadership

Greenleaf first wrote about and defined servant leadership in the early 1970s, and there have been a multitude of other leadership philosophies, ideas and theories written about since. Each different concept has elements that make it unique. In Keith’s (2008)

writings, he noted four major differences when comparing servant leadership with other theories. The first difference is a moral component. This difference touches on the moral component of the leader but also how the leader provides support for the group in terms of their moral decision-making (2008). The second unique quality is the human aspect of the philosophy. Each person is recognized for who he is and has personal goals that encourage growth and development over time. Relationships are built within a servant leadership framework so that the leader is involved with this growth. The third element is the “concern with the success of all stakeholders, broadly defined – employees, customers, business partners, communities, and society as a whole” (2008, p. 10) and servant leadership urges leaders to include those who are the least privileged in this list. The inclusion of this last group involves the Greenleaf’s best test, which requires the leader to ask if those served are growing, becoming healthier, wiser, freer, and more like to become servants (1970). Lastly, the focus on self-reflection is a key to this philosophy. Leaders are encouraged to humble themselves before those they serve and strip away all self-serving agendas (1970).

Dirk van Dierendonck (2011) noted in his writing that servant leadership could be compared to seven other leadership theories. These following seven reveal the most overlap with the characteristics outlined by Greenleaf: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, Level 5 leadership, empowering leadership, spiritual leadership, and self-sacrificing leadership (2011). Servant leadership has grown in popularity in the past five decades, but researchers have only been able to actually measure the term since around 2006. Measurement instruments such as Page and Wong’s Servant Leadership Profile (2000), Laub’s Organizational Leadership Assessment (2000),

and Dennis and Bocarnea's assessment instrument (2005) proved to be reliable in measuring different characteristics of a servant leader. These tools provide validity to the philosophy and established a foundation of reliability for future research. In an effort to conceptualize and measure the construct of servant leadership, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) tested 11 dimensions of servant leadership to test "internal consistency, confirm factor structure, and assess convergent, divergent, and predictive validity" (p. 300). Many practical implications were derived from this study. It found a positive relationship between positive outcomes such as employee satisfaction and extra effort on their part. Additionally, the research showed a great infusion of emotional health, wisdom, and service-oriented attitudes (2006). Even though there are measures in place to assess servant leadership, it is vital to understand how it differs from other models.

### **Transformational Leadership.**

The leadership theory most closely associated with servant leadership is that of transformational leadership. From first glance, the two are so similar that one might question if any difference exists. They are both people-orientated styles with a similar set of characteristics. The characteristics they share are influence, vision, trust, respect, integrity and modeling (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003). The primary difference is the focus of the leader (2003). Components of a transformational leader are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Varol & Varol, 2012). The transformational leader shows concern for the follower, but does not place an emphasis on serving the follower (Stone, Russell, and Patterson, 2003). Both types of leadership are valid; however, they frame the approach differently. In a study conducted by Parolini, Patterson, and Winston (2009), over 500

people in various organizations were surveyed. The types of organizations ranged from churches and non-profits to corporations and academic institutions. The results of this quantitative study confirmed that the perceived difference between a transformational leaders and servant leaders was the focus on the needs of the individuals instead of the organization (2009). A discriminant analysis was used to reveal this difference.

### **Authentic Leadership.**

Authentic leadership has been around for a long time with one author tracing its origins back to Shakespeare's time (Kruse, 2013) with the line, "To thine own self be true." It grew in popularity with Bob George's book, *Authentic Leadership* (2003). Both servant leadership and authentic leadership place a strong value in serving and empowering others. These philosophies focus on establishing relationships with people and rely on follower's strengths instead of weaknesses (Nayab, 2010; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Politis, 2013). The difference between the two styles is the approach. Servant leaders want to do what is right, while authentic leaders are more concerned with being real (Nayab, 2010f; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). There are lists of characteristics for servant leadership that mold the leader in his journey, but authentic leadership does not have a set of attributes. Instead, these types of leaders embrace their own personalities that fit the individual situation (2010). However, there are two attributes that Van Dierendock (2011) discussed as an overlap in these philosophies: authenticity and humility.

### **Ethical Leadership.**

Ethical leadership is a normative approach to leading others. The philosophy, according to Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005), stresses a standardized viewpoint of

appropriate behavior in both actions and relationships. Servant leadership shares many attributes with ethical leadership such as caring for people, trust, integrity, and serving others (Dierendonck, 2011), but they differ from a developmental aspect. Ethical leadership focuses on the correct actions and directives of the leader within the organization, not so much how individuals can meet their goals personally (Brown, et al, 2005). There are three characteristics that these two styles do not share: authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and providing direction (Dierendonck, 2011).

### **Level 5 Leadership.**

In Jim Collins' seminal work, *Good to Great*, he outlined his five levels in his hierarchy of leadership capabilities (2001). The levels are Executive, Effective Leader, Competent Manager, Contributing Team Member, and Highly Capable Individual. The highest level in the hierarchy identifies a leader who represents a balance of humility and professional will, which incorporates sound business results and vision for the future. The lowest level leader uses his talent, knowledge, and skills to make contributions to the organization (2001). Collins proposes that leaders should strive to be at the highest level, and the qualities at this level overlap with two servant leadership characteristics: humility and providing direction (Dierendonck, 2011). A major factor in the creation of the Level 5 Leadership model was shareholder value in terms of stock value, which is a major difference between this style and servant leadership. Three attributes missing from Level 5 that are seen in servant leadership are authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship (2011).

### **Empowering Leadership.**

Empowering leadership is a leadership style grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and the core attribute is the employee's perspective and the leader's actions (Dierendonck, 2011) to involve others. Self-direction and self-motivation are also key concepts for this philosophy according to Pearce and Sims (2002). There are obvious overlapping traits between servant leadership and empowering leadership; however, servant leadership is more of an elaboration of empowering leadership. When addressing the additional five servant leadership characteristics of Dierendonck's research of humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction and stewardship, there is not an overt connection but an indirect expansion of all the traits (2011). The philosophy of servant leadership goes beyond the foundational ideas of this leadership type and encompasses a larger set of traits.

### **Spiritual Leadership.**

Spiritual leadership and servant leadership share the goal to make one's work meaningful and maximize followers' strengths (Dierendonck, 2011). The framework of spiritual leadership combines the employee's experiences with self-transcendence, community, and meaning in a workplace. The leadership style recognizes the experiences can be found in the employee's organization (Pawar, 2008). The issue is a lack of behaviors associated with this philosophy because most of the research is built around the organization and not the leader (Dierendonck, 2011). There are similarities with the viewpoint of both types of leadership. Both encourage followers to find a sense of self through work and creating a community in the workplace (Fry, 2003). Even with servant

leadership being a relatively newer leadership style, there is a more structured framework, which separates servant leadership from spiritual leadership (Fry et al, 2005).

### **Self-Sacrificing Leadership.**

Charisma, legitimacy, and reciprocity are characteristics of a leader who subscribes to the self-sacrificing model (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). Studies (De Cremer, 2006; De Cremer, Mayer, Schouten, & Bardes, 2009; Van Knippenberg & Van Knippenberg, 2005) reveal that these traits are indeed apparent with these types leaders. The followers of a self-sacrificing leader have a strong willingness to work together, motivated for pro-social behavior, and rate their leaders as effective (2005). Self-sacrificing leadership derives from transformational leadership and has a more organizational focus than a person focus (Matteson & Irving, 2005). The connection this style has with servant leadership is found with Greenleaf's best test to make sure that those being lead also become servant-leaders themselves. Attributes they share are compassionate goals and supportive environment, but none of the six characteristics mentioned above are overlapping in this style.

All of the leadership models listed above share similarities with servant leadership, but servant leadership also has unique attributes that allow it to stand on its own as a philosophy. Examining it through the framework of other models highlighted those traits, but it is also important to understand the practical use of the characteristics and themes. Where servant leadership has been implemented and studied continues to provide a framework for the research.

## How Servant Leadership is Currently Executed

A great deal of the literature found on servant leadership is primarily written about in terms of the corporate world and largely thought only practiced in non-profits or charitable organizations (Elizondo, 2011; Barnabas, Paul, & Anbarasu, 2010; Jones, 2011). There are numerous case studies of servant leadership in the for-profit world of business. Spears (2005) noted that its application could be found in a variety of settings such as churches, universities, healthcare institutions, businesses, and non-profit organizations. Over the past thirty-five years, many companies and organizations have added servant leadership as a core value or guiding principle to their organizational structure. TDIndustries is one of the first companies to actually practice servant leadership within a corporation (Spears, 2005). TD is based in Dallas, Texas and provides heating and plumbing contracts. The founder, Jack Lowe, Sr. read Greenleaf's writings on the servant as leader and implemented managerial training in servant leadership as a result. Thirty years later, any employee at TD who supervises someone else must attend servant leader training. The fruit of the implementation for TDIndustries has been a consistent spot on the Fortune magazine's *100 Best Companies to Work for in America* list (2005). From a corporate standpoint, TD does not stand alone in capitalizing on the benefit of servant leadership. Other large companies such as Synovus Financial, Southwest Airlines, and Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen hold employee trainings and center their culture on servant leadership (2005).

Many companies that have been influenced in some way by servant leadership chose to focus more on the people that work for them as opposed to the "bottom line" or what Burlingham calls "small giants" (2005). These are corporations that make a concerted effort to be really good at what they do with an emphasis on relationship

building, which is a characteristic of servant leadership. Many studies (Hind, Wilson, & Lenssen, 2009; Jin & Drozdenko, 2009; Waldman, Siegel, & Javidan, 2006) assessed the impact of servant leadership on corporate social responsibility (CSR), which can be defined as the “involvement in some social good not required by law, which goes beyond the immediate interest of the firm and its stakeholders” (Dierendonck, 2010, p. 1250). While the results vary, the overarching theme was that servant leadership principles such as trust, fairness, and care for people led to a higher CSR score in the organizations studied. In tough times, such as the recession of 2008, for-profit organizations watched how their leaders would handle the challenges, and servant leaders played a critical role (Iyer, 2012) especially when leaders attempted to “prove one up-manship in order to protect one’s turf in the workplace and this can cause several interpersonal problems” (p. 180). Servant leadership has been studied as such in a variety of environments both for-profit and non-profit, and while the results vary, the undergirding point is the prevalence of the philosophy and the research.

### **Servant Leadership in Restaurant Management**

One category of for-profit organizations that often struggle with employee engagement is the field of restaurant service (Carter & Baghurst, 2013; Walker, 2012). Servant leadership has been found to actually improve certain factors in this niche. In a 2013 study, findings revealed the “implementation of servant leadership has created a culture of committed workers who strive to deliver a memorable customer service experience” (Carter & Baghurst, p. 462). The qualitative, phenomenological study compared the experience of employees and the impact on the culture of a Dallas-based restaurant. Employee/management interactions were found to influence engagement as

much as peer relationships and with servant leadership characteristics such as kindness, trust, understanding, and responsibility led to a positive customer rating (2013). These characteristics made the employees a part of the decision-making process and empowered them to address customer complaints effectively (Walker, 2012). Servant leadership can touch many different types of organization and is not limited to just the for-profit corporation.

### **Servant Leadership in Prison Education/Public Service**

The concept can even be found in unusual environments such as correctional education. Simmons and Branch (2015) explained how the Virginia Department of Corrections researched leadership philosophies for its correctional classrooms and decided on servant leadership. They argued that the ten characteristics written in Greenleaf's original essay proved to be relevant for their specific environment. The traits they described were empathy, healing, listening, persuasion, awareness, stewardship, conceptualization, foresight, growth of the learner, and building community. The researchers discussed how each of these fit into the correctional education program and explained the unique characteristics of classroom environment (2015). With many of the participants resisting any type of authoritative leadership style, especially when learning new concepts, student prisoners responded positively to the "shift from the teacher as the authority figure to the teacher as servant leader who facilitates the process" (p.33). This example ties directly back into the focus of servant leadership being on the persons involved and not the actual goal or environment.

Servant leadership has not only been studied with the confines of a prison but also in a police department. The Los Angeles Police Department had faced many scandals

stemming from the Rodney King incident in 1991 to more current incidents. One researcher wanted to see if servant leadership could change the overall culture of the LAPD through an action research project (Cortrite, 2007). The department went through a 16-hour training on the thinking behind and characteristics of servant leadership. Upon completion of the workshop, focus groups and interviews were conducted to see if the training was effective. The researcher wanted to specifically find out if there were any positive changes through the police force as a result. The findings revealed the use of better listening skills, more respect in the workplace, and other positive changes in behavior (2007). One specific area of improvement was in the locker room, which in the past had been a problematic area. After the training, the negative talk had significantly reduced and there was an overall more respectful environment (2007).

### **Servant Leadership in Healthcare**

Healthcare is another field that is seeing a rise in servant leadership strategies. The Cleveland Clinic has been a frontrunner in many areas of healthcare including the use of technology and management practices (Patrnchak, 2015). In 2008, the leadership of the institution felt that although they were a top-notch clinical healthcare system, but the patients using aspects of the system “did not like them very much” (p. 37). In order to turn this perception around, a new leadership structure was designed and implemented to tackle employee engagement with a focus on community, total rewards, talent management and servant leadership development, and wellness/well being. The leaders at the clinic used the slogan, “A great place to work and grow” (p. 37). Multiple initiatives were started and as a result, the clinic’s negative survey results began to see improvement. Examples of these strategies from a healthcare perspective were: creating a

“Silence Kills” (p. 45) program in the ICU so that all employees feel empowered to speak up; the head of Pharmacy used the guiding principles of servant leadership to meet patients’ needs; and the Family Health Centers used servant leadership practices to develop a strategy for greater performance (2015). The overall results showed an increase in employee engagement and improved patient satisfaction.

To further the glimpse into servant leadership and healthcare, one study examined the “strategies, techniques, and processes” (Lambert, 2015, p. 95) of the nursing education faculty to see if incorporating servant leadership principles into their teaching would make a difference. The findings of this qualitative study offered a “consistent meaning among participants as servant teaching being student-focused and purposed toward student success” (Abstract). Six themes emerged from the study, which was used to help nursing educators implement servant leadership into classrooms more effectively. The themes were: awareness of student needs, assessing student needs, serving needs, modeling, listening, and caring (p. 95). Servant leadership is not limited to the nursing education field when looking at healthcare. A 2012 study (Slockett) on physicians also showed a correlation between servant leadership attributes and work life satisfaction specifically in the areas of inspiring and visionary leadership. The researcher used two instruments to measure self-perceptions (SLP-R) and worklife satisfaction (AWS) to gather data for the analysis (p. xiv).

### **Servant Leadership in the Military**

The military is another area where the attributes of servant leadership have been researched within the framework of satisfaction and work application. The senior military officers who participated in Shanan Farmer’s study were surveyed for servant leadership

characteristics and self-identified as having these traits (2009). The researcher also wanted to look at the demographics of the officers to differences in age, gender, combat experience, occupational specialty, and branch of service. There were no differences found in these areas, but it was found that 41% of the participants “scored too high on abuse of power and pride,” which is an outcome for further research (p. 87). An additional outcome for this qualitative study of servant leadership as a leadership philosophy is an added layer of validity of the SLP-R instrument, which was alluded to previously. In addition to the demographic study, job satisfaction in the navy was specifically examined in a 2014 quantitative study. The purpose was to evaluate if there was a relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction within a U.V. Navy organization (Jordan, 2014). The quantitative study indicated a strong positive correlation and overall positive effects on this branch of the military (2014). Both of these studies recommended a deeper look into the use of servant leadership practices and suggested additional training for military personnel.

### **Servant Leadership in Educational Environments**

One particular Canadian community decided to make servant leadership a community effort specifically in their educational arenas. While the elementary and secondary schools were implementing professional development sessions on the topic, the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education adopted three of Greenleaf’s books as the textbook to use in the Leadership and special education courses (Crippen, 2004). Crippen’s research findings recommend the use of more Greenleaf works in additional courses so that a greater number of students have exposure to the concept. The original

courses were repeated with approximately 250 teachers and administrators reading, discussing and analyzing the works for relevance and applicability (Crippen, 2004).

As these studies showed, servant leadership can be found in a variety of organization types and arenas. Most of the studies explained a need for additional research in order to examine the impact of servant leadership in the respective field of study. However, the fact remains that servant leadership research is growing in both depth and breadth.

### **Servant Leadership in Higher Education**

Servant leadership in higher education is a growing topic of research and scholarly articles. Leadership in general is a highly sought after subject for students due to the fact that most Human Resource recruiters, no matter what the field, look for resumes with leadership experience (Collins & Holton, 2002; Holt, 2011; Taylor, 2004; Adler, 2007). University classrooms of the new generation are changing and the shift is a desire to move away from the old leadership style to a more democratic structure (Roberts, 2007). Crippen (2005) found that the old leadership paradigm of yesterday is no longer correct in terms of it being top-down oriented, male-dominated, intimidating, or directly connected to one's affluence and power (2005). Students want to know how to be an effective leader and are no longer thinking that one can only be born with good leadership skills. Studies have found that leaders in fact do not have to be born (Claar, Jackson, & TenHaken; 2014, Ndoria, 2004) the characteristics can be both taught and learned. Yip (2006) begins his article on leadership with a quote from the novelist Pearl S. Buck. It reads, "The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible, and achieve it, generation after generation" (p. 12). The article

goes on to assert that universities must capitalize on the imprudence of youth and teach leadership while students are at a stage of self-discovery and not leave the teaching of leadership to chance (2005). Universities have also discovered the importance of being intentional with leadership development, but this development takes hard work, commitment, and endurance (Morris, 2012). Leadership is best taught by experience and watching others and cannot be developed overnight (2012).

A component of servant leadership that stands out from other leadership programs is the service aspect. This unique element begs the question of the impact of service on the college student. Astin and Sax (1998) studied incoming freshmen with follow up data in 42 different institutions and found that participation in service activities greatly increases a student's academic progress, life skill growth, and civic responsibility (1998). The study was quantitative in nature and revealed a highly statistically significance across all measured outcomes (1998). This study looks at service through the framework of service learning, but the key component is still the same in a servant leadership environment, which is service.

The methods for incorporating servant leadership into a higher education institution can widely vary according to the campus. For the above examples, it is clear that there has been a shift in the attitudes of the students in the classroom and a direct link between success in post-secondary education and service to the community. The literature also suggests a possible positive correlation in professors adopting servant-leadership strategies in their courses (Hays, 2008; Scardino, 2012; Jacobs, 2011). These outcomes drive the need for programs at universities and colleges, and many of these institutions are heeding that call.

These studies give insight into where servant leadership has been implemented and researched. Each individual location and environment creates a different framework for which to study the leadership philosophy. The research offer a wide range of results, but those results must be examined with certain limitations in mind. The limitations give pause to further research while also providing opportunities for additional studies.

### **Servant Leadership Limitations**

While servant leadership has garnered a great deal of attention since Greenleaf first began publishing his essays in the 1970s, the lack of empirical research to move it from a philosophy or model to a theory caused some to be concerned. Travis Berger (2014) called for researchers to focus on two specific aspects of the current philosophy if the proponents want to move servant leadership to a more mainstream leadership style. One focus should being the construction and evaluation of the concept as theory and the other being the use of the word “servant” as the main descriptor (2014). In Berger’s opinion, servant leadership moved quickly from a “metatheory to measurement instruments and conceptual models” (p. 147) without going through the channels of theory construction. In terms of the use of the “servant,” Dierendonck (2011) wrote of his concerns that the term connotes a soft or more conformist feeling and of some organizational leaders not wanting to formally adopt the term because of the spiritual connotations. Berger proposed that legal issues might evolve from the use of such a term (2014).

Boyum (2012) also echoed this need for proponents of servant leadership to acknowledge the scholarly criticism of its development as a theory. She also argues that there needs to be wider view of the concept in terms of how those being led become the

leader one day. It is also noted that the expectations of implementing servant leadership has outgrown the body of literature available to researchers (Boyum, 2012; Ruschman, 2002; Werhane et al, 2007). Because of the popularity of the leadership philosophy, many training programs and movements have been created with little empirically sound research to back them up. There is value to creating a servant leadership environment where there is a focus on service to other over “self-promotion, self-interest of fiscal profit” (Boyum, 2012, p. 22).

There are others (Kokemuller, n.d.; Mooney; n.d.; McCrimmon, 2010) who believe that servant leadership is not a valid business leadership philosophy. These authors critique servant leadership through the lens of a business model and one common issue that arises is the “bottom line.” The argument is that while servant leadership sounds nice, a manager or someone in a supervisory role should only be serving the customer and not the employee (Kokemuller, n.d.). These critics also mention issues such as too paternalistic, lacking authority, and even possible bullying as reasons to cause hesitation for servant leadership (Kokemuller; Mooney; McCrimmon). The underlying viewpoint of the criticisms was the need to focus more on the actual growth of the business than the employees because, as McCrimmon stated, “Employees are just means to an end” (2015, p. 1). Even with these limitations and concerns, servant leadership on college campuses has become a more prevalent sight. Whether it is discussing the business implications in a MBA Program or delving into the characteristics in an undergraduate forum, institutions of higher learning have taken notice of the philosophy.

### Examples in Higher Education Institutions

One strategy being implemented by higher education institutions to aid in leadership development is the addition of servant leadership on campus, but servant leadership on college campuses takes many different forms. Some institutions have activities based on servant-leadership principles while others, like Columbus State University, have programs; however, as far as the research is concerned, CSU is the only co-curricular, scholarship program of its kind. Before looking at CSU's program, it is important to review how servant leadership is approached in other locations.

Crowder College, a 2-year public community college located in Missouri, participated in a research study that examined its implementation and practice of servant leadership values (Walker, 1997). This implementation occurred with faculty and staff and not directly with students. The college consulted with the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership to align all of its functions with servant leadership, which included flattening the organizational chart and developing a mission statement (1997). The findings included an increased participation in making decision across campus, and trust in the president and other faculty members to educate the students enrolled at Crowder (1997). While these findings did not find a direct connection to students, there was an indirect positive impact based on the overall environment at the college.

Another example of servant leadership on a college campus is Aurora University's *Sleep Out on the Quad* event (Johnson, Grazulis, & White, 2014), which incorporates learning about a social issue and helping students understand servant leadership at the same time. The event takes place on a cold night with approximately 400 students, faculty and staff literally sleeping on the campus in order to simulate homelessness (2014). It is noted by the authors that the participants often experience an

instinctive response to see serving others in a different way. Aurora University is a 4-year independent university in Illinois and, while it does not have a servant leadership program specifically, it does have a Leadership Education and Development (L.E.A.D.) program (2014). The program consists of four-tiers and each tier has required workshops and service-oriented events, like *Sleep on the Quad*. A major component for the students who participate in the activity is the debriefing conversation at the conclusion where everyone shares their thoughts and reflections (2014). While this institution and program do not have the title of “servant leadership,” there is clear evidence of similar attributes. There is an opportunity for students to minor in servant leadership with 20 hours of coursework focused on studying the philosophy.

Categorizing the various approaches to servant leadership in higher education institutions can be difficult because of the wide-range of elements. These elements include public or private, religious affiliation, 2-year or 4-year, and overall methodology to the integrating the philosophy. Within these elements were subsections that include online or campus and degree or certificate program. The various methodologies included an endowed chair position, such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Milwaukee School of Engineering (“Servant Leadership Academic Programs”, n.d.). Many other institutions opted to offer a Masters level degree in servant leadership. These include Gozanga University, Viterbo University, William-Penn University, Colorado Christian University, Hope University, and Hope International University (“Servant Leadership Academic Programs”). Columbus State University, in addition to the full undergraduate program, offers a Masters in Organizational Leadership with a servant leadership track along with having an endowed chair position.

One could develop a lengthy list of institutions that delve into servant leadership on campus in some way. Institutions have made the philosophy a part of their core values, student-led organizations, and even offer non-credit courses and workshops to help not only currently enrolled students but the community-at-large, as well. In the vast amount of information available on these offerings, four programs stand out as similar to the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program in multiple characteristics. The first example is the Seton Hall University Servant Leader Scholarship Program (“Center for Vocation”, n.d.). Seton Hall is a private, Catholic university located in South Orange, New Jersey. The Servant Leadership Program began in 2003 as an extension of the institution’s mission of forming students who are servant leaders. The program is application-based and requires a teacher evaluation, transcript and essay submission. Accepted students must participate in the Servant Leader Scholars’ program, which consists of completing 20 hours of service each semester and attending meetings and other service opportunities. Students wishing to renew the scholarship must maintain a 3.0 GPA and full-time status. The scholarship amounts vary according to applicant, but it averages \$2,400. Changes in amount are determined by quantity and quality of applications for the particular year. This opportunity is available to undergraduate and graduate-level students; however, no academic courses or credit is offered for this program (“Center for Vocation”).

McMurry University is located in Abilene, Texas and is a private, liberal arts institution associated with the United Methodist Church. The Servant Leadership Program offers an introductory course, which includes a weekly group lecture centered on the principles of servant leadership (“Servant Leadership Program”, n.d.). There is an

additional weekly meeting lead by upper classmen where hands-on opportunities to apply learning experiences are completed. There is a 30-hour requirement for students in these small groups for course completion. The program works with a variety of local agencies and non-profits, such as Abilene Housing Authority, Food Bank of Abilene, and Habitat for Humanity. Students can also qualify to become preceptors and receive a stipend for their work. There are a total of six courses that lead up to an Internship/Capstone, which can be combined with additional coursework to equal a minor in servant leadership in a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies major (“Servant Leadership Program”, n.d.).

Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia shares a similar funding source with Columbus State University. The Ethics and Servant Leadership (EASL) Program works to develop ethically engaged servant leaders (“Ethics and Servant Leadership”). The program consists of two main opportunities: The Forum and the Servant Leader Summer Internship. The Forum is a weekly meeting with topics centered on servant leadership themes. The participants are 15 undergraduate and graduate students, and they are selected through an application process, which requires essay responses and references. The Forum is a year-long program and incorporates retreats, projects, and guest speakers throughout. The second part of the EASL Program is the Summer Internship where students are matched with Atlanta-area agencies and businesses and all Emory University students can apply. Students receive a \$4,000 stipend and must complete 240 hours at the placement site with the goal being to enrich the student’s exposure to servant leadership. The program offers a minor in Ethics but no course credit is given for The Forum or the Summer Internship (“Ethics and Servant Leadership”).

The final example of a program that is similar in structure to Columbus State University is Southern Mississippi University's Luckyday Scholar program ("Luckyday", n.d.). Southern Mississippi is a 4-year public, state-funded school in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The program began in 2001 and the foundation committed to funding 400 scholarships annually. Students must apply for acceptance into the program and acceptance is based on financial need, community service, and leadership positions in high school. Applicants must have a GPA of 3.0 or above and provide a resume, essay responses, and a transcript. The scholarship is \$6,100 per year after the freshman year experience and is renewable for three years. Freshmen and sophomores must maintain a 2.5 GPA with juniors and seniors needing a 2.75. One unique aspect of the Luckyday program is that all students are housed together for the first year. Servant leadership principles are incorporated in the leadership roles offered to students. This program does not offer course credit, but it does offer service opportunities and servant leadership experience within the different roles ("Luckyday").

Institutions provide servant leadership opportunities for students in a wide variety of ways. Some chose to make a campus-wide focus on the philosophy to include administration, core values, and mission statements, while others dedicate scholarship money and coursework to the study of the philosophy. Seton Hall, McMurry, Emory, and Southern Mississippi all encompass multiple characteristics that are similar in structure and framework to Columbus State University's program. However, the research still leaves characteristics to be examined and studied that separate CSU's program from the rest. All of the characteristics, not having been studied previously, were analyzed under with the current higher education research in mind.

## **Servant Leadership and Higher Education Research**

Research on servant leadership in higher education runs a wide gamut of specific topics. While there are very few studies on actual servant leadership programs, research on the use of servant leadership in a higher education setting was abundant. One such study (Elliot, 2012) examined three chief academic officers at a community college. The people in these positions identified as being servant leaders, and they participated in a series of interviews, observations, and document analysis in order to determine how servant leadership was applied to their work. The study affirmed all ten characteristics from Spears' list were displayed by the CAOs, and those employees reporting to these leaders held an optimistic and fulfilling viewpoint of their leadership (2012).

Most studies that combine servant leadership and higher education take place in a public or private university setting; however, one unique study (Negron, 2012) reveals the link between the leader as servant and a for-profit university. The researcher's purpose was to find out if servant leadership was an applicable philosophy to use in the for-profit setting (Abstract). This qualitative, single-case study showed a relationship between the functioning of an organization to leader with servant leadership characteristics (listening, commitment, awareness, stewardship, and empathy). However, the researcher noted, "evidence was insufficient to conclude that servant leadership can address needs in for-profit organizations related to competitiveness and firm decision-making" (2012, p. iv).

Hays (2008) chose to examine the impact of servant leadership at the faculty level. This examination compared and contrasted the use of traditional lecture style to a servant leadership approach. The traditional model involved the teacher as manager and decision-maker especially when it involved assessment and content (2008). The servant

leadership philosophy involved the students more and allowed them to participate in the development of the course. As a result, it was revealed that the servant-style teaching was more effective. The mixed-method study used interviews and focus groups along with survey results to determine the outcomes, and while it was found to not be the faster or the easiest approach to teaching, the incorporation of servant leadership into the classroom could be done in small steps, such as adding discussions to the syllabus or allowing for assessment options (2008). Scardino (2012) also studied the influence of servant leadership on the faculty and its impact on student engagement. Through a cross-sectional quantitative survey at three Franciscan institutions of higher education, the study examined the extent to which servant leadership characteristics were exhibited by faculty, as well as the connection to student learning. The research findings noted a link between the two elements studied with a strong correlation in emotional healing (2012).

There was additional research on servant leadership and faculty implementation in a private university setting (Jacobs, 2011). This study investigated the effectiveness of servant leadership and effective teaching strategies. The study was completed in four university centers in Texas and applied a comparative quantitative approach to the research. The results, however, did not show a statistically significant difference and reported an inconsistency between the literature on servant leadership and classroom behaviors (2011). The researcher called for more research on this association including a variety of university settings.

Servant leadership scholars often noted that foresight is the most important of the characteristics, and it did show up on multiples lists of traits. A study on evangelical theological higher education (ETHE) examined this quality within the framework of the

classroom (Funk, 2008). The qualitative study utilized interviews to garner participants' views on servant leadership in their educational experience and how this might look in the future. The findings included identifying key components of servant leadership and foresight in this unique setting, as well as targeting foresight, creativity and cooperation as key elements in leadership-development (2008). In addition to this study that focused on one specific attribute, a study conducted at five Alabama regional universities surveyed five isolated servant leadership tenets: love, humility, vision, trust, and empowerment (Farris, 2010). The researcher chose to study these traits in terms of the institutions' President creating an even more focused design. The quantitative study correlated the five traits to employee satisfaction using two separate survey instruments: *Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument* and *The Mohrman-Cooke-Mohrman Job Satisfaction Scale*. The findings suggest a need for universities to take full advantage of the concept of a leadership institute so that students pursuing a master's degree are exposed to servant leadership attributes and outcomes (2010). These findings are based on a correlation between a servant leader in a position of authority and job satisfaction among employees. Both studies target a specific attribute or audience for the research, and both included implications that are relevant to servant leadership programs at institutions of higher education.

Campus-wide servant leadership initiatives and research offer the greatest pool of studies done to date. This type research is geared more towards institutional changes or overall student engagement as opposed to specific programmatic study. One study attempted to define the institutional dynamics and attributes needed to implement servant leadership tenets in higher education organizations (Hardegree, 2007). In addition, the

researcher examined the dynamics of an organization that hinder the effectiveness of a servant leadership. Through the use of a three-round Delphi study both qualitative and quantitative in nature, a list of twelve characteristics for servant leadership in higher education. They were identified as good listening, integrity, meaningful collaboration, commitment to the growth of people, people valued, a sense of community, interdependence, trust, transparency, humility, mutual respect, and authenticity (2007). When employed, these traits create an environment conducive to servant leadership. In addition to the positive characteristics, there were twelve traits found to be detrimental to the proliferation of servant leadership: “turf” issues, weak ethical foundation, fear of change, lack of commitment, leadership emphasis on power instead of service, minimal dedication to stakeholders, inconsistent rhetoric and behavior of leadership, ineffective institutional communication, lack of vision, adversarial relationships, lack of servant leadership modeling, and lack of collaboration (2007). Those participating in the research were limited to faculty, staff, and administration at the post-secondary level, which provided a focused approach to the information.

Another campus-wide of study conducted at two different institutions found a significant difference in perception between administrators and workforce group (McDougle, 2009). The quantitative study conducted at a public 2-year and public 4-year universities used the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 2000) to determine if differences existed in and among the universities. The top leaders in the two institutions believed that servant leadership concepts are being used more among their workforce than what was reality (2009). This finding showed a disconnect between those at the executive level of the university than those at the mid-to-lower levels. It was also found

that no matter what type of institution, both the administration and workforce group share similar perceptions of servant leadership attributes at work. Servant leadership attributes did not change between the two types of universities and implied a similar mission for both groups (2009). The researcher in the study connected a moderate-to-low level job satisfaction among all surveyed to a misconception of servant leadership attributes being implemented. Because of the disconnect between higher level administrator and those working the mid-to-lower level positions, the lack of leadership development was reasoned as the cause (2009). This study called for a more intentional implementation of servant leadership characteristics and a clearer communication plan of those attributes the universities want to establish in all levels of employees.

The above studies focus on servant leadership on the employees of a campus, and there was a body of literature on the impact of this philosophy on the actual students. One such study used the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 2000) to assess the level of servant leadership in five California community colleges and to examine if there was a relationship between that level and student performance (Hannigan, 2008). The researcher based the quantitative study on seven performance measures to find if there was evidence of servant leadership in the colleges and, if so, to what extent did this impact the students. While this particular study did not have a response rate that met statistically significant measures, there were some inferences to be drawn from the data gathered. The first being that the OLA is a valid measurement tool for assessing servant leadership, and the second is a need for further research on servant leadership and objective performance (2008). While solid findings could not be drawn, this exploratory

study added to the literature of higher education research within the lens of servant leadership.

The impact of implementing a campus-wide servant leadership philosophy on students studied at a private Christian university (Bommarito, 2012). The purpose was to examine the university's commitment to using servant-leadership principles alongside Kouzes and Posner's (2002) Leadership Challenge. As a part of a whole-campus initiative, the university changed the mission to ensure that every student encountered a leadership development philosophy in his field of study and each program of study was required to include servant leadership (2012). These changes were made in 2001, but no data had been collected on the results. This study selected a cross-section of students, seniors, and alumni, and the results revealed that groups with more exposure to the philosophy had a higher level of engagement in all five of Kouzes and Posner's (2002) leadership practices than the other groups assessed especially those most closely related to servant leadership: enabling others, encouraging the heart, and modeling the way (2002). The overall implications for the study were that the changes in the leadership development strategy of the university had a positive impact on students (2012) and highlighted a successful partnership between servant leadership and higher education.

In terms of examining how students are affected by attending a university with a focus on servant leadership, research showed no conclusive results that upper classmen had stronger attributes than under classmen (Meyer, 2013). Concordia University, a private, faith-based institution, developed an intentional message through the mission, vision and other public communications that it graduated students who were servant leaders. The quantitative study concluded there was no statistically significance

difference between the upper classmen and freshmen (2013). While this study drew few conclusions for the actual connection between the mission and vision of the university with the impact on students, the implications for further research reflected the growing trend for higher education/servant leadership focus.

In a slightly different style of research, a case study completed at a state university in Utah evaluated the impact of servant leadership on a distance-learning program (Russell, 2013). The emergency services program students took an additional 15-week servant leadership course. The qualitative study explored the influence of the course on those enrolled. The researcher used a systematic, hierarchical approach to analyze the data and the results revealed a positive relationship between the students' perceptions and the course (2013). The students had no previous exposure to emergency services and did not directly connect the field to servant leadership, but throughout the course, the students were impacted. The results showed that each student reflected on his leadership and how this type of leader would be successful in this particular field (2013). While this major of study and delivery of curriculum was unique in the body of literature, the results still indicated an overall positive association with studying servant leadership at the post-secondary level.

Student engagement both at the undergraduate and graduate level are important to institutions of higher learning (Nyamboli, 2014; Paron, 2012). Servant leadership has been explored as an option to increase engagement thereby increasing a university's overall success. A study completed at the undergraduate level used the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) (Laub, 2000) to determine the level of servant leadership implemented in the university as well as the Net Promoter Scale (NPS) to measure

student satisfaction (Padron, 2012). The results revealed a statistically significant level of servant leadership at the university, but no level of statistical significance between servant leadership and student satisfaction (2012). The OLA was also used in a 2014 study of doctoral students in an online environment (Nyamboli). The purpose of the quantitative, non-experimental correlational study was to gauge the level of servant leadership within the university, as well as the perception of student satisfaction. The results found moderate levels of servant leadership, but no statistical significance between the perceptions of servant leadership and student satisfaction (2014). Both of these research studies propagated the interest in servant leadership and called for more research in the future.

There is a great deal of research on university and college campuses with regards to servant leadership. The literature exposed studies at state universities, religiously affiliated private colleges, and specific majors within various types of programs. While most studies implicated a further need for research, each helped build the foundation for servant leadership's presence in higher education. This foundation led to and continues the tradition of Columbus State University's Servant Leadership Program outlined below.

### **Description of Columbus State University's Servant Leadership Program**

In 1998, Columbus State University announced the beginning of a partnership with the Pastoral Institute that would be known as the Servant Leadership Program (Columbus State University, 1998). The goal for the program was to provide servant leadership training to college students and ultimately, to build a learning environment where servant leadership was second nature to the student body, faculty and staff. The program actually started in 1999 with the first class graduating in 2003. Dr. Mary Sue

Polleys was named the director of the program, and the original mission was “to build a community of future servant leaders who are highly motivated, service-oriented, courageous, creative, effective, and ethical through study, experiential learning, self-awareness, modeling, and mentoring” (Polleys, 2002, p. 128). Polleys outlined the need to this type of program in her article, *One University’s Response to the Anti-Leadership Vaccine: Developing Servant Leaders*. Polleys stated that the program “addresses the need for institutions of higher education to be involved in the development of leaders who believe that power and authority are for helping others grow” (2002, p. 117). Polleys had a wealth of experience in the classroom, as well as corporate training and community volunteering. She served as the then President of the local school board and received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Auburn University (2002). Her article cited many of Greenleaf’s thoughts on the connection between the servant leadership philosophy and the university setting. Many universities at that time saw the need and responded in a variety of ways, but Columbus State University’s answer was the Servant Leadership Program grounded in Greenleaf’s writings and reflections.

Polleys outlined three different leadership theories as a basis for her argument for a servant leadership program at Columbus State. Through her literature review, she explained all three through the framework of comparing and contrasting with servant leadership. The theories she used were historical grounded and divided into three time periods: 1910 to World War II, World War II to the late 1960’s and the late 1960’s to 1999 (Polleys). The 1910 to World War II period marked a time of, what Polleys described as, who the leader is. Leaders such as Churchill, Lenin and Jefferson were used to argue the Great Man theory and the concept of great leaders must be born prevailed.

The second period was mainly about what the leader does, and this timeframe saw more emphasis on behavioral and humanistic theories. The organizational leadership theories, Theory Y and Theory X, were developed by McGregor during this time and were based on human motivations and desires (1960; 1966). The final period was based on where the leadership takes place and the situational theory was created. The theory suggested that leaders needed to take into account characteristics such as “organization size, worker maturity, task complexity” (Polleys, p. 18) and watch for these to change in order to lead well. Examining these three time periods provided a background for Polleys to argue for servant leadership as the leadership philosophy of choice for Columbus State University. Her conclusion explained, “[Servant leadership] can provide the modern philosophical tradition needed to bridge the gaps between the various levels of analysis---individual, group, organization, and society” (p. 24).

### **Conceptual Analysis Chart**

The following table highlights studies that align with the literature topics.

**Table 2.1. Conceptual Analysis**

TOPIC: Studies Related to the History of Servant Leadership

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
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STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Hayden (2011)	Tests statistical relationships validating Greenleaf's "best test"	452 employees of an urban, Midwest utility company	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wisdom was the only leadership dimension that could reliably predict a contextual effect on service orientations.</li> <li>• With this one exception, all the predictive capabilities of the models were related to dynamics which take place at the individual level, statistically unaffected by contextual effects</li> </ul>
Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	Presents an instrument to measure of servant leadership	294 respondents	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The instrument can measure five items: empowerment, love, humility, trust, and vision.</li> <li>• Provided operational definition of servant leadership</li> </ul>
Laub (2000)	Answered questions: how is servant leadership defined? What are the characteristics? Can these be assessed through a written instrument?	828 people from 41 organizations	Qualitative (three-part Delphi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of characteristics</li> <li>• OLA found reliable</li> </ul>
Boyum (2012)	Identify the holistic, developmental, integral and temporal constructs of servant leadership as it is experienced in the	25 participants	Qualitative interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a proposed model of servant leadership</li> <li>• Extended current model by adding several lens</li> <li>• Provided insight into how a follower becomes a servant leader</li> </ul>

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
	relational state between leader and follower			

TOPIC: Studies Related to Servant Leadership Execution

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Carter & Baghurst (2013)	Explore servant leadership from the perspective of restaurant employees	43 participants	Qualitative focus groups, observations – Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Servant leadership positively influences employee engagement</li> <li>• SL also contributed to employee loyalty</li> <li>• Participants were more committed, had healthier work relationships, and participating more actively in restaurant goals</li> </ul>
Farmer (2009)	Examine servant leadership attributes in senior military officers and determine the scope of servant leadership attributes and the demographics that differentiate them	163 current and former military officers	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting SL principles in the military may lead to higher officer retention rates</li> <li>• 41% of the participants scored too high on abuse of power and pride to be considered a servant leader.</li> <li>• added to the reliability research of the SLP-R instrument and confirmed a high reliability score</li> </ul>

TOPIC: Studies Related to Servant Leadership Examples in Higher Education

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Walker (1997)	Examine the practice of	32 members of Crowder College	Qualitative interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “whole” person approach works</li> </ul>

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
	servant leadership on a road towards understanding its influence in the realm of higher education	faculty and staff	and documents (letters, minutes, clippings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Trustees advocate servant leadership</li> <li>• Flattened organization structure is important</li> <li>• Administration is willing to take risks</li> <li>• President is perceived as ethical and trusting</li> </ul>

TOPIC: Studies Related to Servant Leadership in Higher Education Research

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Bommarito (2012)	Investigate the impact of an institution-wide leadership development model on students at a private Christian university.	4,718 participants	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater knowledge and experience with leadership development equaled a higher level of engagement</li> <li>• Strong impact of servant leadership principles</li> <li>• Enabling others, encouraging the heart, and modeling the way were the highest levels</li> </ul>
Meyer (2013)	Understanding what attributes, inclinations and dispositions toward servant leadership students are coming in with as well as what they are taking away from their time at the institution	316 participants	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of five servant leadership attributes selected, the seniors indicated higher scores in two categories, lower in one, and showed no statistical difference in the other two</li> </ul>
Farris (2010)	Explore the relationship between two variables,	280 participants	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is statistically sound evidence that servant leadership is at work on the university</li> </ul>

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
	servant leadership and job satisfaction, among management, executive staff, and faculty at Alabama's five regional universities			<p>campuses that were studied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty and senior and mid-level employees are recognizing and responding to a balance of authority and influence displayed by their president</li> <li>• Three servant leadership attributes were combined as was intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.</li> <li>• Those traits were visions, humility and agape.</li> </ul>
Hardegree (2007)	Delineate the institutional dynamics and characteristics necessary to successfully foster the successful application of servant leadership principles within higher education organizations, while also identifying the institutional dynamics that might tend to diminish servant leadership effectiveness.	18 panelists	Qualitative interviews – Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final listing of 12 distinguishing servant leadership characteristics,</li> <li>• 16 positive institutional dynamics related to servant leadership initiatives</li> <li>• 12 negative institutional dynamics related to servant leadership strategies</li> </ul>
Russell (2013)	Explore the influence a	6 undergraduate students	Qualitative case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course on servant leadership left lasting</li> </ul>

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
	distance learning servant leadership course had on the emergency service students' understanding of leadership			impression on the participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive experience for distance learning</li> <li>• Course causes each student to reflect on personal leadership</li> </ul>
Astin & Sax (1998)	Examined the impact of community service participation on undergraduate student development	3,450 students from 42 institutions	Quantitative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in service during undergraduate years substantially enhances academic development and civic responsibility</li> <li>• All 35 outcome measures was positively influenced by service work</li> <li>• All four types of service were beneficial: human needs, public safety, environment and education.</li> <li>• More time serving equaled a strong positive effect.</li> </ul>

### Summary

As outlined in Chapter 2, servant leadership has a long history of implementation even before it had an official title. Historical figures utilized the traits and characteristics before Greenleaf expounded upon them in his essays. The concept of “serving before leading” (Greenleaf, 1970) is the ultimate foundation of servant leadership. Multiple lists of attributes have been created off of this basic concept (Spears, 2005; Turner, 2000; Keith, 2012; Dierendonck, 2011; Frick, 2004; Greenleaf, 1970; Pilink.org). There are

also many leadership philosophies and styles that can be compared with servant leadership. Seven specific styles mentioned previously are closely associated with servant leadership but when examined with the six characteristics from Dierendonck's research, none of the seven share the same traits (2011). Servant leadership is a unique leadership philosophy especially from the standpoint of wanting to serve first thereby becoming a leader (Greenleaf, 1970). In addition to this difference, servant leaders are also most concerned with personal goal achievement and workplace satisfaction whereas other styles focus more on organizational outcomes.

These similarities and differences are also seen in the environments where servant leadership is implemented and studied. Research on the philosophy in public service, schools, healthcare institutions and other locations has added to the overarching context. However, even with a great deal of research on the impact and outcomes of servant leadership, there are limitations to be considered. A dearth of empirical studies combined with other concerns (Boyum, 2012; Ruschman, 2002; Werhane et al, 2007) creates reason to examine the philosophy carefully and create opportunities for further research. Even with current limitations, higher education institutions of all types are giving way to servant leadership programs. There are multiple approaches that colleges and universities are weaving servant leadership on campus whether it be through awards, academic programs, residence opportunities, or extracurricular activities. In addition to the implementation on campus, researchers have also chosen to study servant leadership in higher education with varying results and implications. Utilizing these examples and studies helped to lay the foundation for the methodology found in the following chapter

focused on research design, data collection, analysis and a synopsis related to the data analysis.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The researcher's goal of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of students, administrators, and other stakeholders in the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program. Phenomenology was selected because of a need to capture the experiences through the individual perspectives. The study was mixed-method in nature due to the fact that focus of the study was to understand the nature of a setting and the experience others have in that context (Bogden & Biklen, 1997; Merriam, 1981). The objective of this type of research is to provide a deeper understanding through an analysis of the experiences within a particular setting and time (Husserl, 1931; Polkinghorne, 1989). A mixed-method approach presented rich descriptions of those involved with the Servant Leadership Program over the past 16 years.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The researcher proposed to understand if differences occurred from the inception of the program in 1999 to the current year, 2015 and if so, what characteristics would lead to a new model for program improvement. In addition, the research allows for replication of the program by other universities. Universities constantly look for new ways to incorporate leadership on the campus, and often reach out to program staff to inquire about the CSU program. This study gives a framework for the beginning of the

current CSU program, but also provided a basic structure for another university to start a similar program. The phenomenological research study is intended to advance the current body of research by examining a unique program through the framework of perception data for program surveys, focus groups, interviews and historical documentation. The research questions were derived from existing literature sources and compiled to focus on the specific purpose of the study (Clark, Watson, & Reynolds, 1995).

### **Research Questions**

In this study, the researcher explored the relationships between the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program and its students, administrators, and stakeholders.

#### **Main Research Question**

1. What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?

#### **Additional Research Questions**

2. To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?
3. What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?

### **Research Design**

The mixed-method approach to this study allowed the researcher to examine and gain an understanding of individuals relating to a particular societal issue (Creswell, 2009). This study examined a program not previously studied for differences across a span of time. Phenomenology was used as the qualitative strategy of inquiry in order to capture the perceptions and experiences of the selected participants. Specifically, the

study used descriptive phenomenology in design, and this design was selected because, according to Giorgi (1997), “phenomenology wants to understand how phenomena present themselves to consciousness and the elucidation of this process is a descriptive task” (p. 6).

## Phenomenology

Phenomenology draws heavily on the writings of Edmund Husserl, whose abstract ideas were expanded on by others, such as Egleton, Kruger, Giorgi, and Moustakas (Groenwald, 2004). While these writers often clash in their thoughts on the topic, they agree on a few common themes for the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. These shared ideas are that phenomenology is the study of lived experiences of people, the view of those experiences are conscious ones, and the development of the descriptions should be of the essences of the experiences, not explanations or analyses (2004). Researchers undertaking a phenomenological study should remain true to the facts and refrain from any pre-given framework (Giorgi, 1997). There are several types of phenomenology, such as (1) eidetic or descriptive, guided by Husserl, (2) hermeneutics or interpretive/existential, guided by the work of Heidegger, and (3) a Dutch form that combines descriptive and existential (Cohen & Ornery, 1994). This study was conducted under the descriptive methodology (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004), which focuses more on the descriptions of the experiences of the participants as opposed to the interpretations of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas approached the research method using a Husserl concept, epoche or bracketing. Bracketing removes the researcher’s experience, as much as possible, in order to provide a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being studied (1994). This removal

rarely happens at a perfect level, but can happen by the researcher describing his own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out his own viewpoints prior to examining others' experiences (Creswell, 2006).

There are certain guiding principles for phenomenological research. According to Smith and Fowler, these are nature of conscious experience, intentionality of directed action, person in context, and situated human experience (2006). Each of these must be considered when undertaking a phenomenological study. The nature of the conscious experience can result in a wide variety of narratives. Each participant will select their own personal narrative and communicate in their own way. This personalization of the experience comes from the different levels of consciousness during an experience. Participants can vary from conscious, semi-conscious, and completely unconscious of different aspects of the phenomenon (Smith & Fowler, 2006), which can impact the responses.

In phenomenological studies, the researcher attempts to delve into the participants' experience with the particular phenomena being studied. Through focus groups and past program surveys, an understanding of the interactions are formed and analyzed for best practices. The researcher sought to gather data on the perceptions from all stages of the experience in order to capture the changes made and the reason behind those changes. Because of the conscious and unconscious experience awareness, non-verbal behavior will be observed in these situations and probing questions will be asked accordingly (Morgan, 1997).

Within the framework of phenomenological research, intentionality proposes that every human action and the experience of that action are directed toward something in

the world (Pollio, et al., 1997). It is the act of forming an inseparable connection with the world and serves as a guide for understanding the nuances of the experienced event (van Manen, 1990). Research of this type attempts to study the experience with those who chose to align themselves with the values of the phenomena in some way. The researcher's goal was to fully understand each participant's role in the phenomena being studied, as well as to what extent the characteristics kept them associated with the phenomena for whatever time appropriate. In probing into the relationship between the participant and the program, best practices will be ultimately discussed and analyzed for relevance to the study.

The third concept in phenomenology is importance of individual context. Each participant has his or her own thoughts and experiences. The phenomenological researcher attempted to understand the narrative and take the person behind the commentary into account (Pollio, 1997). Each participant in this type of study was listened to within the context of his or her role in the phenomena being studied. The commentary each provided offered a snapshot of the perceptions at the time of involvement and each snapshot was important to the overall picture and analysis (Morgan, 1997). Because of the variety of roles in the study, the phenomenon was reviewed from many angles and each context proved invaluable to the final implications.

Situated human experience relates to the concept that each human being has a unique way of embedding meaning (Pollio, et al., 1997). Phenomenology requires this relationship to be considered within the research. Each unique perspective was captured in terms of the exposure to the phenomena. The focus groups were designed to gain data related to the characteristics of the phenomena over time and the differences experienced

through those characteristics (Morgan, 1998). This data allowed for the reconsiderations of the phenomena at the current time in terms of overall improvement and advancement of the characteristics.

### **Participants**

After obtaining the university's permission, authorization was obtained through Columbus State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct research that involved human subjects. Participants of the study included students, administration, faculty and alumni. Each data source shared unique perspectives and perceptions of the program from his point of view. The six data sources included both past and current stakeholders (Morgan, 1998). The university administrators included the administrators who were involved with starting the program, such as the University President, Interim Provost, and Advancement Vice President. The focus group for this source were also comprised of persons who held these positions over the past 16 years and current administrators, as well. As stated previously, Columbus State University has a relatively short history of only 57 years, and of that history, the Servant Leadership Program has sustained for 16 of those years. Many of those involved in the focus groups had a broad understanding of the university campus, as well as how servant leadership fits into that broad scope. In addition to administrative group, University Faculty were be used to gather information. Those faculty members who taught in the program will comprise another focus group. This group will also included the former Program Director along with the current Director. The Alumni group was made up of students from all graduating classes. The researcher ensured that a cross section of students is represented so that the data gathered is historically sound (Morgan & Kreuger, 1988; Morgan, 1997). As the key

partner of the Servant Leadership Program for the past 16 years, the Pastoral Institute interview was comprised of the former CEO of the organization. Because this organization is going through a change in leadership, the study was isolated to only the more recent CEO who was involved with the CSU program. The focus group of Community Agencies includes various non-profit organizations that the program has reached in its history, Dialogue Partners from previous and current years, and corporations that have supported the program either financially or through personnel support.

The following table presents the data sources selected for the study along with the details of each source to include the instrumentation and how the information from the source will be used.

**Table 3.1. Data Sources**

Data Sources	Why Selected?	Instrumentation	What Can They Tell?	To What Extent?
1. University Administrators	Integral in starting the program; Different perspective in terms of their administrative point of view; vested interest because it is a value-add to the institution	Focus Groups Interviews Historical Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the reasons for starting the program</li> <li>• Discuss the impact on the university</li> <li>• Explain the history of the program in terms of sustainability</li> <li>• Identify the attitudes of outsiders regarding the program</li> </ul>	Use this information to help answer the four research questions. Specifically the overarching question of overall perceptions of the current and former participants of the CSU Servant Leadership Program.
2. University Faculty	Firsthand experience in the	Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to the scaffolding of</li> </ul>	Use this information to

Data Sources	Why Selected?	Instrumentation	What Can They Tell?	To What Extent?
	classroom with students; Can speak to the role of the college experience in an individual leadership/ life development	Historical Documents	information for leadership development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the progression of leadership/ personal development as students move through the program</li> </ul>	help answer the cognitive question regarding students' experiences in the program
3. Program Alumni	Direct experience with the program (historical experience); Vested interest in the program (want it to be successful)	Focus Groups Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the experiences with the program (positive, negative, neutral)</li> <li>• Identify the impact of the program after graduation</li> <li>• Describe specific areas of the program (positive, negative, neutral)</li> </ul>	Use this information to help answer all three (cognitive, affective, social) questions
4. Evaluation Surveys/ Perception Data	Direct experiences with the program. Quantitative data on the different areas of impact for the program.	Surveys Historical Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe experiences with the program (positive, negative, neutral)</li> <li>• Discuss the perceived impact of the program on agencies, community partners, students</li> </ul>	Use this data to answer all research questions
5. Pastoral Institute	Key partner of the program. Helped form the original structure. Helped oversee the program for the past 16 years. Provided self-assessment and community engagement aspects of the program. Center for Servant Leadership served as a resource for SL training in our community.	Interview Historical Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment on the personal student development, self-awareness and the impact on leadership, impact of student engagement in the community.</li> <li>• Speak to the sustainability of the program</li> <li>• Discuss attitudes about the program beyond the campus</li> <li>• Identify the need for the program at the university level</li> </ul>	Use this information to help answer the social and affective research question

Data Sources	Why Selected?	Instrumentation	What Can They Tell?	To What Extent?
6. Community Agencies	Direct involvement with students in the program. Can speak to the needs of the community and how/if they were met. Help provide a “real world” setting for servant leadership philosophy into practice.	Focus Groups Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the impact of volunteering while in college on the student.</li> <li>• Identify needs in the community for the program</li> <li>• Discuss the impact of volunteering on developing students as leaders (i.e. time management, commitment level, mentoring)</li> </ul>	Use this information to answer the social research question

### Instrumentation

The researcher proposed to understand participants’ perceptions of the Servant Leadership Program. To gain this understanding, the researcher used in-depth focus groups to collect data for the study (Morgan, 1997; Krueger & Casey, 2000). A focus group is in essence a group interview but the reliance is on the interplay of those involved (Morgan, 1997) as opposed to just questions and answers. In this study, the groups consisted of 5-10 people with a similar interest or experience with the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program. Each focus group included open-ended questions about the participant’s perceived experiences with the program (Clark, Watson, & Reynolds, 1995). The researcher created the questions using past program surveys as a basis of inquiry, making sure to identify and fill in gaps from the previous surveys. The anecdotal data collected from the surveys helped form the questions posed in the focus groups and also established a framework for the probing questions as follow up (Bodgen & Biklen, 1997; Morgan, 1998). The researcher also consulted with field experts to

ensure the instrument would be effective in gathering information necessary for the study. The data provided by the focus group participants will add to the body of knowledge gained from the analysis of the surveys while also establishing forward-looking perspective for the program.

In addition to using focus groups, the researcher also employed the use of one-on-one interviews in certain situations where necessary. One of these situations was the Pastoral Institute data set where no one except for a past CEO was available to form a full focus group. Due to recent turnover, those involved with the program in the past could not be contacted to participate. An additional two interviews were conducted in the Administrative data set. One past university President currently resides in Amsterdam, and the time zone difference inhibited participation in a focus group. Additionally, one former administrator had a medical emergency and was unable to attend the scheduled focus group. Her insight was important, so a one-on-one interview was scheduled and conducted. These one-on-one interviews were exact replications of the focus groups in terms of format. The researcher utilized the same script, and the sessions were recorded for accuracy and later transcription. The interviews and focus groups were structured enough to focus the conversations on the participant's experience with the Servant Leadership Program, but also open enough to allow for free expression of thought and relevant elements (Smith & Fowler, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Moustakas; 1994).

Data including perception data from past program surveys and program stakeholder focus groups were used as the basis for further inquiry in focus groups. These instruments provided the researcher with the opportunity to gather data on experiences within the program. Prior surveys from the past 16 years are archived in the Servant

Leadership office on campus. These program surveys included surveys given to students, non-profit organizations, and community/campus partners. The surveys included a 5-point Likert-scale section along with open-ended questions. The student surveys included specific course evaluations with each activity/assignment broken down into a Likert-scale question. This set of surveys also included overall program evaluations with students' providing feedback on each component of the program.

Historical documents were also used to gain perceptions about the Servant Leadership Program in terms of the initial structure of the program. These perceptions related to the study of the phenomenon by creating a framework for the creation of the program on campus. Documents such as the original program proposal and University Curriculum Committee (UCC) course requests were important to gain an understanding of the original program intent. Previous course syllabi, oversight meeting agendas, and activity outlines added to the overall picture of the program and help guide the focus group questions for the researcher.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection methodology for this research study was comprised primarily of focus groups with some additional data collected through surveys, one-on-one interviews, and program archived documents. (See Table 3.2) Through these focus groups and interviews, participants provided historical information from their perspectives (Glesne, 2006; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 1990). Participants were given the opportunity through these in-depth group meetings and one-on-one sessions to re-create their experiences, which allowed the researcher to observe and understand them in greater depth (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The participants'

experiences were constructed through the constructed questions, and the group structure provided the opportunity to control the line of questioning (Morgan, 1998). Each participant was given a chance to answer the question with follow-up question asked in order to probe for further information. The open-ended questions followed by probing questions gave information regarding the perceptions of the participants' experiences that a researcher would not be able to gather through traditional surveys (Axinn & Pearce, 2006). All of the focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed (Morgan & Kreuger, 1988), verbatim, by the researcher assisted by other resources (i.e. court reporter). Caution was taken to ensure that the technology did not fail and that environmental conditions were taken into consideration (Easton, McComish, and Greenberg, 2000) when recording the focus groups and interviews. Duplicate recordings were utilized to guarantee the sessions were successfully recorded and sound checks were conducted for sound quality and volume control.

The focus groups and interviews were held on campus and were informal in nature. The researcher hoped to make both environments as similar to the experiences with aspects of the program as possible, meaning that they were informal in nature. The focus groups were kept to a five to 10 participant minimum (Creswell, 2009) to make sure everyone felt comfortable expressing their thoughts; however, they were large enough to supply useful insights for analysis (Morgan, 1998). Each group took place on campus, and in areas that allowed all participants to sit around a table together. Formal classroom settings were avoided so that everyone felt comfortable sharing their experiences. The researcher began with a review of the necessary informed consent form and introductory items. Once those items were discussed, the researcher began with



Research Questions	Data Sources	Question Source	Rationale	Guiding Questions
		<p>Dennis &amp; Bocarnea (2005)</p> <p>Laub (2000)</p> <p>Meyer (2013)</p>	<p>becomes a servant leader unaffected by contextual effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The instrument can measure five items: empowerment, love, humility, trust, and vision.</li> <li>• Provided operational definition of servant leadership</li> <li>• List of characteristics</li> <li>• OLA found reliable</li> <li>• Of five servant leadership attributes selected, the seniors indicated higher scores in two categories, lower in one, and showed no statistical difference in the other two</li> </ul>	
To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?	Alumni Perception Data Pastoral Institute Faculty	<p>Carter &amp; Baghurst (2013)</p> <p>Farmer (2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Servant leadership positively influences employee engagement</li> <li>• SL also contributed to employee loyalty. Participants were more committed, had healthier work relationships, and participating more actively in restaurant goals</li> <li>• Adopting SL principles in the military may lead to higher officer retention rates</li> <li>• 41% of the participants scored too high on abuse of power and pride to be</li> </ul>	<p>What experiences did you have that encouraged you to continue or increased your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership with the Servant Leadership Program?</p> <p>Have you had any experiences that could have discouraged you or reduced your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership with the Servant Leadership Program?</p>

Research Questions	Data Sources	Question Source	Rationale	Guiding Questions
		Farris (2010)	<p>considered a servant leader. Added to the reliability research of the SLP-R instrument and confirmed a high reliability score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is statistically sound evidence that servant leadership is at work on the university campuses that were studied</li> <li>• Faculty and senior and mid-level employees are recognizing and responding to a balance of authority and influence displayed by their president</li> <li>• Three servant leadership attributes were combined as was intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Those traits were visions, humility and agape.</li> </ul>	<i>Probing</i> - Are there any other things you would like to add?
What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?	Alumni Community Partners Community Agencies Faculty	Walker (1997)  Bommarito (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “whole” person approach works</li> <li>• Board of Trustees advocate servant leadership</li> <li>• Flattened organization structure is important</li> <li>• Administration is willing to take risks. President is perceived as ethical and trusting</li> <li>• Greater knowledge and experience with leadership development equaled a higher level of engagement</li> </ul>	<i>CONTINUE TO PROBE AS NECESSARY:</i> a. Any experiences with academic classes you would like to discuss? b. Any experiences with rules or requirements you would like to discuss? c. Any experiences with faculty you would like to discuss? This could include changes on

Research Questions	Data Sources	Question Source	Rationale	Guiding Questions
		Hardegree (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong impact of servant leadership principles Enabling others, encouraging the heart, and modeling the way were the highest level final listing of 12 distinguishing servant leadership characteristics</li> <li>• 16 positive institutional dynamics related to servant leadership initiatives</li> <li>• 12 negative institutional dynamics related to servant leadership strategies</li> </ul>	<p>the faculty that affected you.</p> <p>d. Any discouraging experiences with students?</p> <p>e. Any discouraging experiences with departmental staff?</p> <p>f. Any discouraging community experiences? This could also include anticipated benefits of community service.</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to get information about your perceptions of the CSU Servant Leadership Program. Is there anything we left out?</p>
What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants? (Cont'd)		Astin & Sax (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in service during undergraduate years substantially enhances academic development and civic responsibility</li> <li>• All 35 outcome measures was positively influenced by service work</li> <li>• All four types of service were beneficial: human needs, public safety, environment and education. More time serving equaled a strong positive effect.</li> </ul>	Same questions as above

Research Questions	Data Sources	Question Source	Rationale	Guiding Questions
		Russell (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course on servant leadership left lasting impression on the participants</li> <li>• Positive experience for distance learning. Course causes each student to reflect on personal leadership</li> </ul>	

### Data Analysis

Focus group and interview recordings were transcribed and the data analysis was conducted by thoroughly reading the transcripts of the focus groups/interviews in order to establish a holistic, global view of the phenomenon (Smith, 2008). The data collected from these sessions were then analyzed through categorization (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). Categories emerged from the transcripts and out of those categories themes were established through the major components of the study. The researcher highlighted through horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) the sentences, quotes, or statements that provided the understanding of the experiences within the Servant Leadership Program. The participants' perceptions along with the descriptors of the perceptions and evaluations of those descriptors were recognized as how the participants felt about their experiences with the program. Clusters of meaning (1994) then developed and formed into themes to guide the analysis. The two data sets of focus groups, interviews, and previous program survey results (Clark, Watson, & Reynolds, 1995) were analyzed for

disparate issues with an emphasis on coherent themes (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Conner, 2003). Out of these categories and themes, the researcher made recommendations for program improvement and replication (Creswell, 2009). The researcher employed the use of triangulation with a variety of data sources, different perspectives, and different methods being used to crosscheck the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher also kept a journal of experiences with the study in order to add an extra narrative to the data (Moustakas, 1994; Smith 2008). This extra narrative allowed the researcher to work through biases throughout the study by forcing the examination of data through patterns. If patterns form through the focus groups and interviews in terms of thoughts and questions, it proved valuable to the researcher. There were certain data that was quantitative in nature, and it is reported as averages (Merriam, 1998; Axinn & Pearce, 2006).

### **Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations**

There are a variety of strategies that a researcher can use to ensure validity and reliability (Creswell, 2009) when conducting qualitative research. One major component of the study that established the validity and reliability was the extended amount of time the researcher spends in the program in order to understand it fully. Creswell (2009) stated that the researcher must gain insight into the study site and people in order to lend credibility to the narrative account. Additionally, the researcher used member checks (2009; Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1999) to provide the participants an opportunity to further comment or provide clarity on the findings. Member checking ensures internal validity by providing the opportunity to give further feedback, getting respondents on the record with their own reports, allowing for summarizing of preliminary findings, offering

the chance to assess and confirm data, and presenting an opportunity to correct errors and challenge misperceived perceptions (Angen, 2000).

Because the researcher employed the use of focus groups, ethical concerns arose for the researcher (Morgan & Krueger, 1998) specifically ones of privacy. In an effort to minimize the concern, a statement of privacy was presented to each participant, and this message was reiterated at the beginning of each focus group (Morgan, 1997). Also, the recording process was explained to the focus groups with emphasis on the fact that the recordings would not be shared with any other parties besides the researcher and transcriber. To assuage the ethical concerns, the participants were assured that names and identifiable characteristics would be withheld. There was also an importance placed on respecting each other's privacy after the focus group concludes. Participants were urged to not discuss the conversations with anyone outside of the group. The recordings were kept in a secure location under password protection, and participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with any questions or concerns. The previous survey data collected over the past 16 years and used for the basis of questioning in this study were anonymous in nature; therefore, no names or associations were present and privacy concerns were not a factor.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of the research design was that the study reported on a single study site. However, the site is convenient for the research study because it allowed for the phenomena to be analyzed at a deeper level than would a multi-site study. This study analyzed the experiences of students in the program at Columbus State University over the past sixteen years; therefore, there should be hesitation to generalize the data for

transfer. While the aim is to provide a framework for other institutions to model programs after the existing one at Columbus State University, there is always a level of caution when applying qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). The focus groups were also small in size but were strategically formed to represent the sixteen-year history of the program. The goal was to have each graduating class have at least one representative, and each phase of the program had administrators, faculty, etc. present for the focus groups. The size of the focus groups aligned with suggested best practices (Morgan, 1997) but was limited to the overall number of stakeholders in the program. Lastly, the university employed the researcher at the time of the study as a member of the program's staff.

Great care was taken to remove bias by carefully selecting questions, using well-structured follow-up questions, transcribing all session recordings verbatim in effort to remove personal and research bias, and employing the use of member checks to verify the data (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, the researcher was learning the research process through this study, which should reduce the bias of the analysis (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of the study are defined by Simon (2011), as “characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of your study” (p.2). For this study, the researcher had ready and immediate access to the information to include past program surveys and historical documents. There was also availability to participant information and in-depth program contact information and other personal information. Additionally, both the concept of servant leadership and the Servant Leadership Program was of

national and international interest. Because of this attention, stakeholders were eager to aid and assist with the growth of the program on campus. With the Columbus State University Program being unique to the state of Georgia and quite possibly the entire nation, this study provided an opportunity to pass along information that is one-of-kind. The study brought light to a program that could be replicated at other universities thereby bringing even more attention to the philosophy of servant leadership and Columbus State University.

### **Graphic Representation of the Study**

The following schema represents the study in graphic form.

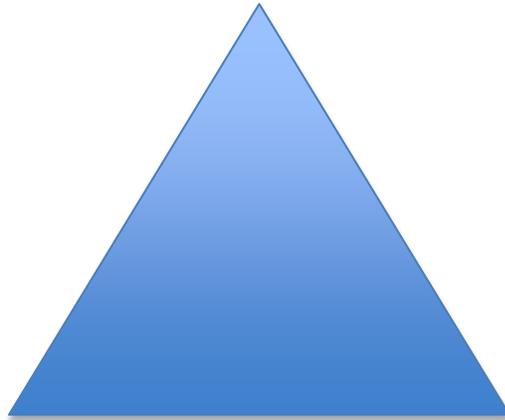
### Q: Research Questions

#### Main Research Question

1. What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?

#### Additional Research Questions

2. To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?
3. What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?



### D: Data Collection

Focus Groups  
Historical Documents  
Perception Data/Program Surveys

### P: Participants

Alumni of SL Program  
Administrators of SL Program  
Students in SL Program  
Faculty of Columbus State University  
Community Partners (Non-profits,  
Dialogue Partners)  
Pastoral Institute

## Summary

Phenomenological research methodology was used to gather and analyze data regarding participants' experiences with the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program. The researcher offered an overview, rationale, and details for the qualitative approach to the topic. Because phenomenology allows the researcher to examine the lived experiences of participants, it was the ideal methodology. Details regarding participants and instrumentation were discussed along with information regarding data collection to include focus groups, interviews, and program surveys used

for analysis. In addition, the validity and reliability along with ethical implications were presented in detail. Limitations of the study include single study site and researcher bias. Delimitations, to include access to historical documents and participants, were also examined, as well as a graphic representation of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the study from data collected via focus groups and interviews, historical documents, and program surveys. The focus group protocol was designed using data collected from past program surveys. The data determined the questions asked to the participants in the sessions. The results of the focus groups/interviews conducted for this study showed the perceptions of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program from the point of view of current and former faculty, former administration, community partners, and program alumni from the past 16 years. From the categories and themes pulled from focus group/interview transcripts, pertinent historical documents were used to complete the analysis. Finally, a summary of these results will be given and conclusions will be drawn from the data presented.

The researcher sought a new understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in a way that has not been previously recorded. Emerging identifiers have assisted in clarifying the phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2011), inclusive of the discovery and data verification with researcher as instrument (Patton, 1990). The data collection was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?
2. To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?
3. What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?

## **Organization of Data Analysis**

Prior to the start of the focus groups and interviews, the researcher analyzed the historical survey data from 2003 to 2015. This information was archived on the CSU campus and each year was averaged in six different categories: Academic Classes, Community Volunteer Work, Mentoring At-Risk Children, Community Mentor, Retreats and Reflections, and Overall Program. Once this data was analyzed, a protocol for the focus groups was written and vetted by the Institutional Review Board process. The focus groups were then conducted and verbatim recordings were transcribed. The researcher kept a detailed journal of any thoughts and opinions on the specific group so as to decrease researcher bias. In addition, transcriptions were made available to participants for member checking with no one responding to the opportunity. The researcher read through each transcription carefully looking for patterns and common perceptions, but also for outliers and minority experiences (Sproull, 2004; Yin, 1993). Each data set was given a unique color and each emerging category and theme was also given a designated color. The categories were captured using the determined color scheme so that the researcher could refer back to the appropriate group. Three main categories surfaced and various themes were captured under the categories using specific words, thoughts, and stories.

## **Data Collection**

Data was collected in two main forms: quantitative survey data and focus group/interview perception data. The survey data helped build the questions asked in the focus group session with five distinct data groups. The focus groups and interviews were carefully constructed using participants who shared a common thread of being a

participant of the CSU Servant Leadership Program at some point over the past 16 years (Morgan, 1998).

### Survey

The program survey was given to students at the end of each academic year (See Appendix D). The survey captured students' thoughts on specific items encountered throughout their experiences with the program. Some of the line items changed over the years, but six items remained constant. The surveys started with the first graduating class in 2003 and continue through 2015. There are two years of program evaluations that were missing for an unknown reason: 2004 and 2008. One category from the 2015 evaluations (Mentoring At-Risk Child) was missing. This particular year was a unique situation because the agency used to match students failed to complete the matches, so mentoring could not be evaluated. Each item on the surveys was evaluated using a Likert-scale using a 1-5 measure (5=excellent and 1=unsatisfactory). Averages in each area were calculated and analyzed for differences.

### Study Participants

Each focus group consisted of participants with similar relationships to the program. The groups ranged from two to six participants with a small number of interviews for those who could not attend the sessions for various reasons. While two is a small group, there is no definitive opinion on the smallest size for a focus group (Cheng, 2007). Most agree that the number of participants should be determined by the recruitment conditions and the research purposes (Morgan, 1998). Additionally, it should be noted that the phenomenon being investigated should determine how many participants are in each group to optimize the discussion (Cleary et al., 2014). In addition,

interviews were used to capture data for one particular data set where only one appropriate participant was available. Each session lasted under an hour in order to keep participants engaged and keep participants on schedule. Below is a summary of each group with first names being used to maintain confidentiality.

### **Faculty**

The faculty group consisted of six participants and was the first session conducted for the study. Email invitations were sent to a very specific group of participants with only one not responding to various attempts. Participant 16 was the first director of the program and the creator and developer of the curriculum with the help of many others on campus. Participant 12 was the second and current director with the transition occurring in 2008. Participant 16 and Participant 12 taught the courses in the program, along with the various College and Community Coordinators. This position was originally held by Participant 15 then later by Participant 17, who were both officially employees of the Pastoral Institute; however, they spent most of their time teaching courses and coordinating the details in the program on campus. Participant 13 and Participant 14 also held this title, with Participant 14 being the current person in that role. In this group, the entire timespan of the program was represented.

### **Administrators**

Two former administrators attended the scheduled focus group. One participant was unable to attend at the last minute due to an emergency. Participant 18 was a former University President who is now the interim Headmaster at a local school. He was President at the time the program was being designed and implemented. Participant 19 was a former interim Provost and retired Biology professor on campus. He was also in his

role from the beginning of the program. Another former University President, Participant 20, currently resides in Amsterdam and travels extensively across Europe for his new position. Because of the time difficulties, he was scheduled for a one-on-one telephone interview. He took office after Participant 18 and served as the President until December of 2014. The group does not include current President has only been at the university for six months. The former Vice President of Advancement, Participant 21, was not able to attend the session with Participant 18 and Participant 19, but she was able to attend a one-on-one interview on campus. While the logistics of this group were not ideal, a good amount of perception data was collected regarding the program's history.

### Alumni

Email invitations were sent to the entire database of program alumni, and a total of 15 responses were received. Two alumni sessions were scheduled with six alums originally scheduled for each. The additional three were unable to make the scheduled sessions. The first group had five actually attend with a cross-section of graduates represented. One participant was unable to attend and came to the second session instead. The second group had six attend with one participant not showing up. The table below describes both groups with graduation year and current role.

**Table 4.1. Alumni Participant Descriptors**

Name	Program Graduation	Current Role
<b>Alumni 1</b>		
Participant 1	2003	Chief Financial Officer, Hughston Hospital
Participant 2	2011	Assistant Director, Brookstone School Servant Leadership Program
Participant 3	2015	Editor, PR Dept, Columbus Regional Healthcare Center
Participant 4	2013	Labor and Delivery Nurse, St. Francis Hospital

Name	Program Graduation	Current Role
Participant 5	2009	Marketing Manager, Supplemental Healthcare, Atlanta
<b>Alumni2</b>		
Participant 6	2003	5 <sup>th</sup> grade Teacher, Gentian Elementary
Participant 7	2015	Registered Nurse, Columbus Regional Healthcare Center
Participant 8	2005	Law Enforcement Officer, Columbus Police Department
Participant 9	2015	Board Member, Homeless Resource Network
Participant 10	2015	Marketing/Community Relations, Uptown, Inc.
Participant 11	2012	6 <sup>th</sup> grade Teacher, Phenix City Intermediate School

Some graduating classes were not represented and the graduating class of 2015 was heavily represented. However, the thoughts shared and the anecdotal information gathered provided perception data critical to the data analysis.

### **Community**

The Community Focus Group was a combination of Dialogue Partners and agencies that have been served by the students in the Servant Leadership Program. Email invitations were sent to a variety of community partners with the following people responding. Participant 21 is a relatively new Dialogue Partner from a local high school that was partnered with a student who shared a similar career interest. Another Dialogue Partner attending the session was Participant 26. He has been a Dialogue Partner for many years and works at Aflac in Columbus. Participant 27 represented the connection the program has with the local United Way organization where students have volunteered in the past. She graduated from the Columbus State Masters of Organizational Leadership Program with a track in servant leadership, which added to her understanding of the undergraduate program. Participant 25 and Participant 24 both represented Truth Spring Academy, which is a local non-profit that partnered with the program for two senior projects. Participant 25 is a board member, and Participant 24 is the CEO of the non-

profit. To give some background on the program's impact in the community, Participant 23 offered her perspective of the program from her role as Assistant Principal of Hardaway High School. CSU's Servant Leadership Program was instrumental in the formation of a Servant Leadership Program over five years ago. The programs continue to support each other, and Participant 23 leads the Hardaway program as the Director, as well.

### **Pastoral Institute**

The Pastoral Institute was a partner of Columbus State from the very beginning of the program. Unfortunately, there was only one person left from the organization that could speak to this partnership. Participant 28 is the most current retired CEO of the non-profit organization; however, he just retired in December of 2014, so he shared a full, 16-year perspective of the program. He is now serving as an interim director of a non-profit that is connected with the local United Way agency, and he taught courses in the Masters of Organizational Leadership Program at Columbus State.

## **Results**

The following results are from comprehensive program evaluations and focus groups/interview transcripts. Survey data was reported in averages from Likert-scale survey data. The focus group/interview data was analyzed for the common categories and minority outliers and themes reported below. Each research question was connected to a theme and thoroughly examined using the perception data collected.

### **Survey**

An analysis of the survey data from the comprehensive program evaluations showed a consistent level of student satisfaction from 2003 to current year, 2015. The table below shows the averages for the years and program areas evaluated.

**Table 4.2 SURVEY DATA (2003-2015)**

	2003	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Academic Classes</b>	4.8	4.46	4.06	4	4.43	4.55	4.6	4.49	4.75	4.77	4.83
<b>Volunteer Experience</b>	4.95	4.97	4.57	5	4.74	4.66	4.59	4.59	4.76	4.64	4.52
<b>At-Risk Mentoring</b>	4.8	4.68	3.74	4	4.04	4.47	4.22	4.07	4.15	4.33	N/A
<b>Community Mentor</b>	4	3.24	3.08	4	3.77	4	4.28	4.54	4.35	4.68	4.65
<b>Retreats/ Reflections</b>	4.76	4.75	4.4	5	4.65	4.65	4.75	4.45	4.65	4.66	4.48
<b>Overall Experience</b>	4.94	4.89	4.57	5	4.66	4.82	4.87	4.67	4.70	4.82	4.8

The six areas listed on the table were the ones consistently addressed on the comprehensive evaluations since 2003. The averages did not vary more than a half a point with the exception of two areas: At-Risk Mentoring and Community Mentoring. These areas both deviated slightly from a 4 (Good) rating into a 3 (Neutral) rating with the At-Risk Child Mentoring decreasing in satisfaction in 2006 and Community Mentoring in 2005 and 2006. However, these variances increased from 2006 and remained constant until current year, 2015.

While these results indicate a slight change in program satisfaction in two areas, the change did not indicate a need for a specific questioning regarding mentoring in the

focus groups. The data from the survey analysis did not signify a need for any specific line of questioning in the focus groups. With each area maintaining a “Good” status, except for the two areas mentioned above, there was not an area that indicated a need for specific attention. Due to this consistency, the researcher designed questions to capture program perceptions at a high level. The following questions were asked in each focus group and interview for the study.

**Table 4.3 Focus Group/Interview Questions**

Focus Group/Interview Questions	
Question 1	What was it that drew you to the servant leadership philosophy? <i>Probing-</i> Anything else that led you to servant leadership?
Question 2	What drew you to this particular program? <i>Probing-</i> Anything else that led you to choose this program at Columbus State University?
Question 3	What experiences did you have that encouraged you to continue or increased your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership with the Servant Leadership Program?
Question 4	Have you had any experiences that could have discouraged you or reduced your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership with the Servant Leadership Program? <i>Probing -</i> Are there any other things you would like to add?
Question 5 (As Needed)	CONTINUE TO PROBE AS NECESSARY: a. Any experiences with academic classes you would like to discuss? b. Any experiences with rules or requirements you would like to discuss? c. Any experiences with faculty you would like to discuss? This could include changes on the faculty that affected you. d. Any discouraging experiences with students? e. Any discouraging experiences with departmental staff? f. Any discouraging community experiences? This could also include anticipated benefits of community service.
Question 6	The purpose of this study is to get information about your perceptions of the CSU Servant Leadership Program. Is there anything we left out?

These questions were designed to illicit perceptions centered around the three research questions and allowed for participants to share beyond what might be expected or

assumed. Because the researcher worked in the program, researcher bias was a major concern; therefore, the questions were open-ended and generic enough to allow thoughts to be shared thoroughly and in a dialogue-style format.

### **Research Question 1**

*What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?* Two main categories from the focus groups and interviews emerged to address this question: the importance of relationships within and among program participants and overarching program aspects. Within the major categories, specific themes were addressed below.

#### **Importance of Relationships**

A common theme throughout the entire study was the impact of the people connected to the program. Although there was not a question that specifically asked about the relationships or specific people associated with the program, each session began with a mention of either specific people or generalized statements about people. The most mentioned person was Mr. Bill Turner. His name was said in every focus group and interview, and there was a great sense of reverence around his name. Participant 15 from the faculty focus group said, “Bill Turner drew me in just through his passion for servant leadership.” Later in that same group, Participant 16 explained how the program was started under Mr. Turner’s guidance, “They said, ‘In seeking funding, we went to Mr. Bill Turner who said, ‘I’d be interested if it had a focus on servant leadership.’” As I always told the story, they said, “That’s exactly what we had in mind.” Not only was he the financial backer of the program, but his presence was constantly felt in all aspects.

Participant 16 continued, “Mr. Turner [was] always there. I don’t mean presently there; I mean his presence, though, was always felt.” Participant 28 agreed with this idea in his interview, “Bill Turner was a cheerleader in terms of [servant leadership].” Mr. Turner saw a big future for the program. Participant 21 remembered him saying that the program could “change the world.” Through this one relationship, it seemed as if many participants of the study were impacted in a positive way.

The role of the servant leadership faculty was repeatedly discussed in the various sessions. A review of the transcripts showed names of the various faculty members mentioned repeatedly throughout the meetings. The importance of the relationships between the students and the faculty were perceived as integral along with the relationships between the servant leadership faculty and the university administration, faculty, and staff. Even beyond the campus, the relationship with the community was also viewed as critical to the sustainability of the program.

The connection of student to faculty was mentioned often in the alumni focus groups. Many discussed their experience from their initial interview for the scholarship all the way through graduation. Participant 2 mentioned that she “loved everyone that she met at the interview” where she got to meet “people that were key throughout the program.” She continued to share a story about her interview day where Participant 12, the program director, gave her the scarf she was wearing so that no one could see through her dress. It was a rainy day and Participant 2 was wearing a white dress. Participant 2 goes on to say that “she will forever remember” that day. Participant 4, a graduate from the first servant leadership cohort, mentioned that Participant 16 was also similar to

Participant 12. He agreed that what drew him to the program was the people. He said there was a level of importance, “When you got Bill Turner, and you got Participant 16 and you got the people at the Pastoral Institute, you got all these people in the community involved.” Participant 8 discussed Participant 16 and called her a “driving force during the early years of the program.” She was a mentor with an open-door policy who Participant 8 said, as a freshman, was “nice to have on campus.” The faculty themselves also discussed the impact on student relationships. When asked about what brought drew her to the program, Participant 16 said, “I’d say connections with the students.”

The program had a few transitions in faculty over the past 16 years. When Participant 12 was interviewing for her position after Participant 16, she remembered that it was the “people who interviewed me that got me excited because of the way they talked about the program.” While that was a big transition, there were four other transitions in the College and Community Coordinator position. Participant 10 mentioned that the “new faculty really made a big difference for [him]” and he learned the most from the “one-on-one dialogue with [Participant 12] and [Participant 14].” Participant 7 followed up immediately by saying, “If it wasn’t for [Participant 12], I wouldn’t have seen it. She encouraged it all the way.” However, the perceptions shared about the program faculty were not always positive. Participant 9 mentioned a time when she perceived a negative reaction from the faculty. She said, “I know that me and one other student really felt like some of the faculty, if you weren’t coming in right out of high school, happy, we love to do this kind of person, off key, right off the bat, you’re not committed to the program.” This comment was unique in the perceptions provided by the participants and noted as an outlier in the analysis.

The role of the administration, faculty, and staff on the campus of Columbus State University also emerged as a relationship that was important to the participants.

Participant 16 recalled the very beginning of the program in faculty focus group. “Then Participant 18 was – that’s the only kinda leadership he understood, too. That’s the only kind he knew. It would fit perfectly with his particular style.” Participant 17 followed with, “It wouldn’t have worked if we all didn’t have good relationships with one another and Dr. Brown and Participant 28. Yeah, it wouldn’t have worked.” Participant 28 from the Pastoral Institute mentioned this relationship by saying he was “fortunate enough that Participant 18 and I were part of this as the leaders of our two organizations in the beginning.” Participant 21 was a member of the administrative staff when the program began. She commented that she “was very impressed with the design of the program. Participant 16 and our faculty worked together to build the program.” She stated, “I think having a President like Participant 18, who is a true embodiment of the Servant Leader, made this just the perfect place.” Participant 21 went on to talk about Participant 19 and his role as a faculty member on campus during the startup of the program. Her thoughts were:

Participant 19 just, he was a true, a faculty member in the best sense of the word. Both of these men [Stanton and Brown] are just great individuals who put the good of the organization and the community above their own personal ambition or advancement. I can’t help but think that they helped shaped the environment of this University to be a Servant Leadership beacon.

The comments provided by the focus group participants highlighted the role of campus faculty, administration and staff, and further review also indicated a connection to the community, as well.

The community connection emerged in multiple discussions including the community focus group. As Participant 18 pointed out in his focus group, “Our city is known as a servant leadership city. Maybe even the servant leadership city, in terms of community.” Participant 15 stated, “If you think how it all started, for the fact that the Pastoral Institute and a public university could even kick this off in the first place – only in Columbus, Georgia.” Even more, there is a strong relationship between the community and the university. Participant 19 pointed out that the “institution is so enmeshed in this community and this community is so proud of this institution.” Participant 22, from the community group, commented that she noticed this relationship at the appreciation luncheon she attended. She noted, “I just sat there and listened to student after student after student stand up and talk about the program and [Participant 14] and [Participant 12] and the community, what – they sense what they’re a part of.” Participant 26 also commented that the faculty’s relationship with the community is unique, “I mean the faculty is great. It’s just a great marriage between organizations.” The Pastoral Institute interviewee recalled this value, as well. Participant 28 said, “I happened to be fortunate enough to be part of that establishment with Dr. Frank Brown, Mr. Bill Turner, Wayne Anthony, Cindy Sparks, and others in this community, and the Pastoral Institute and Columbus State University and the community co-established this program as collaborative partners.” Participant 12 continued the idea of important of the relationships

when she said, “I would also say that the relationship with people in the community is an unanticipated and unexpected, huge benefit of this program.”

These connections to people were key in many of the discussions about the program. According to Participant 12, “I think that’s what the program boils down to.” The impact of relationships between all of the participants surfaced throughout the study. This category had multiple themes, but relational importance was seen as a common thread when asked the protocol questions.

### **Overarching Program Aspects**

The participants of the study shared common overarching aspects about the program. The most collectively shared was the concept of servant leadership as a philosophy being something that was already known only in parts, but not as a whole. Being a part of the program allowed people to put a name to the characteristics they already shared. Participant 16 explained that when she was asked to develop a servant leadership program, she had “never heard of the body of literature, that is was an area of study currently in the secular world.” She actually discovered servant leadership, the term, afterwards, but she realized that she “grew up knowing [it] was the only thing – only way to define leadership.” Participant 1, an alumni of the program, explained that he “grew up with that philosophy, but I didn’t know what it was called.” Participant 3 and Participant 5 agreed with on this point saying that they grew up knowing the importance of volunteering and giving back but did not know there was a specific phrase to explain the leadership principle. Participant 10 also agreed with this concept in his focus group session when he stated, “I think I was practicing it, but I wasn’t identifying it, like I’ve learned to do now.” The concept of attaching a name to a set of characteristics also

surfaced in the community focus group with Participant 23 explaining, “I just felt there was a natural connection. It was just putting a name on something that really was already there.”

This philosophy of servant leadership being attractive to the participants once they were able to put a label on the characteristics also impacted the campus as a whole. Participant 20, former university President, talked more about implementing servant leadership as a core value of the university. Anyone who researches the campus will see servant leadership on the list, and this addition was ratified during his presidency. He noted that this decision was also followed by the endorsement of the graduate program in the Turner College of Business with the servant leadership track. The University chose to attach a name to a concept that was growing in popularity. Participant 10 explained this through a story about going to an interview for post-graduate work. He said, “I am going to these places, and they’re like these are our core values, and I was like perfect, that was this program’s core values.” Participant 12 touched on this in her focus group. When talking about those core values, she said:

I think those core values are there so if somebody who graduated in the very first class was havin’ a conversation with one of our freshmen, they will still have shared experiences that I think haven’t changed over time. They may be tweaked a little here and there, but they would have the vocabulary and the experience to share, even though they may have been in school 10 years apart, or they could even be in school 15 years apart now.

It was this idea of the core values that lead to deeper discussion on the multifaceted nature of the program.

The Servant Leadership Program brings many concepts together into one opportunity for students. Participant 17 explained, “Just havin’ a multifaceted program to just kinda come alongside you during those four years knowing that [it] potentially has the impact of really changin’ the trajectory of your life.” The concept of scaffolding was discussed as an important theory for the program. The faculty discussed that this word explains how when a building is going up, there is scaffolding around it. The building is worked on for the four years and when a student is a senior, the scaffolding is taken away. The faculty exchanged thoughts on this explicitly, which the other groups talked more about this idea more indirectly.

A concept mentioned throughout the sessions was the blend of an academic component and community involvement. Participant 14 described the combination as similar to a student taking a Biology class with a lab. “We do the academics and then on the community side, that’s your lab. I think that does add a ton of legitimacy to our program, and that it’s comprehensive. We’re not just volunteer-based. We’re not just academic. It is the blending of those two.” It is in this blending that, according to Participant 25, students are taught to think proactively about the community. This viewpoint is what has “encouraged me more than anything” said Participant 25. She also mentioned that the students she encountered were taught to ask, “What do you need? What is it that we can provide for you?” instead of, “Let me fix this.” They learn to put themselves on the same level as those they help in the community, not above like some volunteers do.

The program had also blended the inward training of the students with the outward reach into the community. Participant 23 indicated the importance of this

connection. The program “just has so much expertise in the area, so much more than I could ever have to instill to a student.” The role of the university has been to share this knowledge and Participant 23 continued that “CSU has grown into such a great program, and they can help the rest of the community get servant leadership out there.” The alumni also agreed on this perception. Participant 10 acknowledged that “seeing a need in a community and recognizing I have the means to do something about this, and therefore, it’s my responsibility and my duty to do it, if I can do it well.” This interaction between the curriculum and the hands-on learning emerged as a theme for the overall perceptions of the program.

An overarching program characteristic that arose out of the focus groups discussion was the culture of the program. There was a sense of camaraderie in the program that was mentioned often. Participant 21 mentioned that the diversity of students led to this being “such a wonderful opportunity.” The alumni also discussed this when Participant 9 said, “It’s such a diverse group of people. You come in and realize that there are other people who can have the heart of service that we all share.” Participant 8 agreed and followed up with, “I think the other thing is just having a sense of community.” The program encouraged this cohesion, and Participant 9 explained that it is “the way the upperclassmen in the program treat the younger classmen, too, that’s really helpful.” She went on to say, “This thing we shared that other kids on campus didn’t share. It was just our thing.” The community focus group pointed out that allowing anyone to join the program is a positive aspect. “It’s still open to anybody who has a heart for it. Those kids who apply who don’t get it still have the opportunity to be involved in Servant Leadership.” Participant 9 mentioned, “You never know who was scholarship and

associate. It was just like we were all in Servant Leadership.” Even though a sense of camaraderie emerged, there was a shared concern about the students who left or were removed from the program.

There was an overall disappointment among the groups when discussing when students left or when a certain class did not remain the same size from the beginning. Participant 10 explained that he “lost so much of my class. I started off as a regular-size class. Then, by the end of it, there was what, four of us that were from the original class, and then the rest of it were people who came in halfway.” Participant 9 immediately followed up with, “My first class with y’all was the semester that a whole bunch of people started dropping like flies.” As the discussion continued, Participant 10 mentioned that he felt the issue was the initial reason for joining the program being the money. “I think they were in it, at least in my initial class, for the scholarship, and they couldn’t really care what type of program it was.” The second alumni focus group also discussed the attrition rate. Participant 4 said, “I wanna say half of [my class] dropped out of the program along the way.” Courtney agreed that her class “started out with 16, and six of the original 16 graduated with me.”

The idea of students leaving the program also emerged in the faculty and Pastoral Institute interviews. Participant 28 discussed this as one of the things that has disappointed him about the program. He said he didn’t realize that “you were gonna lose half of them in the process.” His expectations were that the program would consistently graduate the same students who entered as freshmen. The faculty considered this and also expressed disappointment. Participant 15 explained that they had to “remove a student from the program, and that was really difficult.” Participant 16 followed that comment

with, “Some of them removed themselves. I remember a very talented young girl, young lady, who took a job as a waitress and then they wanted to promote her to be a manager of the restaurant, and she took that instead of school... You hate for those folks who didn’t see the long-term benefits of the opportunity.” While student retention was not a specific question in the group, the discussions emerged when asked what reduced a participants’ enthusiasm for the servant leadership program.

One area of caution that emerged as a theme with this category was the religious perceptions of the program. There was dialogue around the idea that servant leadership was deemed a religious philosophy so therefore the program was religious based. Participant 15 explained this in her comments when she said, “I do think that the partnership with the Pastoral Institute certainly gives that impression.” Because the Pastoral Institute is a spiritually based community resource, there is often an association made. Participant 15 went on to say, “It’s certainly part of a lot of our students’ personal experience, but it’s not a defined part of the program by any means.” Participant 12 shared the story of a student asking her if she was a Christian at her interview for the director position. She was taken aback, but also recalled having a heated discussion with another faculty member. “I think it has been one of the biggest challenges to this is that I think students – some students outside the program think of this as being a Christian-only program.” Participant 20 also agreed with a sense of warning that the program needs to be overly cautious about any religious overtones connected to the program.

This theme continued with Participant 18 clarifying that the religious concern was a hurdle to starting the program on campus. He stated that there was not a lot of support on campus from faculty. He explained, “They didn’t understand what was going on with

it.” To counter this pushback, he enlisted the help of Participant 19 from the Biology Department, and because of Participant 19’s leadership, the faculty grew to a better understanding of the philosophy and the program. Participant 19 recalled this issue and remembered only one distinct example during his last years on campus. A group of Servant Leadership Program students decided to confront another student about her beliefs and in Participant 19’s words, they were being “unfair to her.” Participant 19 said the issue was handled without a conflict, but it was an example of this perception. Participant 21 also noted that some faculty were taken aback by the phrase “servant leadership” because the racial implications surrounding the word “servant” in the south, but she said people realized that it was actually a different meaning for the word. In her words, “This was pretty quickly resolved.” This perception did not emerge from the alumni sessions but was a prevalent theme in the two focus groups mentioned above.

## **Research Question 2**

*To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program? One main category emerged to address this question. The category was overarching program aspects. Within this category, specific themes are addressed in the focus groups and interviews.*

## **Overarching Program Aspects**

Various themes resulted in a review of the overarching program aspect category. A common thread in the conversations was the sense of journey with the students. Participant 12 used those actual words when describing her work in the program. “That fact that it was four years and you had the same students – you got to journey with them

for four years.” Fran also added, “One of the things was that I think the four years of college are such a key time in the life of an individual, is such a time of growth and development. There was really an opportunity to potentially changing the trajectory of your life.” Participant 16 spoke specifically of a student named “Max” who volunteered at a local elementary school. She said he was a technology whiz and all the teachers would love to see him at the school because he would help them. She said, “It changed him. I think it changed everything about him, and he did go to med school.” Participant 14 shared a story of a student who told her, “Nursing school taught me to be a nurse. Servant Leadership taught me how to be a good nurse.”

Other groups spoke of this journey, as well. Participant 28 talked about watching the students go through the program and ultimately decide to go into nursing, teaching or non-profit jobs. He commented, “It was interesting to watch the process.” He would provide feed back on the self-assessments provided by the program through his work at the Pastoral Institute. He told of students who would “come back the next year talking about the insights they had gained from the past year.” Some students were even pointed in the right direction in terms of counseling needs. Participant 28 provided multiple Counseling Center referrals in order to get them help with various needs. Through the self-assessments and the help provided by the faculty and staff, students themselves saw the personal growth. Participant 5 mentioned, “One of the things for me in the program that I think was the most beneficial, looking back, was the amount of program focus on kind of personal growth.” Participant 2 agreed and added, “It definitely taught me to take that approach of learning to do it myself.”

In the administrators' session, Participant 19 told the story of "Mary" who was the president of a student organization for whom Participant 19 was the advisor. He said he clearly remembers the day Mary invited a guest speaker to the club meeting. With Mary in charge, "everything just went the way I would have expected a faculty member to run a meeting and not all would have." Through this story, he highlighted the organizational and leadership skills the students were exhibiting on campus. The community group also saw this growth. Participant 23 commented, "I think that's just a continuing thing with servant leadership is it's really a growth of the teachers and the students." This sense of growth was seen with all participants of the program, not just the students enrolled, but Participant 25 discussed that the program students she has worked with were just different. "I mean there's just a little bit of a difference between these groups of college-aged kids that you see versus other ones that you interact with." She summed it up with the phrase, "Point 'em in the right direction and get outta the way." Participant 22 shared a personal story that summed up the growth she has witnessed from the program:

He was one of the original students to go through the scholarship program. I remember thinking he was doing it for the wrong reasons. It was nice little chuck a change as far as a scholarship. It was gonna help him get another degree that he really wanted type thing. I just remember thinking that he had applied for it and he'd gotten the scholarship, but it's for the wrong reasons. Then, listening to the requirements, what the program made him do to hit the markers, I saw a transformation of him becoming more of a servant leader. Even though I really, and again that's just personal judgment, but because the requirements are in place, it does make them be in a position of service. Then with the other training that's

provided, there is that insight and that self-reflection and why are you doing what you're doing and what's the payoff for you. I think when he really started getting into the service for the right reasons I saw a transformation in him. I'm just not sure that would've happened if the requirements were not in place.

You're gonna have the kids come into it wanting to do the right thing for the right reasons, but then you're gonna have those that get into your program, if you don't have the requirements laid out hard and fast, they're gonna skate through around—I mean that's just human nature, on the edges of it. The requirements force them to hit the markers, but then the way you support them and then what you're doing, the other training, to me that's that transformation.

That's when you put the service and the leadership together. We're not just checking boxes for volunteers in the community. I mean, honestly, anybody could do that. That's not our goal. It's not the philosophy. That's not what you're trying to instill. I think the parameters have to be there and then the program supports to put that all together.

This personal growth seen throughout participants' connection to the Servant Leadership Program was highlighted in a variety of comments and stories. Another point made regarding growth was the change in college major by students.

One specific story told by Participant 6 in one of the alumni focus groups emphasized her own growth from being in the program. She spoke about listening to Mr. Turner speak to her class about his life experiences. She went home and immediately began writing a journal about the meeting with him. While she felt great pressure from her parents to go to medical school, she also knew that she had a great passion for

children. It was that day that she realized that she didn't want to be a pediatrician. Instead, she wanted to teach. "I remember speaking with him and listening to him talk about it. I was like I already know what my passion is. I'm sorry, parents, but no, that's just not for me." She changed her major and has now been teaching for 13 years. Participant 28 mentioned this in his interview when he spoke about the self-assessment he would conduct with the students. He said that many times they would look at the results of their profiles and realize that their current major did not fit what their strengths or what they really wanted to do. He added, "About 75 percent of them probably shifted their major, and I think moved to a better fit that helped them to be, I think, a better students in terms of the process." These shifts in majors were noted as a by-product of program components that will be discussed under Research Question 3, but emerged as a measure of growth by participant, as well as the honing of certain skill sets.

Many alumni in the study perceived growth as result of their participating in the program. Participant 4 noted that a general takeaway for her was "dealing with people. There's so many specific details from the program that I could mention, but that's just kind of a general thing. It's helped me so much in work and boards I'm on and community stuff." When asked by Participant 1 if she meant how to communicate with people, she answered, "Yeah, how to communicate, how to deal with difficult situations." Later in the session, the topic resurfaced, and the group discussed the skills they learned from community work. They mentioned digging holes, laying shingles, preparing meals, which are what this group referred to as "life skills." Participant 1 expanded the discussion to his current career. He stated, "I feel very fortunate to have been as successful as I have been in a very short amount of time. I attribute a lot of that to what I

learned in the program. I'm not just sayin' that big cliché. That program, I think, gave me the skillset that I needed to do that." Participant 5 followed up by saying, "I'll echo that. I'm a manager now and I've got four direct reports. All the stuff that my boss talks about with empathy and managing and training and all that kinda stuff that I'm supposedly good at, I mean, I can point pretty directly to things that we approached in the program that kinda fed those skills."

In addition to these statements, the groups also highlighted other skills learned from the program, such as interview skills. Participant 9, Participant 7, Participant 10 and Participant 8 all attribute feeling comfortable in a job interview or even obtaining employment to their participation in the program. Participant 10 stated, "I have the program to thank for my current job." Participant 8 commented that the program makes students "very marketable." This exposure to these skills through program experiences gave Participant 7 confidence in her interview for an RN position at a hospital. She explained that it was a panel interview, and she just tried to "pull something from Servant Leadership that I learned" because she knew it would be the right answer. Participant 21 echoed these thoughts and stories in her interview. She stated, "We had students who had been in the program and they were carefully selected by whoever was the Director [at that time]. They were powerful spokespersons for the program. A lot of them I've followed over the years and know where they are now in their careers, and they're all doing really well." Participant 28 agreed and felt that the key was:

We are empowering students to rethink their perspective on life, that offers them a different way of thinking in terms of giving back and empowering the least of these in terms of some of the kids they mentor and supervise and work in the non-

profits of these organizations. In the process, they got it. The energy that came out of that and in that philosophy, no matter where they went, whether they became a physician or a plumber or a TSYS employee, they got a part of that with them, and they've got a balance.

Throughout the study, participants spoke of various ways they perceived growth as a part of the Servant Leadership Program. In the journey of the four years in the program, participants learned about themselves and the community. Some even shifted career goals by changing majors due to finding out more about themselves and their strengths and interests. Others gained skills sets that launched them into successful careers and community work. The perception data collected showed the extent to which growth was perceived, and also the specific program components that led to that growth.

### **Research Question 3**

*What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?*

There was one main category emerged to address this question. The category was specific program components. Within this category, specific themes are addressed in the focus groups and interviews.

### **Specific Program Components**

The Servant Leadership Program is comprised of many different components that were discussed throughout the study. Participant 16, the original director, spoke about building the program. "It has every one of these components. There should be mentoring. There should be some kind of service. There should be opportunities for hands-on

learning, and there should be a strong academic component.” Participant 21 also spoke of these program fundamentals. “Our faculty worked together to build into the program the hours of community service, and combined that with: the academic study of leadership; the recruitment and selection process of the students who were in the program; the business leadership in the community.” There four components of the program that emerged as aspects that lead to participant growth: mentoring, community placements, senior project, and academic exposure.

Each session during the study mentioned mentoring in some way. There was an overall importance placed on this component of the program by the data collected. In the administration focus group, Participant 19 explained that he would run into people in the community, “people I didn’t even know – or I was just meeting them, ‘Oh, I worked with your student.’ I think they looked forward to that weekly or whatever it was, meeting when they got to be with this young person who was so excited about what they were doing.” Participant 18 agreed and expounded on that thought:

It was not uncommon to bump into some of the captains of industry in Columbus out and about town who had been a mentor, agreed to be a mentor to one of our students and have them just burn your ear off for ten minutes or so about what a great kid, what an outstanding student, and expressing great admiration for the servant leadership program and concept.

The faculty also echoed these thoughts. Participant 15 talked about mentoring in her comments about the program starting up. “The mentoring was so big for us.”

One change Participant 12 made in her role as director was to bring in faculty as mentor, not just community people. She also changed the name from a Mentor to a Dialogue Partner. Participant 17 spoke about this change in her focus group:

The mentoring piece in the early days was very challenging because we were getting some pretty clear directives, maybe, from Mr. Turner. I guess freshman year they did this, sophomore year they did this. I do remember the partnership with the W.C. Bradley Company was challenging because most of our students were not necessarily gonna work at the W.C. Bradley Company, and we have a higher percentage of females in our program. They had a higher percentage of men. Just tryin' to figure out that whole mentoring piece. Then, I don't remember what year it was, but at some point, we had a—we got permission to tweak it. I think once we went to the conversation partners or dialogue partners, we made some pretty big changes. Participant 12, I guess you were here. Anyway, I remember us havin' a meeting at Pastoral Institute and probably putting together some tweaks that made that work a lot better. I think, yeah, we changed the name of it. I think there was some issues inherent with even the word mentoring. Like, I know something, I'm teaching you something, when sometimes our mentors didn't—our students knew more about servant leadership than our mentors did. That would probably be a challenge in the structure of the program and what we were doing.

Rob, a long-time Mentor/Dialogue Partner in his session, noted this change. He stated, “I first got involved with the program when it was less dialogue partner and more of a mentoring type relationship. I was a little bit repetitious at the end of course

questionnaires.” He later said, “In the mentoring phase of the program, it was pretty much like I was pushing the student to sit and meet the requirements of the program.” He explained that now, he doesn’t have that same feeling. Students have been calling and reaching out to him first to set up a meeting. Participant 22 and Participant 26 both mentioned that students whose schedules were very busy or students who were “not as focused on meeting the requirements, of fulfilling their obligations to the program” were somewhat negative. However, they both agreed that the program was overall “very encouraging.”

From an alumni standpoint, the mentoring piece was a key part of the program. Participant 1 started the discussion by saying, “I’m gonna have a great mentoring aspect to the program. That was huge. To have somebody in the community that you can connect with, that I – these guys were leaders in business already, something I aspired to be.” Participant 9 described her experience with her dialogue partner as wonderful. Although they did not have same interest in terms of career, “it was like we connected on tons of things.” However, Participant 9 did not feel that the partnership did not move her forward with towards what she wanted to do after college. Participant 10 mentioned having the same feeling. “I think I would’ve benefited more, had my community dialogue partner been roughly in the same sort of area that I was pursuing.” After some additional conversation, Participant 10 added, “I definitely think that that’s a critical class, where, if someone gets the wrong match, the semester feels like a waste.”

There were many facets of the mentoring component of the program. Not only were students assigned Mentors or Dialogue Partners, but they also mentored younger students. Participant 15 and Participant 1, in their respective focus groups, told a story of

an elementary-aged boy whom Participant 1 was mentoring. The little boy ended up drowning in the river, and Participant 1 remembered thinking “you never know what’s gonna happen in life and what kinda impact just in that short kid’s period of time where just reading with him and spending time with him, and what kinda impact you might have made.” He added, “I might be just kinda this immature kid, but I can make a difference in somebody’s life.” Participant 15 remembered, “Just watching that student grow from that tragedy and taking such a strong leadership position was really amazing.” Not only did students mentor elementary-aged students, they also mentored each other.

The concept of a senior mentoring other students in the program emerged from the alumni focus groups. Participant 5 spoke about this experience, “The seniors mentored a group of freshmen. The growth of those, not having younger siblings, myself, was one of the first times when you had somebody kind of looking up to you for advice.” He continued later saying, “Again, you’re a 20-year-old, and most college students’ concerns are not being a good example and offering advice to these folks. That was such an important experience to be in at that time in my life. That was a huge takeaway from the program.” When asked what aspects of the program increased her enthusiasm for servant leadership, Participant 11 answered, “I think for me, it was actually at the freshman retreat when I was a senior mentor. For that, it feels like everything just came together.” These experiences along with community placements stood out as contributors to participant growth.

Students’ placement in the community is a main part of the Servant Leadership Program. This component emerged from the discussions in the alumni focus groups. Participant 1 talked about his volunteer work with Girls, Inc. “I was trying to figure out

how we were going to interrelate with these girls, but a lot of them didn't have fathers and so forth. We were able to go and be coaches, basically.” He went on to describe seeing one of the girls much later working in the community. “Just watching somebody that come from that background and now they're kind of flourishing as a citizen in the community – just another impact.” Participant 2 also discussed her work with Habitat for Humanity. “I went to Habitat for like six hours every Saturday for several weeks just to get my hours done. Well, then in came time for the house dedication. I realized one of the ladies who had been there working with us every week, alongside of us, it was her house. She was completely overjoyed.” Later, Participant 2 stated, “I don't have a lot of money to give other people, but if I can share my time and I can live – if I can help them make their world better with my six hours – my little time that I have, that's worth it.”

Participant 3 shared experience with the Ronald McDonald House. She had a specific story about a family losing their son to cancer during her time volunteering there. “The exposure of servant leadership is that element that it's putting you out of your comfort zone to really see the needs of other people that you wouldn't otherwise be exposed to.” Participant 4, who is now a labor and delivery nurse, continued this train of thought during the session. She talked about working at the Neonatal ICU at Columbus Regional Hospital. “My main role there was to do laundry. I never realized how important that was until I see it now. It's important to give back in the smallest way possible.” Participant 11 brought up how her volunteer work was “tailored really good to me. I used to teach dance, and then instead of getting paid for it, actually did it as a volunteer thing. That was really neat, because I was really struggling about not having dance in my life.”

The conversation eventually turned to how the work in the community while in the program helped the participants in their current roles. Participant 1 talked about his work with the American Cancer Society. He serving on the Board and chairing a major fundraiser. “You learn so much from situations like that, because I deal with that in work now where you feel like – even volunteer work.” Participant 8 also shared a similar story of how his work with Habitat came full circle after becoming a police officer. He was called to one of the Habitat Houses that he worked on during his time in the program. It was a burglary and theft case, and the women who the house was originally built for still lived there, and Participant 8 introduced himself. He was eventually able to find the person who broke into the home and prosecute them. He commented that it was all “really full circle.”

While the discussion on community placements was mostly positive, there were a few discussions about the challenges. Participant 13 in the faculty focus group said, “I think being over the community engagement component sometimes a challenge is balancing the requirements of the program with a positive or a worthwhile experience.” She goes on to explain that it was difficult at times, “Really trying to put arms around something that’s so experience-based while maintaining a structure that you can have a lens through every student.” There were also some discussions around specific agencies such as PAWS and a local hospital that were mentioned as not worthwhile placements. Another viewpoint shared was that sometimes the students would get confused with other people doing community service as court-ordered volunteering. Participant 10 explained that it was “definitely a learning experience as to the privileged life of community service that I was doing at PAWS, which was entering donation amounts into a computer, versus

going and actually doing what I would consider community service for them.” The placements students have while in the program lead to a capstone experience in their senior year, which is a different project each year.

The Senior Project was discussed in three of the five data group for the study. Participant 18 in the administrative group commented on how “the projects they chose were appealing projects. They were projects which truly helped others and gave people a chance to feel good about themselves because of their participation.” The projects were chosen by the students to meet a specific need in the community. Participant 25 and Participant 24 from Truth Spring Academy shared:

We have a unique experience perhaps in that we’ve had two years now to work with senior project. In 2010, I really didn’t know there was a program. When we heard about this, it was beginning to kickoff and we were going to partner with Servant Leadership CSU, and it was a great experience that year going into 2011 for that senior year for everyone. It was a learning experience for all and a learning experience to where everyone was really likeminded. I appreciated that. Now, fast forwarding to the present day and working with this class, the momentum is just really excelled. I mean I think the class is just more mobilized. They really have a lot of ownership in servant leadership. Not to say that 2011 didn’t, but you can just see the growth and the maturity that has come about in the last four years. I think that’s really attractive. That it’s not just about going and quote/unquote serving, but that it’s about really cultivating servant leadership and that’s been evident from looking at two different instances.

This perspective highlighted the impact of the project on an agency, but the impact on students was also discussed in the alumni focus groups. Participant 5 painted a picture of his senior project at a local nursing home. His class fundraised and installed a garden at the home for the residents. He remembered how they were “excited to have them there, to have the garden and have a place to go outside that was a little bit nicer to sit, talk.” He went on to talk about the personal growth of the project. “I think, like everybody’s touched on, being able to funnel that into, man, their value of making other people’s lives better is just a great thing to have come away from the program with.” Participant 10 commented, “Senior project is a lesson in project management that most people don’t get until further along in their careers.” These lessons were mostly positive, but there were challenges around the projects.

Participant 2 explained that her class built the playground, and she explained, “It brings tears to my eyes talking to my students about it and getting to now see it to fruition.” She explained that it was a tough road getting to the final day. The project took a long time, and as she explained it, “We got stuck with fundraising.” The class had trouble getting everyone to get the same level of commitment. She described, “In the trenches of that senior project, it was a really rough year. It was a difficult experience for us. I don’t feel like it was as positive as it has been in other years.” As Participant 10 clarified in his group, “It really does help you be able to approach a problem and be like okay, these are the steps you have to take, addressing everyone’s capabilities to actually get it done, and then arranging your task base on that.” Each experience with the project was different and individualized, but the senior project surfaced as a project aspect for participant growth.

The third program aspect that emerged from the discussions was the self-awareness component. Participant 28 touched on this in his interview. When asked about what drew him to the philosophy of servant leadership, he said, “I think to be a servant leader requires a level of self-awareness that the average American is not really carrying in today’s world, and we work to help the students develop that sense of what their gifts were and how they could best use those.” The self-awareness tools the program used and still uses are the California Psychological Inventory, StrengthsQuest, and Leadership Profile Inventory, with Myers-Briggs and Emergenetics standing out the most to the students. Participant 5 spoke about Emergenetics as “one of the most enlightening moments” he had in the program. He explained that he “got this piece of paper that says I’m really conceptual and I’m not very structural. I went, of course! I’m not structural.” Participant 2 agreed with Participant 5 saying, “Having that personal awareness piece is just not something that most people get in just the everyday average college classroom.”

Participant 10 and Participant 8 shared the same thoughts on the self-awareness piece in their focus group. Participant 10 said, “The aspect of the program that I got the most out of was the personality profiling that we did. Self-improvement is a really big thing for me, so this was a way for me to find out this is how I function.” Participant 8 piggybacked on that comment with, “The personality profile was huge. When I did the profile I was an introvert. Now, most people that meet me, when I tell them that I scale as an introvert, they’re like, ‘There’s no way. There’s no way. You’re extraverted.’ You learn how to deal with it. You learn how to work through it.” It was through the Myers-Briggs that Participant 8 realized that he could work on his fear of public speaking. This

skill was learned through the different servant leadership or LEAD courses the students experiences in the program.

The academic aspect of the program materialized from the focus groups as leading to participant growth. The faculty discussed this in their session with Participant 17 mentioning the use of journals. “I really enjoyed reading the journals...because the journals were supposed to integrate the things they were doing with the program and how that was affecting them. I loved hearing how the experiences that we were providing, how they were impacting and how those were being internally processed in a positive way for our students.” But on the opposing viewpoint, not every participant enjoyed journaling. Participant 1 commented, “Journaling, I mean, that’s not something I enjoy doing.” This comment received laughter and positive headshaking from the group. However, Participant 4 also received agreement from the group when she added, “Certainly, looking back on it, I see the value of whatever it was.”

Participant 4 also connected with the classes, as well. “I would definitely say the people, but also just the curriculum. The class we took when – I actually met with [Participant 12] before I applied for the program and she explained the classwork that I would have – would go along with it. I just thought that would be so cool to have – to be able to be in a class with all these people that wanted to learn.” Participant 6 talked about her academic experiences, as well. “Academics is definitely a strength for me. I was able to take the academic stuff, and then switch it around and write a curriculum that teaches those academic things to that younger age group.” Other specific academic ideas that were shared in the focus groups were Stephen Covey information, the inverted pyramid information, and the concept of six people in every conversation.

One point that Tr Participant 10 avis brought up that was a negative experience around the academic component was the use of independent study courses. Due to scheduling reasons, some students take an independent study course instead of being in the classroom with his or her cohort. Participant 10 pointed out that this is a “really challenging program, and the part of it that makes it challenging is working with others to learn how to be part of a cohesive unit.” Participant 7, who had to take these types of independent study courses, agreed with Participant 10. She explained that she “felt like an outsider a lot of the time. That would be the hard part for me.” This lack of connection to the other students was seen as a negative for the students.

### **Summary of Findings**

Perception data as reported by the participants helped reach conclusions to the three research questions. Three main categories resulted in a wide variety of themes under each question. The first, main research question addressed the overall perceptions about the program from the participants’ point of view. Relationship building within the program and outside of the program was one category with themes emerging such as relationships on campus and in the community. Overarching program aspects such as sense of journey, personal growth, and building skill sets for success fell under the main research question, as well. The secondary questions were answered using the categories of overarching program aspects and specific program components. Themes developed under each category for the individual questions. Perception data from the focus groups and interviews provided examples for each category and theme. A great deal of information was collected from the participants and each focus group provided an in-depth look into the participants’ experiences with the program.

## **Summary**

The data collected from the study was collected through a variety of sources. An analysis of the survey data gathered from the past 16 years showed no significant change over six areas. These results led the researcher to develop a protocol for the focus groups and interviews. Invitations were emailed to participants for each data set and follow up emails were sent to those who responded. Focus groups were scheduled accordingly with interviews scheduled on an as needed basis. Once the data was transcribed, participants were offered the opportunity to member check the data with no one adding any additional information. The researcher then read through each session multiple times using a system of highlight colors for each category. During the actual data analysis, themes were pulled using another system of color-coding and each research question was correlated to the category and themes. The information offered an opportunity to examine the program and offer implications for program improvement and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

## **Introduction**

The researcher proposed to examine program characteristics and data for the first time since its inception. The experiences of the stakeholders involved with Columbus State's program provided the basis for the phenomenological study. There has not been an examination of the program from implementation to current time, 2015. The main research question guiding the research throughout this study was: What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program? Two additional questions helped direct the analysis: (1) To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program? (2) What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants? Data collected by the researcher added to the existing body of research for servant leadership, and those interested in developing university-level servant leadership programs.

## **Summary of the Study**

Research regarding servant leadership on university campuses has shown that a greater knowledge and experience with leadership development equaled a higher level of engagement (Bommarito, 2012). There is also statistically significant evidence that servant leadership is at work on the university campuses that were studied (Farris, 2010). Research also shows that participating in service during undergraduate years substantially enhances academic development and civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998). Hence, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the Columbus State University's Servant Leadership Program in terms of overall perceptions and perceived growth by participants of the program.

## Conclusions

There were three general findings of this study that contribute to the current literature on servant leadership: 1) The relationships and personal connections to people in the program, on the campus, and in the community were strongly perceived as important to the program; 2) Certain overarching program aspects lead to participant growth; 3) Specific overall program components were indicators of growth as reported by participants in the study.

### Survey

The data gathered from program evaluations from the past 16 years show little in terms of change in student satisfaction in the program. The satisfaction rates are well above the “good” mark in all six areas. The two areas that showed a lower satisfaction rate, at-risk mentoring and community mentor, increased after a two year dip and held steady for the past five years. These two areas have also been adjusted to create better participant experiences in the past two years. The conclusion to be drawn from these averages is that the program is functioning well when looking through the lens of student satisfaction; however, this data does not give any foresight of what could be added to the program that is new or different. These six items have been standard components of the program since inception, but there could be elements used by other universities that would enrich the program experiences to a greater extent. The review of the literature shows a lack of programs that are exactly like the Columbus State program, so the similar components would be difficult to apply without thinking creatively.

## Research Question 1

*What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?* The two main categories exhibited through participant discussions were the value of relationships built in conjunction with the program and the weight attached to certain overarching program aspects. The importance of building relationships emerged as a theme across almost all data sets. This theme is concurrent with other research on the topic (Hayden, 2011). The relationships such as the connection with program co-founder, Mr. Turner, and with faculty members are a foundational piece of the program that has not changed over the past 16 years. The participants from every group mentioned a personal connection that pointed to someone either on campus or in the community (Boyum, 2012). The conclusions to be drawn from this data are that establishing and maintaining the level of personal connections is imperative to the success of the program. Participants want to experience servant leadership through the connections to others (Meyer, 2013).

The study brought to light an important need for community support that was not seen throughout the review of the literature. The statement from Participant 15 of this program only being able to successfully happen in Columbus, Georgia was evident. The community supported and continues to support the program both financially and through human-capital, which has helped maintained the level of student satisfaction over time. Some communities such as the Canadian province of Manitoba implemented a servant leadership approach to educational institutions (Crippen, 2004), but this study was limited to only the K-12 and university systems. There was not the same level of commitment and engagement from the business community as in Columbus. This

combined effort between the university administration and the corporate decision-makers is unique and quite possibly not replicable.

The overarching program aspects such as providing a name to the set of characteristics referred to as “servant leadership” proved to be important to participants. The study participants recognized these characteristics prior to hearing the phrase “servant leadership” (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Laub, 2000). The founding director, Participant 16, was one who mentioned she had “never heard of the body of literature, that was an area of study.” Being involved in the program simply allowed her and others to define and see the characteristics through the lens of a philosophy. This “naming” of servant leadership coincides with the literature reported on creating an instrument to measure the characteristics. Participants who did not have an understanding of the definition learned one through experiences in the program (Laub, 2000); therefore, they were then able to list and measure the traits.

The concept of culture emerged from the focus group discussions and interviews, and seemed to generate a great deal of positive perceptions. The participants mentioned a sense of cohesion within the groups of students enrolled in the program, as well as the faculty and staff. The concept of serving others thereby being a leader is not only taught in the program, but modeled, as well. This “others before self” attitude has been studied in other places besides a university campus as seen in the literature review (Carter & Baghurst, 2013, Farmer, 2009; Farris, 2010). Environments such as restaurants, prisons, and the military showed positive results when adopting a servant leadership culture, so the conclusion would be drawn that a university campus would be no different, especially one that is teaching the actual concept.

An often-discussed issue regarding the program was student retention. In almost every data set, this topic was discussed and debated. Participants expressed frustration with students leaving the program, and class sizes being reduced sometimes by half. It did not seem to be an issue of students not following the rules and requirements of the program, but a broader issue of dissatisfaction. This issue was not seen throughout the review of the literature and the participants of the study were unable to define the issue related to this issue, which would call for further research and study.

The founders of Servant Leadership Program at Columbus State had to break down certain barriers to get the program started and accepted on the campus. One of these was the religious connotation of the philosophy. While the philosophy actually has ties to multiple religions across the globe (Keith, 2012), there is a misconception that it only has roots in Judeo-Christian principles. The administration and faculty groups both mentioned this issue, and the President of the University at the time decided to gain the support of a key department on campus. The current director, Participant 12, mentioned having faculty members become Dialogue Partners in order to engage them in the actual program. By doing this, they could see the program for what it was, not what they assumed. Getting a wide variety of faculty and staff to support the program (Hardagree, 2007; Hays, 2008) initiatives was important in establishing the core values of the university and the program.

The overall perceptions of the current and former participants show both positive and negative experiences. Interpersonal relationship building, servant leadership characteristics, and the unifying culture all correlate to constructive and affirmative components. Participants shared memories and moments of the people they encountered

in the program and the value of those relationships. The participants working toward a common goal with the entire community and being able to use the name “servant leadership” to apply to a set of characteristics emerged as a unique aspect of the program. Two areas that resulted in negative perceptions were student retention and religious misconceptions. These two perceptions require further research and are recommendations outlined below.

## **Research Question 2**

*To what extent did participants perceive growth as a result of the program?*

Participants in the study ranged from all different experiences and backgrounds. The groups were comprised of teachers, healthcare workers, public service workers, former military, and university faculty and staff. These careers fields were all represented in the literature reviews as being careers where servant leadership was implemented with successful results. Participant 8, a police officer, told stories of remembering the lessons learned in the program while working a burglary case, which correlates to the study conducted by Cortrite (2007) where servant leadership reduced workplace negativity by a significant amount. Participant 7 and Participant 4, both registered nurses, also reported a positive impact in the field of healthcare. Participant 7 commented, “The Nursing program taught me to be a nurse. Servant leadership taught me to be a good nurse.” These perceptions connected to a 2015 study where servant leadership led to a more patient-oriented staff (Lambert, 2015).

The community group of participants also reinforced the studies in the literature by discussing the role of servant leadership in their fields. Participant 22, a high school health occupation teacher, stated, “That was a lifelong philosophy I wanted them to have

whether they went into healthcare or not.” Being intentional about incorporating servant leadership characteristics into the classroom has the ability to encourage students to engage in their studies and in their community at a higher level (Crippen, 2004).

Participant 26 touched on the military connection with servant leadership. He explained that he experienced servant leadership while serving his country. “The thought behind that is that you gotta take care of your people because your people are the ones that are putting their life on the lines.” Farmer (2009) studied this connection and found a connection between officer retention and the implementation of these traits. If servant leadership is being found and being successful in the workforce, it only makes sense for a university to be infusing the philosophy into the students it is graduating. It prepares them for a better work environment and to be a better employee.

These direct correlations to previous research provided even stronger reasoning for the inclusion of servant leadership on the university campus. The students communicated a level of growth from the program that related back to their sense of journey within the experiences, personal growth resulting in changing career goals, and an acquisition of skill sets necessary for the workplace. Listening to the former administrators talk about the campus binding together to develop and implement a Servant Leadership Program and servant leadership as a core value of the university is nothing new (Walker, 1997; Bommarito, 2012; Russell, 2013). What separates this program from others is the multifaceted approach with a combination of academics and community involvement. It is this approach that sets the program apart from other similar experiences.

### Research Question 3

*What aspects of the program lead to growth as reported by the participants?* The various components of the program discussed in the focus groups highlighted the aspects that lead to growth. The component most discussed across all data sets was mentoring. The conclusion is that mentoring is an important foundational piece of the program, and it could be argued that it makes the program most unique in its structure. While other programs have similar structures in terms of academics, community service, or scholarships, Columbus State's program is the only one that mentions the utilization of mentoring for student growth. The programs mentioned in the literature review, Seton Hall, McMurry, Emory, and Southern Mississippi, do not capitalize on this seemingly valuable tool. The results showed that this component has been altered slightly through the years to accommodate student and community needs. The greatest change being to customize the partnerships with the dialogue partners so that common career goals are shared. While the concept is still mentoring, the purpose is more to partner than to mentor. This component should be customized to fit both the student and the community member so that both see marked growth and fulfillment from the process.

Community placements were another aspect that arose often during the conversations. Alumni mentioned specific placements that were more engaging than others; however, the conclusion drawn by the researcher is this process is very individualized. While some participants mentioned having unfulfilling experiences with certain agencies, others expressed a very meaningful one at the same organization. Like the mentoring component, the placements with the agencies should be carefully developed and well-thought out. However, this community involvement was repeatedly discussed as a valuable, important tool for growth in participants. As Participant 14

mentioned, this involvement is the students' lab experience and should be just as robust as the academic coursework. Other programs in the review of the literature share this aspect of the program; however, the parameters of the CSU program seem to outweigh the others in terms of requirements and structure.

Having a capstone experience for students in the program is not unusual. McMurry University's program shares this component with the Columbus State Program ("Servant Leadership Program", n.d.). Utilizing prior experience to implement the learning outcomes is a foundational component of many good programs. The Senior Project in the Servant Leadership Program offers students the ability to put what they have learned into practice. While the project was not a major topic of discussion in all groups, the alumni groups did use this as a talking point for positive experiences with the concept of servant leadership. Most discussed their project with great pride. However, there was a conversation around the very large project that involved a great deal of fundraising. While the Senior Project can add value to a student's experience and give hands-on experience with concepts like teamwork and project management, this conversation brought up the stress of fundraising for a project. The scale of the project is a key factor along with student engagement in the project. Others in the focus group did not mention the same level of stress, so each project is unique, just as the class who was working on it.

Self-awareness was mentioned as an important way for students to relate to the principles of servant leadership (Keith, 2012). The various types of self-awareness profiles used in the program were mentioned as memorable and having long lasting impact on growth. A continued focus on these tools within the framework of the servant

leadership curriculum would continue to promote student growth. While other programs might employ the use of these tools, the CSU program goes beyond simple classroom activities to make a financial investment in each participant. This investment goes beyond just the students' time on campus into their careers and future plans. There were no negative perceptions from the use of self-awareness instruments into the program, and even years after graduation, alumni used the language of the tools in the discussions. The ability to recall the details of these assessments showed the lasting impression of the component.

The academic courses are where the characteristics of servant leadership are taught. Without the academic component, the community involvement would be the same as other programs with simple or basic service requirements. The combination of academics and service brings a unique opportunity for students to have hands-on experiences alongside classroom assignments for reflection. Continuing to examine the curriculum to maintain a strong connection between these two components is required for continued sustainability (Bommarito, 2012). However, careful consideration about the differentiation of the curriculum is important to ensure all learners reflect appropriately. Additionally, the subject of independent study courses arose, with negative perceptions surrounding students whose schedules will not allow for the traditional courses. While independent study courses provide an opportunity for the individual to still experience the curriculum, they can cause a loss of the sense of community that many of the participants spoke of very positively in the study.

The three research questions framed the study and provided the lens through which the data was viewed. The researcher found many of the results and findings to be

concurrent with the review of the literature. However, because the Servant Leadership Program is such a distinctive program, there is little to compare in terms of specific components. From the data, the researcher was not surprised to see the importance of the relationships emerge along with the value placed on mentoring. The issue of student retention and frustration surrounding independent study courses were surprising. These surprises lead to specific implications and recommendations.

### **Implications**

The Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program has sustained and thrived for 16 years. Studying the program through the eyes of those who have experienced it resulted in three implications for the program. The first implication is that the relational aspect of the program has significant importance. The emergence of this theme in the focus groups was consistent and immediately apparent through the discussions. Whether specific people were named or just generic comments regarding the faculty and/or staff, the weight those relationships carried was obvious. The review of the literature also exposed the relationship between the leaders and the follower as vital to the philosophy of servant leadership (Hayden, 2011; Boyum, 2012; Meyer, 2013). The more specific implication regarding the relationships built in the program deals with student retention. A main concern of multiple participants was the number of students leaving the program. A deeper look into these occurrences is needed to make definite implications, but the immediate implication is that there is a need to evaluate that phenomenon.

Certain program aspects carry more weight than others. There is a need to focus on the participants' sense of journey. By delving deeper in to the student retention issue, the program can maintain that focus. Participants stated a clear sense of learning about

who they were through the program, and this shared sense implies growth and a sense of confidence with what many deemed as “life skills.” The story told of changing majors, therefore altering a life path, is a great example of how the program works to help students reflect on who they are as people and servant leaders. Whether a student joins the program for the scholarship or for more intrinsically related reasons, the data proves that transformations occur from program involvement. The overarching aspects of the program lead to very little negative perception; however, there are specific components that emerged as areas for further investigation.

Particular program components are indicators of growth and should be cultivated. Thinking outside the box in terms of the components that have been around since the program’s inception is important. However, study participants are still acknowledging these components as agents of student growth. The five specific program components that emerged from the focus group conversation were mentoring, community placements, senior project, self-awareness instruments, and academic coursework. The results of the study indicate a need to keep these in place, while also taking appropriate measures to evaluate each for current program needs. Strides have been made with mentoring with changing the name from Mentors to Dialogue Partners. The community placements should be customized for each student’s own needs and passions. Balancing the need for a rigorous capstone experience for seniors with the needs of fundraising requirements is an area to examine in order to maintain consideration of student engagement. Because of the importance of self-awareness on servant leadership principles, maintaining the level of significance is crucial to student growth. Lastly, the curriculum used in the classroom should mirror the experiences in both the non-profit and business community.

The implications for program growth and improvement can lead to an even stronger experience for students at Columbus State University. However, one goal of this study was to offer a perspective on how to replicate this program on other college campuses. While this study provided a great deal of information regarding the program and its important aspects, a hesitation developed. Columbus, Georgia, as explained by many participants, is a unique and interesting community. It has a rich history of philanthropy and support of servant leadership. As stated previously, it was named a Servant Leadership City in 2010. A university hoping to develop a similar program must bear this in mind and bring many community, business, and philanthropic leaders to be a part of the development. This program could not happen with just the university implementing the components. It takes a level of commitment from the community-at-large and the university in a true partnership.

### **Research Limitations**

This study was limited by several factors. First, the participant group was a smaller than expected. While most of the groups were of standard size for focus groups, there was room for additional groups. Also, some groups were small because for various reasons explained previously. Because the program spans 16 years, there were perceptions not captured. A more aggressive campaign to bring participants into the study would have helped gain these perceptions. Second, because the same protocol was used for each group, each group was treated equally. However, having a unique protocol for each data set might have gathered data more specific to the groups' experiences. This study was limited in that its focus was on a single university. Transferability of results

may be limited to other schools. The results showed a unique situation within the city of Columbus and might not be able to be replicated in other cities.

Fourth, since all of the participants in this study were participants of the program in some way, it is likely they may have known of each other personally and professionally. In addition, the researcher worked for the program over the past year and has built close personal and professional relationships with several of the participants. Furthermore, it was likely that some participant anecdotes could have been recognized by other participants; therefore, participants may not have been willing to voluntarily share personal information for fear that someone might identify them through their stories. These limitations are likely to impact the findings and any application of these findings should be done with great care. Finally, despite best efforts to be aware of biases, it is possible that the researcher's experiences as the assistant director create a bias that place limitations on the analysis.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been developed from the data collected as part of this research. Recommendations are being made in three categories. Recommendations for:

1. current program faculty,
2. university administration, and
3. further research.

#### **Recommendations for Current Program Faculty**

Faculty involved with the Servant Leadership Program should consider:

1. Reworking the comprehensive survey to gather a more robust evaluation of the program. A recommendation would be to alter the wording of the items being asked or changing to a fully open-ended evaluation tool. A further look into evaluations tools is necessary but beyond the scope of this study; however, the data proves that adjusting the evaluation could offer more robust data.
2. Continuing to focus on the relational components of the program. These suggestions can be achieved through the mentoring component of the program in all its layers: community, faculty, senior and at-risk student. Each of these brings lasting value to the participants and offer a unique connection between and among all those connected with the program.
3. Focusing on the culture of the program. The revamped program evaluations should include questions to gauge the culture of the program. While culture can be difficult to measure, the data on the culture showed a need to maintain servant leadership characteristics in theory and in practice.
4. Implementing a more robust exit interview for anyone who leaves the program. Student retention was a concern across most data sets. There is currently no good grasp on why students leave the program. An exit interview that is required and documented would be a vital process for understanding this issue.
5. Utilizing an oversight committee or overseeing body to evaluate the religious aspect to ensure a neutral experience for students. When immersed in a program, there is often a risk of being “too close” to see the impact of certain

decisions. Having a committee of unbiased, yet engaged individuals would help ensure the program is meeting the requirements of a public university.

### **Recommendations for University Administration**

University administration involved with the Servant Leadership Program should consider:

1. Continue to support the relationships created within and among the program. This includes providing opportunities for the community to engage with students on campus, as well as encouraging faculty to participate with the program. Bringing faculty in to become Dialogue Partners was immensely helpful with clarifying the purpose and goals of the program.
2. Recognize the asset of the “life skills” or “soft skills” being cultivated in the program. Many university systems emphasize the need for “soft skills” in order to make students marketable for corporations and businesses.
3. Invite the community into the development of leadership programs. In order to establish a sustainable, impactful program, the community must be invested in the program.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Additional research is recommended to expand the scope of this study. Program students need support to finish the rigorous program and research on the best practices for student retention would be helpful for this issue. Due to this study’s limited scope and methodology, the following research topics were recommended to further develop and verify the findings of this research.

1. In-depth study with a wider pool of participants – With only 28 participants in this study, a study with a larger number would gain even more data to analyze. This study has provided a foundation for the areas on which a new study could concentrate. With the areas of concentration uncovered, the participants could give very specific information in order to guide the program staff to better practices.
2. Investigation on student retention with Columbus State and in other similar programs on university campuses – Obviously, student retention emerged as an issue for further research. Finding out what makes student stick with a program such as this would be invaluable to the longevity of the program. Conducting a review of the literature on other studies on this topic would possibly provide a variety of solutions for not only the program, but the university, as well.
3. Review of specific components – Mentoring, Self-Awareness, Senior Project – While the program components listed here are attached to positive perceptions by participants, the opportunity to study them in detail for best practices would only make the program stronger. The role of each of these on the experiences of a college student could help make adjustments for an even greater impact. These are the three components that the literature seemed to show make the Columbus State University Program unique, but it is suggested by the researcher to look at these individually through other programs and initiatives to provide feedback to program staff.

## Conclusion

Adjectives used to describe the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program during this study included spectacular, phenomenal, and very contagious. When describing students in the program, participants used the words top-notch, mobilized, attractive, go-getters, and proactive. These words were echoed in the stories and memories shared by those in the phenomenological study. From faculty and alumni to administrators and community members, participant growth was evident in the comments and discussions. The theoretical framework proposed that the program should be examined for overall perceptions and participant growth. The literature implied that the program was extremely unique and the concept of servant leadership in higher education is gaining momentum. Conclusions drawn from the data indicate a strong impact of personal relationships, significant emphasis on certain overarching program aspects, and an intentional focus on certain components of the program. Various implications and recommendations for program growth and sustainability were developed using the results with the intent to also guide other universities wishing to develop a similar program. The Servant Leadership Program's mission is to change the world using the framework of servant leadership as a guide. Given the impact and growth shared in this study, this mission is more of a reality than perhaps once thought. While positioned in an extremely unique city, this vision could become reality in other locations with the right mix of relationships, overarching aspects, and program components.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

##### **Informed Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Wendi Jenkins, a student in the College of Education and Health Professions at Columbus State University. The student is being supervised by Dr. Margie Yates, Director of Graduate Studies at Columbus State University.

##### **I. Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to understand if differences occurred from the inception of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership program in 1999 to the current year, 2015 and if so, what characteristics would lead to a new model for program improvement. The mixed-method research study is intended to advance the current body of research by examining a unique program through the framework of perception data for program surveys, focus groups, and historical documentation. The primary research question would be: What are the overall perceptions of current and former participants of the Columbus State University Servant Leadership Program?

##### **II. Procedures:**

The researcher will email stakeholders of the program from 1999 to current year to introduce the research project and recruit potential participants. Informed Consent Forms will be given to participants who express a desire to participate after the researcher receives a reply email. Upon receiving his or her signed Informed Consent Form, the researcher will schedule a time for the focus group on a mutually agreed upon day and time. The researcher will conduct focus groups, which will last approximately one hour each in the university's Schuster 131 conference room, using open-ended and probing questions. For each focus group, the researcher will collect data using an audio digital recorder and type detailed electronic notes. The researcher will transcribe each interview using the digital recording and electronic notes. A mixed-method approach will be utilized in data analysis in order to analyze the perceptions of participants in the program.

##### **III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:**

We expect that any risks, discomforts, or inconveniences will be minor, and we believe that they are not likely to happen. These risks or discomforts could be

feeling uncomfortable discussing the topic in front of others, sharing personal experiences with others, or not feeling clear on how to answer a question. Focus group members are under no obligation to participate. If discomforts become a problem, you may discontinue your participation. The researcher will ensure that the subjects' confidentiality are maintained using a CSU password-protected computer in the Researcher's Office to store electronic files. The back-up flash drive will be stored in my locked filing cabinet within the Researcher's Office. The data will be disposed after five years by deleting all of the electronic versions of the data. The program surveys will be summative by year and class and will not contain identifying information (e.g., student names). There is the possibility that someone might walk into the conference room during the focus groups. If this event occurs, the researcher will stop the focus group immediately and resume after the intrusion is over. All precautions will be taken to alleviate this risk, by placing a sign on the door to indicate a meeting is taking place.

#### **IV. Potential Benefits:**

The anticipated benefit of this study will affect the Servant Leadership program at Columbus State University by examining the program for perceiving strengths and weaknesses. The researcher's goal is for the study to lead to program improvement, thereby improving relationships with stakeholders. Additionally, other universities will be able to replicate our program on campuses across the country.

#### **V. Costs and Compensation:**

There will be no cost associated with participating in the study. There will be no compensation for participating in the study.

#### **VI. Confidentiality:**

The researcher will conduct focus groups, which will last approximately 1 hour each in the university's Schuster 131 conference room. The interview will audio recorded using a digital recorder. The data will be stored on the computer in the Researcher's Office, which is password protected, and on a flash drive as a back-up, which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within the Researcher's Office. The data will be disposed after five years by deleting all electronic files.

#### **VII. Withdrawal:**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Wendi Jenkins at 706-507-8773 or [jenkins\\_wendi@columbusstate.edu](mailto:jenkins_wendi@columbusstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at [irb@columbusstate.edu](mailto:irb@columbusstate.edu).

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project. My signature also indicates that I am 18 years of age or older.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

## APPENDIX B

### PARTICIPANT INVITATION EMAIL

Study Title: Columbus State University's Servant Leadership: A Phenomenological Study

Dear \_\_,

My name is Wendi Jenkins. I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership Department at Columbus State University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Curriculum and Leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying (describe purpose). If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a group discussion about the CSU Servant Leadership Program. In particular, we will discuss perceptions of the program from 1999 to current. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about an hour. The session will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed.

You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. Although you probably won't benefit directly from participating in this study, we hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit from the insight gained from the focus groups.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the Columbus State University. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 706-507-8773 and jenkins\_wendi@columbusstate.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Margie Yates, 706-507-8750, yates\_helen@columbusstate.edu, if you have study related questions

or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research at Columbus State University at 706-565-3672.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please reply to this email and let me know. I will then work with the groups to decide on a mutually agreed upon day and time for the focus group.

With kind regards,  
Wendi Jenkins  
4225 University Avenue  
Columbus, GA 31907  
(706) 507-8773  
Jenkins\_wendi@columbusstate.edu

## APPENDIX C

### SESSION PROTOCOL

**Good afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion of the Servant Leadership Program at Columbus State University.**

**My name is Wendi Jenkins. I am conducting research on the perceptions of participants of the CSU Servant Leadership Program. In particular, I hope to learn about the differences in the program between 1999 and current year 2015.**

**I want to talk with you about your experiences as participants in this program. So, I'll be asking about what originally drew you to this program, and what it your experience was with the program.**

**Before we begin, let me suggest some things to make our discussion more productive. Because I'll be recording for an accurate record, it is important that you speak up and that you only speak one at a time. I don't want to miss any of your comments.**

**I'll only use first names here. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution. In this way, we will maintain your confidentiality. In addition, I ask that you also respect the confidentiality of everyone here. Please don't repeat who said what when you leave this room.**

**During the hour that we will be here, I will ask you questions, and I will listen to what you have to say. I will not participate in the discussion. So please, feel free to respond to each other and to speak directly to others in the group. I want to hear from all of you. I am interested in both majority and minority viewpoints, common and uncommon experiences. So I may sometimes act as a**

**traffic cop by encouraging someone who has been quiet to talk, or by asking someone to hold off for a few minutes.**

**If it is OK with you, we will turn on the recorder and start now.**

**This participant focus group is being conducted for the Phenomenological Study on [DATE] by Wendi Jenkins.**

The tape ID number is \_\_\_\_\_.

START TIME - \_\_\_\_\_.

- I. Let's begin with introductions.**
  - A. Please tell us your first name, your connection to the program, and your current job or role in the community.**
- II. Now that we know a little about you, I'd like you to think back to when you first decided to connect with the servant leadership.**
  - B. What was it that drew you to this philosophy?**
    1. *Probing*- Anything else that led you to choose servant leadership?
  - C. What drew you to this particular program?**
    1. *Probing*-Anything else that led you to choose this program at Columbus State University?

**SUMMARIZE: It looks like there were (quite a few/some) positive features of servant leadership and this program that motivated your initial choices. These features included: NAME CATEGORIES.**

- III. Now, I'd like to talk about what you remember most about your experience with the program. What experiences did you have that encouraged you to continue or increased your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership in the Servant Leadership Program?**
- IV. I AM interested in all aspects of your experiences, so I'd like to hear any experiences you have had that could have discouraged you or reduced your initial enthusiasm for servant leadership in the Servant Leadership Program.**
  1. *Probing* - Are there any other things you would like to add? You can include things that caused students you know to leave the program.

**CONTINUE TO PROBE AS NECESSARY:**

- g. Any experiences with your academic classes you would like to discuss?
- h. Any experiences with rules or requirements you would like to discuss?

- i. Any experiences with faculty you would like to discuss? This could include changes on the faculty that affected you.
- j. Any discouraging experiences with students?
- k. Any discouraging experiences with departmental staff?
- l. Any discouraging community experiences? *PAUSE* This could also include anticipated benefits of community service.

- V. If you had to choose the one most helpful thing from all the items we discussed, what would it be?**
  
- VI. To summarize what we discussed, you said... SUMMARIZE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE SERVANT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.**
  
- VII. Does that capture the essence of what was said here?**
  
- VIII. Finally, as I told you at the beginning, the purpose of this study is to get information about your perceptions of the CSU Servant Leadership Program. Is there anything we left out?**
  
- IX. This focus group is one of a series we are holding here at CSU, so any suggestions you could make for improving it would be very helpful. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this discussion.**
  
- X. END TIME - \_\_\_\_\_.



**APPENDIX D**

**SAMPLE PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**END OF YEAR COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY – SERVANT LEADERSHIP STUDENTS**

**In helping you to be successful in deepening your insights and sharpening your skills and personal vision for servant leadership, how would you rate the following features of the CSU Servant Leadership Program? Please circle the appropriate numbers.**

<b><u>Program Feature:</u></b>	<b><u>Excellent</u></b>	<b><u>Good</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Poor</u></b>	<b><u>Unsatisfactory</u></b>
Academic Classes	5	4	3	2	1
Community Volunteer Work	5	4	3	2	1
Mentoring an At-Risk Child	5	4	3	2	1
Having a Community Mentor	5	4	3	2	1
Retreats and Reflections	5	4	3	2	1
Overall Servant Leadership Program	5	4	3	2	1

Please give suggestions and/or comments:

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