

Building Team Culture

When I was first approached to speak in the Dragon Leadership Academy, I was shocked. I still feel so young and kept thinking, “who would want to listen to my advice?”

As I learned more about the program my mindset quickly changed. I began to view this from the perspective of the students and put myself in their shoes. What did I want to hear when I was in high school? What would I go back and tell myself with what I know now? I wish a program like this was available during my time at SGS. As I began my career, I recognized how important developing leadership skills are. This Leadership Academy is a marvelous opportunity for students to sharpen skills that are crucial in the success of post-high school life.

When I started to think about my experiences, it dawned on me that although it doesn't seem very long, I've learned a lot in the four years since graduating from SGS. I was always taught to be a good leader, and for years my focus was solely on being a leader. It wasn't until I got into my college education and career that I understood there's more than just being a good leader. You need to be a good teammate.

My presentation for the Leadership Academy was centered on creating an inclusive team culture. Most of you might know that I come from a family that loves everything sports. I played sports growing up and always assumed, since I was constantly involved in a team culture, that I was a good team player.

However, that wasn't the case. Whenever I would have problems in a team setting, whether that was sports, group projects, or work, my first reaction was to blame someone else's lack of skill. It took a rude awakening to realize that team culture begins with me. I shared my experience of when I was a bad team member and what I did to improve in that role and also as a leader.

For me, team culture is dependent on these components: listening, understanding, and supporting. Anyone can be a great team member and create a fantastic team culture when they actively listen to every voice, seek to understand those on their team, and show support to their team members.

Once I focused on improving these three skills, I noticed a huge difference in how I functioned as a team member. One of the most important aspects of my current job is teamwork. My job as the Assistant Director of Executive Events at Utah Valley University is extremely demanding. I am constantly working on multiple projects at one time. There is no way for me to handle it all on my own.

This is where my team comes in. I love my team, and we've worked hard to develop a team culture that is inclusive, positive, and efficient. This has been done by focusing on listening, understanding, and supporting one another. Team culture has become a huge priority to me, so huge that it will be one of the biggest aspects I seek out when looking for a future job opportunity.

At the beginning of my presentation, I instructed the students to list out attributes they would expect a future team member to have. By the end of my presentation, I challenged them to make a goal of how they can achieve or improve each attribute.

I was so impressed with these students. They had meaningful comments and questions that inspired me. I love seeing youth take proactive steps to improve themselves as individuals. I hope that they know how beneficial this program will be in the long run.

I am honored to have been able to participate in a portion of this Academy. Thank you for the opportunity. Go Dragons!

– Natalie (Farias) Holloway '16



**Natalie Holloway '16,
Assistant Director
of Executive Events,
Utah Valley
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**Natalie Holloway (far left)
with a Utah Valley University
student group**

