Collaborative Assessment

Throughout my graduate studies in Organizational Leadership, I decided to focus on Human Resources, which requires the skill of collaboration. This has been a concept that has grown from a learning tool into a deeply integral part of my academic, personal, and professional life. Collaboration in leadership encompasses more than just working with others—it involves nurturing successful teams, constructing networks, and embracing to diverse perspectives to create positive outcomes. Two artifacts that reflect this growth within myself are my final presentation on support systems for online graduate students and my professional interview with Sherice Rada, an experienced HR manager. Both experiences, while distinctive in form, pushed me to reflect, relate to others, and improve my collaborative capacity in significant ways.

My growth through the creation of the final presentation on “Understanding Support Systems of Online Graduate Students” was an important collaborative learning experience. I had to develop a questionnaire to ask volunteers about their experience as virtual students. I then had to go outside of my comfort zone and message peers I did not know and ask them to participate in an interview for my class. Once my three interviews were completed, I was then asked by my professor to use three interviews that peers in my class had conducted to complete my project. First, I had to trust that the interviews I was given from my peers were conducted properly. Next, I had to trust that their interviews included enough questions to gain the information needed to fulfill the requirements of this research project. Through my interviews and data analysis, I was able to work not only with other students but ended up indirectly collaborating with other participants by reading their interviews. This research project required a high level of organization, collaboration, and trust which are key ingredients of collaborative learning objective.

My capability to turn six different interviews into a cohesive research project shows my growth in collaborative research and critical thinking. I learned how to integrate different interview styles from my peers and turn it into a project that aligned with the goal of the project. During this time, I was able to use constructive feedback from my professor to, work through different research methods. By utilizing qualitative methods for semi-structured interviews and document analysis from transcripts and coding, I developed stronger interpersonal and professional collaboration skills. These learned collaboration skills with peers and my professor will further support my HR career.

Furthermore, the research project taught me to be a more culturally mindful and inclusive partner. My interview sample included students of different races, nationalities, and life stages. I personally matured from needing to be more attuned to how support systems—or the lack of—affect diverse learners. As author Ryan attests, “The process of qualitative research is not linear-it demands collaboration, flexibility, and responsiveness to the data and those who provide it.” (Ryan, 2006, p. 93). This experience increased my cultural humility and confirmed my confidence in inclusive team dynamics and fair work environments.

The collaborative lessons I learned from the human resource interview with Sherice Rada further grounded my knowledge of collaboration in the workplace. Sherice and I discussed the changing role of human resource managers, specifically in light of AI and remote work. She demonstrated how essential it is for human resource professionals to nurture relationships across departments, demographics, and even geographical distances. Sherice stressed the significance of emotional intelligence (EQ), conflict resolution, and communication which are skills I have practiced throughout my graduate coursework.

Her perceptions helped me look at my current strengths and areas I need to grow in. Having worked in retail, I understood her belief that "the pros and cons of working in HR are both people." Leading others is both rewarding and challenging for many people. Building collaboration within an organization doesn’t stop at the formation of teams—it requires daily, deliberate work to preserve trust, understanding, and shared goals.

After the interview with Sherice, I also recognized how much I had developed my confidence to connect with professionals in the Human Resource field. Before starting the graduate program, I would not have felt comfortable approaching someone in Sherice’s position. Now, I understand such conversations are not only appreciated but essential for career development. Shortly after this conversation with Sherice I joined the local Society of Human Resource Management group to become acquainted with other professionals in my county. This development reflects an important accomplishment of my transition from being a student of leadership to becoming a practitioner of it. Both of my artifacts, while respected, highlighted growth areas as well. In the final presentation, I recognized that my sample size was small and lacked equal representation from male students and non-Organizational Leadership programs. In the future, I would like to broaden my participant pool and apply mixed methods for deeper understanding.

Correspondingly, in my interview with Sherice, I recognized I could have asked more insightful follow-up questions—specifically regarding how she manages collaboration challenges within various departments. More investigative questions could have shown more specific examples of how she designs psychological safety, handles tough conversations, or leads change initiatives—knowledge that would enrich my learning development and real-life practices. These self-reflections are fundamental when developing new skills. Collaboration flourishes on honest self-evaluation, a standard I now hold as part of my professional identity.

The skills and understandings I’ve learned through collaborative academic work have instinctively flowed into my personal and professional surroundings. In my job, I’ve developed more intention in how I shape relationships with colleagues. I now start conversations about workload balance, team culture, and growth opportunities. Reiterating from Rosh, “Collaborative leadership thrives when leader cultivate a culture of psychological safety, where team members feel valued and heard” (Rosch et al., 2023, p. 118). I also listen more carefully, drawing from interview practices and qualitative research skills—to grasp the needs of those around me.

In my personal life, I’ve established better boundaries and emotional regulation through collaboration. For example, Sherice’s comment about work-life balance being a “unicorn” resonated with me. I’ve actively taken steps to safeguard my personal time by being transparent with others, saying no when needed, and taking personal time, without guilt. This has aided me to become a more present and successful team member in every area of my life.

My education has also helped me become more self-aware of the lens I bring to collaboration. As a person who values agreement and organization, I’ve had to push myself to appreciate constructive conflict and uncertainty—particularly in group projects and leadership roles. As Fox & Fine stated, “Leadership in solidarity asks us to learn from each other, to construct knowledge and share power, even when it is uncomfortable” (Fox & Fine, 2015, p. 47). I now recognize that diverse viewpoints, even when challenging, form stronger teams and more innovative outcomes.

Looking forward, I plan to continue this development. Short-term at the completion of my degree. I am ending on intentional reflection for each competency area and seeking a position on a human resource team. Long-term, I intend to pursue a Society of Human Resource Management certification and lead HR initiatives that encourage inclusive, cross-functional teamwork within organizations. I also hope to mentor others—just as I’ve been mentored—to create confidence and aptitude in the next generation of professionals.

Collaboration is not a static skill, but an active, developing practice. Through my graduate schedule, I’ve matured from a participant in projects to a leader in collaborative thinking and action. The artifacts I created, the final presentation and professional interview, are highlights in that journey. They show what I’ve learned and who I’ve become as a leader. Which I hope has proven to be a culturally responsive, relationally driven, and purpose-focused leader who values and nurtures collaboration in all its forms.

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