

Visions for the Future – Leadership

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion.” These words of Theodore Hesburgh, President Emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, speak to us as we are assembled here this week to make decisions shaping the future of Delta Kappa Gamma. What qualities must our leaders exhibit as they present the vision and implement the decisions made here? What, in fact, are the qualities each one of us must exhibit, for in Delta Kappa Gamma we are truly “a fellowship of leadership”?

The first characteristic of a leader is choice – that is, **leaders choose to lead**. A leader must decide that she wants to provide others with vision, direct the course of future events, and inspire others to success. Without this conscious decision, such aspirations seldom come to fruition.

As Father Hesburgh states, **leaders must have vision**, they must believe in and support the vision, and they must be able to communicate that vision clearly and consistently. Leadership “experts” James Kouzes and Barry Posner observe that “There’s nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can’t clearly articulate why we’re doing what we’re doing.”

Motivational speaker Mark Hoog defines leadership as “. . . bringing out the best in other people.” **Leaders enable and empower others**. They do this by selecting and involving others and by making others feel important and appreciated.

One of the rewards of being in a leadership position is the opportunity to identify people with leadership potential and to select them for positions of responsibility.

Although I never met John Brock until this evening, I did know his mother and other members of his family in Mississippi. As president of the Zeta State Mississippi Organization a number of years ago, I recognized the leadership qualities in Anise Brock and selected her to be one of the first district leaders in our state organization.

As international president twelve years ago, I appointed a number of members to international committees for their first time. Among those persons are current committee chairs, regional directors, other Administrative Board members, and an international president – Dr. Carolyn Rants.

Leaders listen. Good leaders care what others think, they ask questions to elicit ideas and suggestions, and they listen actively to the responses.

Leaders know what they value, and they recognize the importance of ethical behavior. They are accountable and they are trustworthy. When the leader's vision and actions are grounded in values and ethics, she will be trusted and she will inspire followers. A leader who says one thing and does another will undermine trust and thereby undermine the effectiveness of her leadership.

After the decisions have been made here this week, what is our responsibility? Our Society has a vision statement – *Leading Women Educators Impacting Education Worldwide*. If we make the choice to be leaders in DKG, we must share the vision, continue to listen to our members even as we enable and empower them, and demonstrate

values and ethical behavior as we implement the vision. The “fellowship of leadership” that is Delta Kappa Gamma has the power to become the premier professional organization for women educators worldwide. The future of our vision depends upon the quality of our leadership.

- Evelyn Barron, 1998-2000 International President
Delivered at Opening Session, 2010 International Convention
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