

Upon hearing about the Laidlaw Scholarship, I was incredibly excited, I immediately knew who I wanted to work with, and ideas were already streaming through my head. I knew that this scholarship would be a fantastic opportunity to learn about the field I wish pursue and acquire fundamental skills in both academic rigour and leadership. Since I was young, I have struggled immensely with public speaking; well-formulated ideas will fall out of my mouth in a garbled mess and I would be left embarrassed and disappointed. I knew this aspect of my life needed to change as such a skill is at the core of academia and a necessary requirement for proliferation of ideas. Over the course of the first half of my Laidlaw Scholarship journey I realised there were three main sets of traits every good leader must have, these being determination, approachability and adaptability.

The first set of qualities includes patience and perseverance which underpin the core ethos of determination, as a leader must be able to push forward in the face of adversity and struggle. A leader must take loss as lesson to be learned as opposed to a defeat; as no dead-end is found without first exploration and I realised over the course of the project that there is value to be found in the journey to an unfruitful result. I found that the skill of good patience is of particular importance as no grand ideas or strategies are ever hastily put into action, rather, they are mulled over to an obsessive extent and planned with excruciatingly meticulous detail. The skill of patience allows you to think outside the box, the more time you donate to a task the deeper the concepts run and the more fruitful a perspective avenue may be. It is, however, vital to always pair this with a healthy dose of perseverance because not all ventures are conducive to success and so you need to have the right attitude to pick yourself up and dare to try again. These concepts, I believe, are the essence of being an effective leader as people often forget that an exceptional leader will work alongside their team and are an integral cog in the mechanism of teamwork, they are the essential beam that bolsters the team's foundation. In that respect the leader is the most important element of the team as when they show strength in times of hardship, they will reassure other members and inspire a similar will to continue even when the team is facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The above-mentioned qualities came to me in the first few weeks of my project. I was struggling to understand some of the material I had to digest before beginning to apply my own ideas and so I turned to my supervisor for inspiration. Even in the most stressful times he seemed cool and always had a plan of action to implement. This was a trait I was eager to develop in my own personality; I knew I needed change my outlook on research and adopt a whole new perspective on what it meant to fail. It wasn't long until I hit some major blockades in my research which zapped me of my enthusiasm at first but slowly, as I overcame each challenge, I felt more accomplished and I began to see the failures for their incredibly valuable learning potential. I think back to the leadership weekend and I see the same traits coming into play. In our groups we sometimes struggled to see eye to eye, and we all had to exercise patience and perseverance in order to come to a consensus. The fact that each one of us took the time to see things from each other's perspectives bred determination within the group to be able to reach a reasonable resolution to the tasks at hand. During my project I also had the opportunity to attend an international seminar on the subject my project was based on and it was an amazing opportunity to see these traits manifest themselves in real leaders of academia. I was struck with awe at how easily these professors could communicate with ease (seemingly flawlessly) and I noticed in particular that these speakers carried themselves with such passion of their respective topics that, even though they too have obviously faced hardship in the course of their research, because they had such a strong love for what they did, patience and perseverance came naturally and ultimately their determination was fed by that passion.

The second set of qualities is to be both knowledgeable and humble, as these two traits go a long way to making a leader more approachable. I found this to be a necessary trait, as a leader must

be able to teach by example and maintain a level of respect with all those around them. A leader must also be able to build up their team giving them valuable skills such that they too can reach a similar position of expertise in the future. I believe that effective leaders will always try to improve others in the group to be better than themselves, this allows for the group to grow in expertise and breeds an independence that promotes efficiency. However, staying humble is key to promoting an approachable character, as a leader needs to encourage positive relationships with the other members of the group. It also allows for a leader to look back at where they are now in relation to where they started and to emphasise with the potential personal struggles of other members. This action of putting yourself in another member's shoes allows you to see other perspectives and tailor teaching moments towards that member.

While I was attending the international seminar, I noted that all the speakers were incredibly knowledgeable, upon having the chance to chat with them I realised I was tapping into a great reservoir of information. Even though I thought that this fact had to be an obvious requirement for such a seminar, I initially failed to see how they had a level of understanding that is both unique and deep which made them a valuable contributor to the seminar for myself and the other attendants. I learned that all these leaders in academia had their own personal perspectives on problems that could give me a rare insight into my research which would help me expand my own expertise. I was incredibly grateful that multiple members took the time to speak to me, I knew that their priority at the seminar was to show and discuss their results with other eminent fluid dynamicists in attendance, nevertheless, they put time aside to discuss their topics and answer my many questions, which taught me the valuable lesson of staying humble in leadership. Even when attending the leadership weekend, I saw these two traits meld together in the interactions between all the attendees as we worked together in our groups. Everyone came from different backgrounds and areas of expertise which created an environment that was ripe with opportunity. The wide range of knowledge brought to the table fostered an efficiency that I had never seen before; if a certain problem arose that required a particular skill then there was almost always a person to fill that position. This allowed the team to learn from one another and generally having a positive attitude promoted by good communication within the groups - everyone was taking the time to help one another to understand what they needed to do and what was expected of them. This struck me as remarkable as I could see that those in the group that were able to lead effectively did so by throwing themselves into the task and teaching others in a manner that stimulated action.

The last set of qualities covers the concept that a leader must always cast their critiquing view inwards and be able to evaluate their own actions to allow for both personal growth and change; these qualities are adaptive, reflective and observant. The latter of the three qualities is especially important as a good leader learns from not only their own mistakes but the mistakes of those around them. A leader must be able to point out their own flaws and be constantly trying to find ways to improve in all aspects of their leadership abilities. Admitting shortcomings shows humility within a group setting and allows everyone in the group to feel comfortable to discuss their own skills. The result of developing the skills of observation and self-reflection allow a leader to develop a readiness which aids them in manoeuvring around potentially difficult situations, helping them in the planning of the group direction such that they can adapt to the present challenges that the group is facing. This ability to adapt to the pressures and stresses around them make these leaders resilient and serve an important role in contingency planning.

Attending the seminar and leadership weekend afforded me many opportunities to observe quality leadership in action. I encountered many occasions where things worked well and others where attempts did not, I found this to be an extremely valuable experience as I could see from an

outsider perspective what strategies produce the best results. Particularly when attending the leadership weekend seeing all the presentations taught me powerful lessons that help with public speaking, I learned that regardless of what you are presenting you must always talk with the utmost confidence - I was always listening in awe of those who wielded this skill with ease and their confidence alone made their presentations all the more captivating. I know now, after reflecting on these experiences, that my fear of public speaking stems from a fear of being questioned or critiqued. This fear, though perfectly normal, has no need to be manifested as I understand now that all of us are in this journey together and we are all trying to learn from one another, therefore making mistakes in these cases is good as they will help me strive to perfect these skills allowing me to be more adaptive.

All the attributes discussed above do not come naturally to everyone, they are skills we all must develop over time with many experiences in our lives shaping our perception of leadership. The act of improving smaller traits will eventually lead to the development of a leadership style that is determined, approachable and adaptive. These prevailing traits, together forming the desirable apex of good leadership, take dedication and practice to master and as I head towards the next set of challenges in the Laidlaw Programme, I have a few methods that I intend to implement into my life in order to promote the development of these traits in my personality. The first method I intend to employ is the use of an efficiency journal which will help me keep track of everyday tasks and the relative time and effort I will be putting into them. The idea is to maximise the number of tasks you do each day, doing more every subsequent day, allowing for better time management. This method will help me to stay dedicated and focused by allowing me to streamline activities and by helping me to reflect on the inevitable shortcomings of each day. Furthermore, I will be undertaking a module in the coming year that will expose me to academic presentation and delivery methods which, along with future presentations directly related to Laidlaw, will help massively with my public speaking fear.

This past year has changed my outlook on leadership and academia massively. I realise that the definition of great leader is a more fluid than I imagined. Being exposed to real life leaders at work left me hoping to attain a similar level of expertise and competence. With a newly refined network of attributes that I will aim to focus on in order to improve both my public speaking skills and my everyday interactions. I have a strong feeling of inspiration to seek out more leadership opportunities in the future and I now have a new-found enthusiasm to do a PhD which will put me on track to becoming an active leader in academia.