

The Culver Residential Curriculum – Leader, Leadership and Character Development

In service of “whole person” education, Culver’s leadership and character-based programs are the bedrock of the residential curriculum which is integrated in all programs delivered within and beyond the school community. It is essential that the delivery of all curricula is provided within the appropriate and multiple contexts, within a systems or interdependent approach. This process begins with an understanding of the core beliefs of the School – one of which is service to others. The second step is the identification of the skills we want our students to learn; and finally, what we want a graduate of the school to look like – the outcome or application.

Leader, Leadership and Character Development

Leader, Leadership, and Character development at Culver follows the tenets of positive psychology – Leveraging strengths as opposed to focusing on weaknesses; balancing emotions; and building high quality connections within the school community. The praxis involves formal experiential training in many environments, including: 1) Student Life - through our coordinate leadership systems in Culver Military Academy and Culver Girls Academy; 2) A four year academic curriculum in Leadership Education (9th grade – Orientation to Culver; 10th grade – *Character and the Application of Leadership Skills*; 11th grade - *Ethics: Virtues and Character Education*; and 12th grade – *Servant Leadership Practicum*; 3) A four year academic curriculum in Wellness Education; 4) Athletics; and 5) Spiritual Life. Also, leader, leadership, and character development are complemented within aspects of all our academic departments – Humanities, Science, Modern and Classical Languages; and Mathematics; Culver’s Global Studies Institute; and The School for the Entrepreneur.

The Center for Leader and Character Development (made up of administrators, faculty, and staff) oversees and advances the theory, practice, and integration of leader, leadership, and character development activities at Culver and beyond. The Center also coordinates programs to support our students’ journey with other key stakeholders, including Alumni and past, present, and prospective parents.

Modeling and Leading Behavior – The Role of Faculty and Staff in the Residential Curriculum

From an organizational perspective, students are not merely vessels to be filled with information by faculty and staff. This is a team effort so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The systems approach includes the faculty and staff as a major part of not only disseminating information, but also serving as what Kouzes and Posner, the authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, suggest in being “exemplars in modeling actions, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the status quo, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.” Therefore, we provide a vast array of internal and external professional development relating to curriculum delivery. Culver’s adult stakeholders are models of leading behavior and delivering curriculum within context to the students.

Learning in Context – Mindfulness and Prospecction

Lessons in leadership and character are provided in context. We are attentive to the tension of aspiring to live the good life and the concern that our students (and our faculty) not run the risk of collapsing under the weight of their aspirations for excellence. Living the good life is a challenge, and we want our students to be “mindful” of trying to live in the present moment, while still evaluating their prospects for the future. So, it is essential that the delivery of curricula is provided within the appropriate setting. Out of context doesn’t mean much to the student. We subscribe to the mantra “gotta live it by believing it and breathing it” in the framework of a system, not a separate “just add water” supplement to the overall mission of the school. We want our students to pay attention to what matters most.

Behavioral Economics – Choice Architecture and Decision-Making

By understanding the current research in neuroscience and attention, Daniel Goleman sees “focusing on self, focusing on others, and focusing on the wider world” as essential to good leadership and living a flourishing life, and a “primary task of leadership is to direct attention.” This is facilitated by all faculty and staff to support our students learning to appropriately direct their focus when making decisions.

Focus is about paying attention to the choice architecture in schools. Choice architecture is the way in which decisions are influenced by how choices are presented. Good choice architects organize circumstances or the environment in which people make decisions. They provide options for choices. Schools function as choice architects for their students, and our students learn to become architects of their own decisions – for good or for ill. As we design choice architecture within our School, it is important that we remember how important it is for faculty and students to have freedoms and choices that truly benefit them so that they will truly want to make good choices. This has great implications for decision-making regarding important student issues revolving around alcohol and other drugs, sexuality, eating behavior, cyber-bullying, time management/study skills, etc. Instead of offering stand-alone programming/lessons on “disease of the week” or good drug/bad drug” topics, it is essential to start from a foundation of “how students make decisions.”

Part of good decision making demands that our students become good critical thinkers – that they intentionally question, filter, and evaluate information; that they are more aware of cognitive biases and illusions; that character is just one part of the decision-making process—we can be saints in one moment and sinners in another. By becoming mindful of environmental factors, the limits to willpower, we believe our students can develop a healthy choice architecture.

At Culver, we want our students and faculty to think about how they think because knowing how to identify these factors can make us more mindful of our own behavior and can make us more compassionate when judging the behavior of others as faculty, staff, and students. This metacognitive adventure—thinking about how we think—is an essential ingredient for students to grow into a fully functioning adult, and for our faculty and staff to flourish within a growth mindset so they can best serve the students.

<p>Residential Curriculum Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership Education – 4 year academic program• Wellness Education – 4 year academic program• Student Life – 4 year program• Athletics• Spiritual Life <p>Complementary programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior/Alumni Ethical Decision-Making program• Horsemanship Program• Other Academic Departments (Humanities, Science, Modern and Classical Languages, and Mathematics)• <i>Thinking Smart, Living Well</i> - Senior Elective (housed in Humanities)• Global Studies Institute• Ron Rubin School for the Entrepreneur• Culver Leadership Academy – for Staff Supervisors• Internal Faculty Professional Development Courses, including <i>Thinking Smart, Living Well</i>	<p>Curricula Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Servant Leadership Practicum• Character and the Application of Leadership Skills• Ethics: Virtues and Character Education• Followership• Leading Self• Leading through Strengths• Strength and Justice• Direct Leadership and Building Teams• Service and Success• Mindfulness and Prospecption• Metacognition – How we think about how think about decisions• Positive Psychology• Grit and Resilience• Neuroscience – The Teenage Brain• Biological, Sociological and Psychological roots of behavior
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