

**Academic Affairs Leadership Discovery Group (AALDG)**  
**San José State University**  
**Program Brief**  
**Fall 2017**

This brief provides a summary of the Academic Affairs Leadership Discovery Group (AALDG), including its background and key elements.

### **Background**

In April 2013, a professional development activity was created for faculty and staff in the Academic Affairs Division. The focus was on helping participants better understand their readiness for a leadership and administrative position. An announcement was sent to everyone in the Academic Affairs Division (more than 1,400 people) on April 9, 2013, asking interested people to apply to the program. The goal was to get 50 people involved, but 80 people applied. After discussion with the Academic Affairs Leadership Team (Provost, AVPs and Deans), a decision was made to invite all 80 to participate.

A kick-off meeting was held on May 14, 2013 at the lunch hour. At that time, 77 people indicated they wanted to participate. Participants were welcomed by the Provost, an overview to the program was provided and the importance of self-discovery to leadership was explained. Each participant received two books for summer reading and was assigned to a group of four to five people. Participants were told to complete assessments included in each book and check in periodically with their group members during summer to be sure everyone was completing the self-assessments and reading as well as to enable the group members to get to know each other. The assigned books for this first year were:

Bradberry, T. & Greaves, J. (2009). *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego: TalentSmart.

Daniels, D., & Price, V. (2009). *The Essential Enneagram: The Definitive Personality Test and Self-Discovery Guide – Revised and Updated*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

After the meeting, participants were asked to complete a pre-assessment of this activity via online survey. After the first year of the program ended in May 2014, a post-assessment was done with mostly the same questions as used for the pre-assessment.

Monthly meetings resumed in September for a total of eight meetings through May 2014. A certificate was presented to everyone who completed the program. The program was designed by one of the Provost's Academic Affairs Administrative Fellows with input from the Provost. The fellow facilitated the program for the first two years.

Professor Annette Nellen, the first leader of AALDG, was responsible for the ideas that became AALDG via her application to the Provost Fellow program initiated by Ellen Junn. Provost Andy Feinstein continued AALDG, and because of Professor Nellen's belief that it is good for AALDG to have someone in the program take it over every year or two, she recommended a replacement in 2015 to encourage new ideas and provide a leadership opportunity for participants. Professor Peter Allen Lee, a two-year AALDG participant,

assumed facilitation duties and became a Provost Fellow. He currently serves as the facilitator of the Academic Affairs Leadership Discovery Group. Professor Nellen continues to be a Provost Fellow, leader, and advisor to the group.

## **AALDG Program Elements**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of AALDG is to provide an opportunity for interested faculty and staff in the Academic Affairs Division to explore their interest in leadership and to prepare for a possible leadership position in academia or a related area. Participants have opportunities to learn from university administrators, others in leadership positions, peers in the program, and through readings and discussions. The activities also improve personal, professional, and leadership skills used in work and personal arenas. Participants develop a plan of action to help in reaching their leadership goals.

A key distinction is that the group is a “discovery” group, not a training group. In this manner, participants are encouraged to further their journey by exploring issues, aspects, and characteristics of leadership; AALDG is not a management training course per se.

### **Activities:**

Activities in AALDG have been conducted in various ways, including through in-person interactions, online discussion, and independent learning. Canvas, an online learning management system, has been the primary tool for curriculum, discussion, and assignment management. The types of activities have included, but are not limited to:

- Guest Panelists (Campus administrators and leaders)
- Leadership and Personality Characteristics Assessments (e.g., via StrengthsFinder 2.0 test or the Essential Enneagram test)
- Emotional Intelligence Assessment
- Book discussion groups
- Leadership career action plan
- Informational interviews
- Speed mentoring
- Leadership mission statement
- Outside small group discussion and peer support
- Online discussion

### **Books and Materials:**

Various books have been used over the years, including:

Bradberry, T. & Greaves, J. (2009). *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego: TalentSmart.

Daniels, D., & Price, V. (2009). *The Essential Enneagram: The Definitive Personality Test and Self-Discovery Guide – Revised and Updated*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Harvard Business Review. (2015). *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Harvard Business Review. (2011). *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Rath, T. (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press.

Sinek, S. (2011). *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*.

Materials have also included articles from professional journals, references to additional resources, and information about other leadership development curricula.

### **Expectations of Participants:**

Participants are expected to:

- Attend the monthly meetings (usually 1 to 1.5 hours during Friday lunchtime)
- Complete readings and self-assessment tests
- Complete assigned activities, including a Leadership Career Action Plan (please refer to the examples)
- Check in via email, phone call, or in-person, once or twice per month with fellow group members;

A certificate of completion is awarded to those who fulfill the attendance and activity requirements.

### **Attendance and Participation**

In the past four years, there has been considerable interest in AALDG at the outset. However, regular attendance and participation often declines from the start of the year (September) to the end (May). Feedback has indicated that AALDG participants do value the discovery process and activities, but the length of commitment, unforeseen or increasing responsibilities during the academic year, and/or the day and time of the in-person meetings contributed to their drop-off. In 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, AALDG switched to more frequent intensive sessions in the Fall season and periodic special events in the Spring season.

### **AALDG's Influence**

Since the start of AALDG, several participants have reported promotions or desired position changes. Their involvement in AALDG provided encouragement to explore their leadership growth, seek out opportunities, and take a risk to apply for new jobs. Notable examples include those now serving as:

- Chief of Staff, Office of the President
- Associate Vice President of Graduate & Undergraduate Programs
- Associate Dean, College of Social Sciences
- Executive Communications Specialist - University Advancement, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs
- Senior Director, Collaboration and Academic Technology Integration
- Director of eCampus

## **Budget**

Currently the budget is about \$7,000 for the academic year plus assigned-time costs (20 percent x two semesters) for the AALDG Director. Funding has been used for:

- Assigned books
- AALDG refreshments
- Office/programming supplies and certificates

## **Sample Materials**

Attached are sample materials used in AALDG:

- Welcome Letter Script
- Sample Session Agendas (PowerPoint slide format)
- Leadership Career Action Plan (template)
- Informational Interview Instructions and Help Sheet
- Book Descriptions and Discussion Group Sign-Ups
- 2015-2016 AALDG Group Picture

## **Questions and Contact Information**

Peter Allen Lee, Ph.D., MSW  
 Provost Fellow - Director, Academic Affairs Leadership Discovery Group (AALDG);  
 Director, SJSU "UP" Pre-College Programs; and  
 Professor  
 School of Social Work - CASA  
 One Washington Square  
 San José State University  
 San José, California 95192-0124  
 peter.a.lee@sjsu.edu  
 (408) 924-5850

Annette Nellen  
 Professor and Director of the MST Program  
 CPA, CGMA, Esq.  
 MST Program  
 College of Business  
 San José State University  
 One Washington Square  
 San José, CA 95192-0066  
 annette.nellen@sjsu.edu  
 (408) 924-3508