

Reflective Report

My desire to be a part of the Laidlaw programme was born out of the opportunity to conduct research as an undergraduate student. The practical aspects of the programme have remained incredibly valuable in my career planning, however my motivation has shifted towards the community aspect of the programme. It is one thing to learn about leadership through lesson plans and exercises, but to witness it firsthand through the growth of my cohort, who have grown to real friendships, is an enduring inspiration of leadership that will shape my character for years to come.

Through the Oxford Character programme, I learned the value of balance within leadership. Whilst an attribute may be a virtue, too much or too little can be a vice, and it is our responsibility to find that balance within ourselves to be the most effective leaders. For example, I have always considered planning to be an overt strength of mine in leadership positions. However, through collaborating with various people with varying communication and working styles, I have learned that excessive planning can be a vice, and that enduring leadership is forged in flexibility.

I have learned my leadership style is one of an acute awareness of my own skillset as well as limitations. In Summer 1, I was exposed to an array of foreign interfaces such as Excel and ArcGIS Pro, with which I felt immensely out of my depth. This self-doubt carried over into Summer 2, when I interviewed unemployed people in a language I wasn't fully confident in or when I edited the interviews in Premiere Pro, an interface I had never used before. I was out of my comfort zone in both with the practical interfaces I used and with the communities I sought to engage with. I then spoke to my cohort, and I felt comforted that they shared similar feelings of being out of their depth. I began to realise that those feelings of weakness and inadequacy are actually signs that you are growing and learning in the face of new experiences. I am now more confident within my leadership identity through the numerous opportunities at Laidlaw to both showcase my strengths and to explore ways of balancing my vices into virtues.

The areas of leadership I seek to develop in the future are in the areas of creativity and resilience. I hope to continue to turn my ideas into actions through making effective decisions in complicated environments and to promote innovative problem-solving as well

as to bring my energy to my projects in their transition from idea to product. I tend to get caught up in the practical aspects and logistics of the project that I forgot to bring to the execution of the project the excitement and energy that motivated its inception. In the future, I hope to work on getting out of my own head and enjoy every stage of the process, with energy and creativity.

Good leadership is a wildly subjective and intangible objective. The goalpost is a couple paces ahead in every moment of progress; there is never a time where you have 'achieved' good leadership. "Good leadership" is therefore in the continual pursuit of growth and to maintain the humility that there are always lessons to be learned and skills to develop. Within this modest mindset, good leadership can be simply explained as striking a balance between listening and speaking, between initiative and collaboration, and between creative visions and practical execution. It is the balance you seek within your own skillset that you can optimise the best 'good leader' you can be, all the whilst remembering that it is not a box to check off.

My experience with the Laidlaw Programme has been one of the most joyful and beneficial experiences of my entire college career. As I have outlined, the practical elements of the programme have been infinitely rewarding, from collaborating with an esteemed Trinity professor on research of my own design as an undergraduate student, to the Oxford Character Project, and the LEAD Days. What has been the most precious experience of the programme, however, are the lifelong connections and friendships I have made from my cohort. At the Durham conference, other cohorts told us the Trinity team had an infectious joyful spirit without a semblance of competitive spirit between us, despite being a group of 20+ bright and driven students. To be a part of a team that champions joy and support for the achievements of others has taught me about true leadership, and I am honored to be a peer of the 2025 cohort.