
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

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Summative Narrative.

In retrospect, I had not fully appreciated the fantastic opportunity presented to me, when I received the scholarship to attend the Leadership Program in Health Policy and Management at Brandeis University. I now realize it was one of those defining moments that can change one’s professional career.

During the week at the Babson College conference center in Wellesley I was exposed to thought leaders in healthcare, I learned in a stimulating and collegial environment and made lasting friendships.

The program was well balanced, presented important topics and, above all, offered real tools that are applicable to our daily work as leaders.

On the first day, Prof. Chillingerian discussed strategic thinking and decision making. Through the expert use of the case method, he prompted us to make critical choices by elaborating on complex data. We all learned how to expand our possibilities by looking for the “third” option, and how to avoid decision making biases by acknowledging our emotional perceptions.

In the afternoon we talked about the management of clinical care processes and patients flow in clinical areas. By using a simulation model we were able to better understand the impact of variable patient’s streams and pooling of resources.

On the second day Prof. Anderson gave us a fantastic overview of financial and managerial accounting. With the limited time at her disposal she was able to deliver an enormous amount of pertinent information.

On Wednesday we talked about value based purchasing and the future of Medicare payments with Prof. Mechanic and Prof. Tompkins. In the afternoon of Wednesday and Thursday morning, we all listened with admiration to Prof. Altman’s lecture. He recounted his story as a seasoned insider who has lived through health care policy making during three administrations and has been instrumental in all the major changes to health care in the last four decades. He talked to us about personal experiences and provided a perspective that is not available by reading books or scientific literature. It was truly an unforgettable experience.
On day four we discussed effective leadership styles and explored situational leadership. By completing a LEAD (Leadership Effectiveness & Adaptability Description) instrument we were able to gauge our primary leadership styles and level of adaptability. The exercise taught us the importance of adapting to the level of maturity of the individuals or groups that we are attempting to influence.

On Friday morning, Prof. Gittell discussed high performance healthcare and the power of relationships. He also addressed how to communicate and share information within the organization to integrate task and purpose through mutual respect; a powerful driver of performance when tasks are tightly coupled, of high complexity, and on a strict timeline.

In the afternoon we ran a simulation exercise with Prof. Chillingerian highlighting the essential practices to successfully lead change in complex systems. I learned first-hand about the importance of relationship building to get buy-in from members of the organization; how to leverage “influencers” and understand “informal networks” to drive organizational changes. Throughout the course of the simulation our team was able to see the effect of our decisions and change our course of action to successfully influence adoption of our project.

That evening we had a wonderful dinner cruise on the Boston Harbor which gave us the opportunity to socialize with faculty and colleagues, present our personal experiences and make delightful memories.

On the last day Prof. Prottas discussed conflict resolution and the foundation of successful negotiation and negotiating techniques. I learned that the basis of a successful negotiation is to first understand our real interest, to listen to the other party’s interest and to find where the two meet. The ability to listen and communicate is the path to finding agreement.

Upon returning to my institution I feel enriched, gifted with new skills and above all honored to have been part of such a special event.