



HEAD, HANDS, AND HEART

The Essential Tripod of Servant-Leadership Education

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[The following is adapted from a presentation made June 11, 2021 at the virtual International Servant-Leadership Summit. It is focused on the question of “how do academic programs ensure the head, hands, and heart are present to the learning experience for servant-leaders?”]

Hello, I am Dr. Michael Carey and I am the Chairperson of the Department of Organizational Leadership at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. The Organizational Leadership program leads to a Master of Arts degree, and I am also the coordinator of what we in the program call the *Servant-Leadership Concentration*, which allows graduate students to focus on the academic study of servant-leadership in nearly half of the coursework required for their masters.

Gonzaga University is a Jesuit school, and like all Jesuit schools in the world it understands that the authentic learning experience must include not just the **Head**, but the **Hands** and **Heart** as well. The Jesuits have this reputation of being super-intellectuals, but the reality is that the strength of Jesuit education is that it focuses on the learner’s affect as well as their intellect: that is, how does what you learn touch your heart, and how does that then inspire you to do



something to make the world, your country, your neighborhood, a better place? **Head, Hands, Heart.**

I'm sometimes asked by organizational leaders to provide them with a short workshop on how to be a servant-leader: "can you just give us a few tools that we can use tomorrow to be servant-leaders?" they ask. I respond by saying that the original definer of servant-leadership, Robert Greenleaf, said that you must have a *servant-heart* first, and only then can you figure out what that means for *servant-leadership*. So, I suggest that their organization should start by providing opportunities for understanding dialogue, the transformation process, developmental theory, and self-transcendence, and then—after everyone has had an experience of profound *metanoia*—then the correct tools for servant-leadership will become clear to them. In fact, I tell them, once you have a servant-heart, all leadership tools are servant-leadership tools. (I should in fairness add that I don't get hired for many consulting jobs.)

I bring this perspective on becoming a servant first to my coordinating the servant-leadership courses at Gonzaga. There are a variety of ways we do that, but one approach is to include literature, art, and poetry in the course content—which pushes students to questions of meaning. For example, there are a number of films that students are asked to watch and discuss in many of the servant-leadership elective courses, such films as *Lincoln* and *Invictus*, *Chariots of Fire* and *Babette's Feast*, *The Mission* and *Of Gods and Men*. All of these films ask deeply existential questions about what it means to authentically become a servant to others, to the common good, to God. Other elective courses include training in mindfulness meditation and the cultivation of silence, again as a way to nurture the servant-heart. And in addition, all of these courses expect the



learner to integrate what they have learned by describing how they will bring what **Head** and **Heart** have understood to their **Hands**—that is, what are the practical actions they will take in their own organizational contexts when the course is finished.

Allow me to give an example from one of the courses that I teach as an elective within our servant-leader concentration. The course is called *Leadership and Community*, and the syllabus states that “Through experience and scholarship students explore and practice empowerment, collaboration, and dialogue in the context of creating structures and processes for sustaining and transforming community.” I have taught a version of this elective course for nearly thirty years, but starting about 15 years ago I began bringing graduate students in the course to live at a Benedictine monastery in California for a week. I ask students to use their experience at the monastery as a metaphor for what is essential to be present in any community, even if the community has nothing to do with religion or spirituality. Among a variety of insights, the students take away with them is the critical importance of what is called *hospitality*. For the monks, hospitality means treating each guest as though he or she was Jesus Christ—really, really treating each guest as though they were Christ. The graduate students in the course experience the monks doing this with them during their week living at the monastery, and it blows them away—it is transformative. And so, my students—who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Agnostic, and Atheistic—all leave their one-week immersion in a monastic community realizing that if they can make every person they encounter in their own organizations feel special, unique, important, and attended to, then that level of hospitality will be transformative to those in their organizations as well. To my earlier point, you can talk about hospitality theoretically as an important quality of servant-



leadership, but until you experience it yourself, you don't know its practical power.

So, to sum up my part of the presentation: when you teach servant-leadership, nothing makes sense until you find ways to invite learners into developing a servant-heart first. The academic study of servant-leadership includes the **Head**, but unless it also touches the **Heart**, it will never lead to an effective use of **Hands** as a servant-leader.

Greetings—I am Kathleen Patterson, and I am a professor and Doctoral Program Director at Regent University's School of Business & Leadership—I have been here for 22 years and enjoyed first hearing the term “servant-leadership” on our campus. I remember thinking “wow there's a name for that!”—I had experienced servant-leadership in the business world and had no idea it was a leadership term and an entire way of being – I knew it from a heart perspective and was now entering into a head and hands perspective. which is why I think we have to look at servant-leadership from this triad approach—the **head—heart—hands**. It is like a three-legged stool—we need all three legs to be balanced in our approach as servant-leaders.

At Regent University we are ‘Christian Leaders to Change the World’—but really—how do any of us change the world, our world? We might all agree it needs changing, but how? The answer has to lie partly in our immersion into it—but then we must acknowledge that any immersion into the world must come from the beauty of wanting to serve others. For many years our school had no specific servant-leadership courses—and yet so many of our students were



studying, writing papers and developing projects with a servant-leadership focus—in fact Peter Northouse names Regent University and Gonzaga University as the two top schools in servant-leadership research. It was funny to me to receive this recognition when we did not even have a course in servant-leadership, but we had so much devotion to the topic—again, papers, projects, dissertations, even yearly hosting a Servant-Leadership Research Roundtable (which we have done for almost 20 years now).

When the idea came about to add a Servant-Leadership concentration – we decided to make the 4 courses available to both doctoral and masters level students. All of our students choose a concentration—so we also added an individualized concentration to allow students from any concentration to pick up a mixture of courses—therefore being able to add a Servant-Leadership course even if they chose a different concentration. We created these courses: Models & Theories of Servant-Leadership, Servant-Leadership & Social Issues, Biblical Perspectives & Servant-Leadership, and Servant-Leadership & the Experiential. If it is alright to admit it—my favorite course has been Servant-Leadership & Social Issues—students literally choose a social issue they care about and assess, write, discover and seek insight into that social issue through a servant-leadership lens—asking how can servant-leaders engage this issue? I have been amazed at how students are able to unpack issues—and with servant-leadership—truly seek hope in our world.

One thing I have seen quite a bit from a practical level are two concepts from Larry Spears’s compilation of Greenleaf’s top ten characteristics—foresight and healing. We have a devoted course that is a core/required course on strategic foresight all students are required to take, and a concentration in foresight as well. Now



healing is a bit different—our students come to us from all over the world and from all different levels of career, and from unique industries and arenas—but there does seem to be an element of healing that is present—all arrive with something we are dealing with. We have seen many leave with a healed aspect—the example that comes to mind in this moment is a woman who had been told all her life she was stupid and would never make it—she was from the wrong side of the tracks—something seems to happen as students’ study and encounter new information and content—students have the opportunity to see themselves in new ways—and to hopefully embrace a new path of healing and wholeness into who they are as persons, students, and servant-leaders.

Greenleaf said “If one is a servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, [and] expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making” –and I think any of us as leaders, educators, followers—are truly invested in these better times! The servant journey is different for us all—whether we begin with the **head**—the learning and the knowledge, or the **heart**—the impetus to love others and the desire to serve them, or the **hands**—the practical ways in which we reach towards one another—our journeys to serve others is about building better human beings, about serving others, and about sharing our servant stories to show others the way.

Hello, I am Larry Spears. From 1990-2007 I was the CEO of the Greenleaf Center. I also had the joyful experience of spending a single day with Robert Greenleaf, shortly before he died in 1990. Since 2008, I have divided my time between my work with the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership, and as Servant-Leadership



Scholar for the School of Leadership Studies, at Gonzaga University. I have been a contributing author and/or co-editor of 36 books on servant-leadership, including all 5 books of writings by Robert K. Greenleaf. Since 2005, I have also served as Senior Advisory Editor of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, which is a joint publication of Gonzaga University and The Spears Center. Shann Ferch is the editor of the *Journal*, and Jenny Song is the associate editor.

My first introduction to the idea of servant-leadership came about in 1982 while working for the Quaker magazine, *Friends Journal*. One day we received in the mail an article submission from Robert Greenleaf. I still recall the excitement I felt as I saw this term, “servant-leader,” for the first time, and as I read his description of what it meant. I felt like he had given a name for something that I aspired to, but that I had not been able to put into words until that time. Over the years, *Friends Journal* published several articles on servant-leadership by Greenleaf, and I began to focus on developing my own **heart, head, and hands** around trying to grow as a servant-leader.

It has been nearly 40 years since then, and I have continued to do what I can to raise public awareness of servant-leadership, and to grow as a “servant-leader-in-training,” which is a term we use at Gonzaga University. For me, it is a potent reminder that we are, all of us, always, servant-leaders-in-training.

Since 2008, I have taught nearly 100 sections of servant-leadership graduate courses, and I have mostly taught two particular courses. One is called “Servant-Leadership” (58 times), and the other is called “Listen Discern Decide” (25 times). Our servant-leadership courses at Gonzaga include a conscious effort to help students in their development of a servant-leader’s **heart, head, and hands**.



The primary texts for our Servant-Leadership course include: *Journey to the East* (Hesse), *Servant Leadership* (Greenleaf), *The Power of Servant-Leadership* (Greenleaf), *Conversations on Servant-Leadership* (Ferch, Spears, McFarland, Carey), *Servant-Leadership in Training* (Horsman), *The Congruent Life* (Thompson), and *Seven Pillars of Servant-Leadership* (Sipe, Frick).

The other course that I teach is “Listen Discern Decide.” John Horsman and I developed this course together in 2013. This course is grounded in servant-leadership and focuses on how deeper listening leads to more powerful discernment and improved decision-making. Our primary texts for this course include: *Siddhartha* (Hesse), *Greenleaf and Servant-Leader Listening* (Frick), *Fortuitous Encounters* (Davis, Spears), *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (Greenleaf), *Silence* (Sardello), *Listening* (Burley-Allen), and *What’s Your Decision?* (Sparough, Manney, Hipskind).

Each of these texts provides meaningful insights for the mind, a deeper engagement in the heart, and practical examples of servant-leadership in action (or the hands).

One of the key experiences in “Listen Discern Decide” is something that sounds so simple, yet it has proven to be such an important source of personal growth for many students. It is an exercise that involves spending 10 minutes a day in silence, then journaling on the silence experience for 2-5 minutes daily. Students are invited to share some of their insights and experiences with others in the Discussion Board, and it is remarkable to read the powerful effect of this exercise for many of them. The act of slowing down, sitting still, listening to the silence, and consciously reflecting on the experience leads to a deeper integration of servant-leadership in the **head**, the **hands**, and especially the **heart**. It leads to a deeper interior awareness, and it increases one’s capacity to become a better listener.



Since 2008, I have had the privilege of teaching and learning from nearly 2,000 graduate students. The experience of reading over 8,000 student papers and 64,000+ Discussion Board postings in Blackboard has left me with a deep feeling of encouragement for the future of servant-leadership.

In a world of smartphones, social media, instant messaging and many other distractions, we increasingly find so much by way of disillusionment, cynicism, and anxiety. Listening and quietude are essential to the growth of servant-leaders, and a powerful antidote to a world filled with confusion.

I leave you with this quote from Robert Greenleaf, “I have a bias which suggests that only a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening *first*. When [one] is a leader, this disposition causes [one] to be *seen* as servant first. This suggest that a non-servant who wants to be a servant might become a *natural* servant through a long arduous discipline of learning to listen, a discipline sufficiently sustained that the automatic response to any problem is to listen first.” (*The Servant as Leader*). Much like Greenleaf, we believe that listening and servant-leadership can be both taught and learned. Thank you.

Dr. Michael R. Carey is Chairperson and Associate Professor of Organizational Leadership in the School of Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University. In 2000, he created the first servant-leadership course at Gonzaga and currently he is the Coordinator of the Servant-Leader Concentration, which is composed of four elective courses on servant-leadership topics in the Organizational Leadership graduate curriculum. An educator for nearly fifty years, Dr. Carey has taught at the primary, secondary, and higher education levels, and has served in a variety of administrative posts, including Dean of the



Virtual Campus, which oversaw the development of online learning at Gonzaga University.

Dr. Kathleen Patterson serves as Professor and the Director of the Doctor of Strategic Leadership program at Regent University, where she has been since 1999. Dr. Patterson is noted as an expert on servant-leadership and has coordinated 3 Global Roundtables, in the Netherlands, Australia, and Iceland. Additionally, she is involved in numerous consulting projects nationally and abroad, and sits on the boards of the Larry C. Spears Center, CareNet, Millennials for Marriage, and the MENA Leadership Center.

Larry C. Spears is a writer and editor who has contributed chapters to three dozen books on servant-leadership. He edited or co-edited all five books of writings by Robert K. Greenleaf, and he is the co-editor/co-author of eight servant-leadership anthologies. Larry divides his time as Servant-Leadership Scholar for Gonzaga University (Spokane), where he teaches graduate courses in servant-leadership; and, as CEO of The Larry Spears Center for Servant-Leadership (Indianapolis), where he focusses on writing and editing projects in servant-leadership, including serving as Senior Advisory Editor of the *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*. From 1990-2007, Larry served as CEO, and as President Emeritus and Senior Fellow, with the Greenleaf Center.