



**Cass Business School**  
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

## **Igniting The Talent Leadership Development Programme for Students' Unions**

**James Barrett**

**With: Kati Brown, Sarah Gosling, Drew Walsh**

Cass Centre for Charity Effectiveness  
Intellectual leadership: developing talent, enhancing performance

[www.cass.city.ac.uk](http://www.cass.city.ac.uk)



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### **The Brief**

- Create & support a generation of outstanding leaders working to transform civil society
- Ultimately to make a real positive difference to the lives of students & their unions
- A bespoke leadership development programme for 60 paid staff in local unions
- Working with three tiers of leaders over 18 months:
  - Chief Executives
  - Senior Leaders
  - Emerging Leaders

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## Your Context

- High turnover of elected officials – needs powerful working relationships to be formed quickly
- Movement's highly ambitious vision – needs exceptional influencing skills across vast network of stakeholders
- Federal relationships are innately complex – requires balance of autonomy, strategy & brand protection.

A programme to develop powerful leaders for your SU context – *what you don't get on an MBA!*

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## The Pilot Programme

- Launch Event – a day together using “Open Space” and “Whole System” methods
- Individual Coaching & 360 Degree Profiling to devise personal development plans
- Residential Programme over 3 days, with talks, simulation, options and ‘taster’ sessions
- 6 Action Learning Sets
- Elective Programme tailored to needs identified by participants
- Supported by Virtual Learning Environment

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## Positive Impact

- High value attached to experiential events for entire cohort
- Strong anecdotal benefits of 360 feedback coaching
- Practical successes, increased reflective practice, and strong peer-to-peer learning from learning sets
- Most focused away from workplace pressures - take full advantage of cross-tier group events and coaching
- Will contribute to Movement-wide L&D
- Passionate, enthusiastic participation. High potential for strong leaders to flourish if we get the conditions right.

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## What We Discovered

Operational context sometimes risks stifling development of strong leadership:

- Breadth vs depth, and activist culture
  - Overwhelming operational commitments
  - Not always a culture of follow-through
  - Many campaigns and messages competing for attention
  - NUS Group resources stretched
  - Still need to establish a culture for self-directed learning, strategic personal development, and budgeting for SPD
- ...So elective programme, virtual learning environment, online evaluation didn't get the participation they deserved

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## Forthcoming Plans

- More experiential events cause they really work
- Repeat 360 coaching as the foundation stone
- Build and extend peer learning and make more of the visits
- More in the core offer - so time away from operations is part of the deal
- Promote it earlier so people can get the costs in their budget
- Still 60 participants - you get so much from each other
- More CEs because those that came got a lot and gave a lot, and we need you to be a part of the movement transformation
- More personal follow up to help you keep up the momentum and encourage greater self directed learning

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## New Programme Design

- Launch Event – introduction / whole system exercise
- Individual coaching, 360 profiling, PDP
- 3 day Residential, built around the simulation
- 5 full day action learning sets and road trips
- Electives integrated into the core offer, with accreditation option
- Follow-up coaching
- Closing event and evaluation
- Online learning community

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## Connecting Up The Learning

- Touch people individually to build awareness of their leadership, distance travelled, ID future needs
- Connect up individual, group, tier and whole system perspectives
- Structured feedback loops to participants and NUS
- In-motion action research to evaluate learning, address gaps as they emerge, and add value to future designs
- Growing and sustaining the pool of alumni to transform the movement

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## Join Us!

- 60 places on new programme from September
- Target of 15 CE places
- Total 13.5 days of development time
- NUS subsidy will keep fee below £2,200
- Costs split over two financial years

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## A Powerful Development Opportunity

- You have a great deal in common and can learn so much from each other
- Join a stimulating group of learners across the movement who are flourishing as they learn together
- Take responsibility for your own L&D within a flexible and democratic framework
- The diversity that is the SU Movement gives a real impetus to leadership development
- Thought leadership is a key element of the programme - shape new thinking for the movement.

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