

At the very start of my Laidlaw experience, when I first applied for the scholarship, I didn't have a firm grasp of what leadership truly meant. Although I had been in a number of positions which required leadership - as a class representative, student ambassador and secretary of St Regulus Hall Committee - I didn't understand the common threads which tied leadership into those roles. Many of those jobs had commonalities; they often required similar skills and abilities, which I have since come to learn are key to leadership. These range from the obvious, such as managing a team, leading others and being led myself, to more nuanced skills that I didn't immediately associate with leadership, such as communication, organisation, reflection and introspection.

The interviews which comprised the application process for the Laidlaw Scholarship highlighted some of these skills, which brought them to my attention and made me consider them in terms of leadership. Utilising these skills directly, under scrutiny and pressure, reassured me in my ability to apply them to my everyday life. However, I realised that whilst I was comfortable making use of said skills, I did not feel comfortable referencing them in an academic setting. I felt I lacked the understanding of the language and theory that I would require to discuss leadership from such a perspective. This was a difficulty for me in the application process, as I struggled to analyse leadership beyond the superficial. What made the difference between self-leadership and leading a team? Which skills were necessary for either, or both? What tied different practical situations together as varying forms of leadership?

I started to address these questions, and develop my own understanding, on the first leadership weekend. I spent an extended period considering leadership theories and alternative leadership styles. The DiSC profiles helped me understand my own type of leadership, which leans strongly towards the D/C (Dominance/Conscientiousness) side of the DiSC. I also learnt how my style of leadership varies from others, such as my opposite style, I/S (Influence/Steadiness). Learning the behaviours and motivations of each style helped me to acknowledge the many variations on leadership can all be valid, and can all result in good leadership. There are many different ways to be a leader with different levels of effectiveness - no one style will suit all people and situations. This was something I had not considered before.

Studying the theory of my own leadership was useful; it taught me the strengths of my leadership - objectivity, task orientation, and acceptance of challenges - while acknowledging the weaknesses - bluntness and fear of failure. This reflection is not something I had really taken time to do before, and it forced me to rethink my attitudes toward my own leadership. Since then, I have tried to change my method when necessary, in order to be a more effective leader. During the weekend, I was asked to work with other D/C leaders, which I found quite challenging. It was difficult to contend with multiple people trying to 'take charge' directly, and this confirmed my belief that diversity of leadership is necessary for effective work. I was happy that in this situation, I did actually change my style to become more accommodating and compromising - something which doesn't come naturally to D/C leaders. I think this helped create a more balanced group, and allowed me to see the theory in action in a real-life situation. Since the leadership weekend, I have tried to be self aware in my leadership, and I have especially focused on being more empathetic and understanding in my style.

This has been particularly useful over the past year in my role as Senior Student of St Regulus Hall. In the summer after the first half of my research project, I lead a team of six to plan and implement a programme of approximately 20 events in 9 days, for orientation week. I had to lead the team remotely, as we were all outside of St Andrews for the

summer, and this forced me to be more considerate of other people's schedules and circumstances. The first week of events was a great success, and using empathy and understanding to maintain a harmonious atmosphere in a high-stress environment was a key part of that.

This continued throughout the year. My team grew to 12 members, and we continued to plan and execute multiple events per month throughout the year. However, my biggest leadership challenge was undoubtedly in handling the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on my committee and hall as a whole. Almost overnight, the entire hall was evacuated and our biggest event was put at risk. Calm, collective leadership allowed us to handle the situation far more easily. In the end, we decided to postpone our event to September - the event may ultimately be postponed again, or cancelled, but those decisions will be made in the same way, through good communication, organisation and collective leadership.

I will be continuing in my role as Senior Student of St Regulus Hall next year - even though I won't actually be living in Regs at all, due to health concerns. A few months ago, that might have seemed impossible. Now, thanks to my improved confidence in my own leadership, it seems sensible. I'm really looking forward to bringing all of the leadership skills and theoretical work that I've developed during my time as a Laidlaw scholar to the role. Maybe I'll even learn something new about leadership then, too.

I've already made use of many of the leadership skills and theory that I mentioned previously for this role. After my research ended this July, I spent the latter half of my summer focusing on the work of the committee in responding to the regulations and restrictions imposed on the university for the upcoming semester. I've been involved in weeks worth of meetings with high-level university figures, and throughout it all, leadership has been key. Not only have I had to lead a team remotely, with all the difficulties that entails, but I've also had to lead myself through increasingly stressful periods. Without the skills developed in the Laidlaw scholarship, I would have struggled much more frequently.

Since the beginning of my Laidlaw experience, I have attended multiple sessions focusing on developing leadership skills. The first of three leadership lunches organised by the Laidlaw team took place on my first day, and provided an opportunity to consider leadership theory with the team and my peers. I found it useful mostly as an opportunity to network with my fellow scholars; networking is an important part of leadership, after all. Building up my network wasn't just a chance to develop my leadership skills; it was also an excellent opportunity to build up a rapport within my cohort and help to develop a team mentality. We already had a Facebook group chat in place after our first leadership weekend, and the first lunch helped stimulate that contact. It allowed us to communicate in person, which was a good way to solidify the bonds we made on the leadership weekend. Following that, those of us who worked together in St Andrews at the same time last summer started to develop a real camaraderie; we started a weekly meeting called Cake Friday (I still get compliments for my vegan treacle sponge cake!) and we finished the summer with a final celebratory meal together. Developing that community required teamwork and motivation, two crucial leadership skills, but it was also a lot of fun. The best leadership is one that you partake in of your own volition, and working within Laidlaw has definitely proven that concept to me. The benefits are still noticeable - Cake Fridays has continued into my second summer, and the friendships I have built with some of my peers will outlast the Laidlaw experience entirely.

Further leadership lunches took place across the first summer. One was given by a representative from Heineken, who talked to us about leadership and culture. He made an interesting distinction between the culture we find in the UK and that in Eastern Europe. I thought it was intriguing that in other countries, leaders are expected to be decisive, because it shows strong direction and authority, while in the UK, we often hope that leaders will be more willing to compromise and consult with their communities, taking slower, perhaps more widely considered decisions. This lunch has stuck with me since the first summer, and I continue to be interested in the differences in culture and leadership internationally.

This summer, the focus on leadership has necessarily been subdued in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the ongoing situation, my Laidlaw experience has changed from a focus on outward leadership - leading a team, leading peers, leading within a group - to an introspective form of self-leadership. Due to my ongoing isolation from others, the only person I can and must lead effectively is myself. This manifests in a very different way to the other types of leadership we have discussed in Laidlaw. To me, the main skill for self-leadership is motivation. I have struggled immensely with motivation this summer - what point is there in research when no-one might read it? What's the use in getting up early, when my day will look the same either way? These type of troubling questions plagued me earlier in my research. Thankfully, I was able to overcome these concerns.

I learnt the most this summer not from any particular leadership lunch or session organised by the Laidlaw team - as interesting as those experiences are. For me, the greatest learning experience was the one I lived everyday in the midst of the global pandemic. I learned that leadership doesn't have to be speaking to a crowd of people, or managing a team of dozens, or even organising anyone else's time but my own. Sometimes, the hardest type of leadership to master simply involves forcing yourself out of bed in the morning. While I struggled at first, it's important to know that self-leadership is like any other type of leadership - you learn by doing. Every day of my project, that self-leadership got easier. As I am approaching the end of my project and Laidlaw experience now, I can safely say that I feel I have started to truly understand how to motivate myself - even when it feels like the world is ending.

I even have more to learn - I missed a leadership session in March, and thankfully an online version has been scheduled in October, so I can still take part. I am looking forward to finishing up my time in the Laidlaw programme with continued study and discussion, even if it does have to take place through a Teams call!

In the future, I intend to further develop the leadership and associated skills I studied and exercised on the Laidlaw leadership programme. As I mentioned earlier, I have been re-elected the Senior Student for St Regulus Hall for the coming year. I will also continue in my role as a student ambassador; I was recently promoted to a Senior Ambassador, thanks in part to my improved leadership over the past year, no doubt. In that role, I will continue to require excellent communication and interpersonal skills - if the role is forced to continue in a virtual capacity next year, that need will only be exacerbated. I am currently undecided as to whether I will stand for Class Representative again next year - if I do, the election and job itself will continue to necessitate both empathy for my peers, communication with staff, and organisation.

When it comes to studying leadership in the future, I would rather focus on the practical application than theoretical analysis. I think there is definitely value in learning about the

theory of leadership, and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to study that, but I still believe that the best way to become a good leader is to lead. As with most vocational studies, theoretical work is useful to understand your strengths and weaknesses and improve your techniques, but the best way to learn is to put that into practice. To that end, I intend to continue to put myself into positions of leadership, while making use of the theory I have come to understand during my Laidlaw experience.