

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*ACU LEADS: A Leadership Skills Development Initiative* is a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) selected and developed by Abilene Christian University to enhance the leadership knowledge and skills of its incoming undergraduate students and elected student organization leaders. LEADS stands for “leading, educating and developing servants” and specifically focuses on servant leadership. The QEP seeks to broaden incoming students’ knowledge of non-positional-based leadership dimensions and provide them with awareness of tangible opportunities for leadership at ACU (i.e., Emerging Leaders Track). At the same time, it serves to equip and empower elected student organization leaders to utilize knowledge of positional-based leadership dimensions through experiential learning and mentoring (i.e., Elected Leaders Track). The QEP rests on a vision for enhancing student leadership development at ACU and reflects both the mission of the university (“To educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world”) and its current strategic plan, which focuses generally on experiential learning and directly on student organizations as an opportunity for leadership skills development. In short, ACU’s QEP focuses on strategic university goals related to leadership skills development for its emerging and elected leaders.

The Emerging Leader Track will focus on undergraduate students as they begin their studies at ACU’s main campus. Reaching out to students as they are oriented to the university, this initiative will connect incoming students to the mission of the university, broaden their understanding of servant leadership, and invite them to complete the Emerging Leaders Badge over the course of their first year. In this way, ACU will leverage its existing investment and commitment to the Compass initiative and related mobile-first software. To earn the badge, participants will complete a set of activities including (1) participating in cohort-based, peer leader-supported workshops based on three dimensions of non-position-focused leadership (Serving the Community, Caring for Others, and Behaving Ethically); (2) attending leadership chapels, (3) completing community-based service, (4) maintain “good standing” with the university and (5) developing a leadership growth plan.

The Elected Leader Track will focus on elected student organization leaders at ACU’s main campus. ACU will again leverage its existing investment and commitment to the Compass initiative by developing an Elected Leadership Badge, which will require all presidents/senior-most officers to complete a set of activities to earn the badge. Activities will include (1) developing a plan with personal and organizational goals for the year, (2) participating in ongoing mentoring sessions with faculty/staff advisors relating to four dimensions of position-focused servant leadership (Conceptualizing, Putting Followers First, Empowering, Helping Followers Grow and Succeed) and (3) developing a summative servant leadership portfolio. Additionally, to prepare students for their elected positions, in the summer between the time students are elected and take office, they will be asked to complete an online training course related to the four Elected Leader Dimensions. Another key component of this track is the plan to better support and equip faculty and staff members that serve as student organization advisors. In doing so, ACU can provide a more consistent mentoring experience for its elected student leaders.