Mosaic Coaching: Description
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Who would have – who could have – ever predicted that two staff members, spending no money, could create a phenomenological explosion that transformed the character and leadership practices of an entire university? Welcome to “Mosaic Coaching.” This innovative program not only resolved the critical needs of one of America’s foremost universities for developing leaders of character, it did so from ground zero – and in only two years. The impact so far has been impressive; the sustainability is rock-solid and expanding.

Student and Campus Needs

America’s Air Force is charged with defending our country’s air and space, and thus must employ the world’s best leaders of character. The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) was created to serve as the training and commissioning crown-jewel for Air Force officers. Subordinately, the “Center for Character and Leadership Development” (CCLD) was formed to serve as the Air Force’s premier Center for integrating the development of character and leadership. Thus, CCLD not only has the immense responsibility of meeting the university’s primary purpose, it must also actually create and implement the best practices for developing 4,000 students as Leaders of Character.

The accompanying “Creation and Implementation” piece describes in greater detail CCLD’s rigorous efforts to create the university’s definition (i.e., “Framework”) for the practices that maximize developing someone as a Leader of Character. However, the creation of that Framework ignited a need to ensure that USAFA was utilizing the best possible practices that are endorsed in the Framework. Many of the existing methods seemed to be lacking in some aspect. How to truly meet the students’ need to develop as a Leader of Character – and how to influence an entire USAFA culture in applying those best practices – that was the challenge! Enter, Mosaic Coaching.

Originality and Creativity

Prior to the creation of Mosaic Coaching, no professional coaching existed at USAFA. Nothing. While the two Mosaic Coaching staff members had expertise and experience in professional coaching, the university was innocently ignorant of the concept – and no coaching “pieces” had ever been created. Thus, the two staff members not only had to demonstrate that professional coaching significantly “added value” to an already prestigious character-based university, it also had to be “cost effective” in terms of student and staff’s busy schedules and the university’s budget (i.e., literally, cost nothing).

The first step involved showing that professional coaching actually worked (in terms of developing one’s character) – and that it worked better than the existing developmental
interventions. A formal research experiment was required – to ascertain whether Mosaic Coaching demonstrated superior merit.

Thus, in the fall of 2011, everything had to be created from scratch – and a Character Coaching intervention was created. An inventory to measure student’s character strengths was created. A manual was written that described how to conduct the Character Coaching. Potential coaches were solicited from the university’s existing staff; those who accepted the invitation were then provided an intensive training program to ensure that they could demonstrate the essential coaching skills. Students volunteered for the coaching experience, “informed consent” was obtained, and a comparable “control group” of students was established.

The Mosaic Coaching staff hoped for positive outcomes; no one expected the results to be that dramatic. The students who received the coaching *significantly improved* their identity toward the university’s prized virtues; the control group did not. Furthermore, the coachees demonstrated *significant improvement on* ethical judgment scores (using a previously validated instrument) – while the control group actually *worsened*. The students who received coaching engaged in virtually no acts of misconduct on campus (while nine percent of the control group had conduct infractions). Finally, none of the coached students committed an academic cheating violation, while 73 of their classmates did so during the same time period.

Upon being given the “thumbs-up” from the university’s Board of Trustees, Mosaic Coaching then launched into creating a *leadership* coaching intervention – again, all from scratch. An assessment inventory was created and validated; a leadership coaching manual was created; a coaching intervention was designed; and staff members were trained in conducting Leadership Coaching (to include requiring them to demonstrate in a simulated coaching session that they had the essential coaching skills). Student leaders on campus were provided the coaching intervention and post-assessments were conducted to measure if it was “value added.” And the rest, as the saying goes, “is history.” The leaders’ followers gushed over the improved behavior that they observed in the leader, while the leaders’ bosses almost universally agreed that significant positive change had occurred in the leader. Furthermore, the leaders consistently demonstrated an elevation in their unit’s performance.

To date, there is no evidence that any other university in America has implemented such a full-scale professional coaching program for developing Leaders of Character. And this was accomplished by two people, in two years, with no cost to the university beyond the two salaries.

### Positive Impact on Student Learning

Mosaic Coaching’s positive impact on the students and the university culture has been described in detail in the accompanying “Assessment Data” piece. However, it is worth mentioning that in a two year period, the culture of the university has evolved from no coaching to a place where now **100% of all freshmen, 100% of all sophomores, and 75% of all juniors:**

- Read a manual where they are taught the university’s Framework for developing Leaders of Character.
- Receive a personalized report of their character, personal, and/or leadership strengths.
- Receive a structured, coaching intervention with a trained university staff member.
- Provide upward feedback to their coaches, regarding the effectiveness of the coaching experience.
Furthermore, headed into the Academic Year 2013-2014, there presently are over 200 staff members or university alumni who will be serving as coaches. Impressively, these coaches come from all of the various university elements (i.e., academics; student life; athletics) – creating an integrated approach throughout the campus on how to best develop Leaders of Character.

Literally 100% of all coaches who has participated in this role have agreed that they were satisfied with the coaching experience, while the student satisfaction rates have ranged from 82 to 97 percent (depending upon which coaching intervention they received). The customers appear to be satisfied.

Additionally, as reported in the accompanying “Assessment Data” paper, 98% of the students agreed that they had learned how to recognize the moments of when to act virtuously – thereby increasing their chances of acting in accordance with their values, while minimizing “falling down” due to lack of focus.

While the students significantly increased their identity toward the university’s prized virtues, it is wonderful that the coaches likewise developed a stronger identity (as a result of being utilized in the coaching role).

Oftentimes a critique of “reactional” assessments (i.e., satisfaction ratings) is “Yes, but did others observe that the subject’s behavior actually improved?” In the case of Mosaic Coaching, the answer is: most certainly. At least 96% of the coaches agreed that unquestionably the student provided evidence that s/he had noticeably improved in the virtue/leadership competency that had been targeted. Furthermore, 90% of the leaders’ followers acknowledged that from their personal observations, they could detect a noticeable improvement in the leader’s competency.

Speaking of leaders, a yardstick for measuring effectiveness usually involves the unit’s success. Does this leader’s unit produce positive results? A staggering 99% of the leaders’ bosses reported that the leader had elevated the performance of their unit.

Across two different coaching interventions (i.e., Character Coaching and Leadership Coaching), and across two different semesters, the results were virtually identical – providing evidence that coaching is an impactful intervention for students at the university.

Evidence of Sustainability

The evidence of Mosaic Coaching’s impact in its first two years is significant, but does this “rocket” appear to be gaining any momentum – or do we expect it to “fall flat?” Consider the following evidence of its sustainability:

- The university’s highest governing body (the Board of Trustees) has given its blessing upon the continuance of the program.
- The university’s curriculum handbook has approved providing academic credit for the coaching experience.
- The Mosaic Coaching program has grown from one intervention in AY 2011-2012 (i.e., “Character Coaching”), to two interventions in AY 2012-2013 (adding “Leadership Coaching”), to four interventions in AY 2013-2014 (adding “Personal Coaching” and “Executive Character Coaching”).
- The number of students receiving coaching has grown from 47 (i.e., 1% of the student body) to 2,750 (69% of all students).
- Coaches can now receive an actual “certification” in professional coaching, thereby demonstrating enhanced professional development.
• Highly respected character-based organizations outside of USAFA are implementing the Mosaic Coaching methods. For example, America’s chief organization for infusing character into the “K through 12” educational system (i.e., the “Character Education Partnership”) now offers “Executive Character Coaching” to school leaders (provided by phone coaching from the two Mosaic Coaching staff members).

In summary, Mosaic Coaching – while starting from nothing – has had a tremendous impact on the university’s highest value of developing Leaders of Character.