**Lifelong Learning**

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Speaker’s Name(s): Bryce Hughes and William Schell, Graduate Students at Montana State University

Topic of Talk: Leadership in Engineering

Sponsoring Organization: Montana State University

**Introduction**

Two graduate students from Montana State University were conducting a study on what students believed leadership in engineering is. The study was comprised of a series of questions that included: What got you in to engineering? What do you think being an engineer means? What do you think being a leader means? What do you think leadership in engineering is? The discussion was fairly open with each student taking their turn answering the question and other students adding to the points being made. The group was made of six students and each student’s response was recorded. The purpose of the study was to take all the student’s responses and use them to help engineers, in particular young engineers, become better leaders.

**Discussion**

An interesting topic of discussion was if each person believed that they were a leader. Most people in the group felt like they were not leaders, or they were working towards becoming a leader. What I found interesting was that some members in the group said that they assumed a leadership role when no one in their group wanted to be the leader or when the leader of their group wasn’t doing an adequate job. I just thought it was interesting that given a particular set of circumstances, people that normally aren’t leaders become leaders. Another interesting discussion was that one student felt like he was someone that his group despised when he was the leader. This student said he is very stern when he is a leader and makes sure everyone in the group pulls their weight. I feel as though I am on the other end of the spectrum when I am leading a group. I’m most always friendly and encouraging with my teammates and hardly ever stern. A hard, stern leader’s group usually will get their work done in a timely manner, but members in the group will be less inspired to do their best work and it is likely that there will be strife within the group. A group with a friendly, encouraging leader will most likely not have much strife and members will be more encouraged to produce quality work, but some members might take advantage of the lack of scolding and not finish their work on time.

We were also asked if we considered ourselves engineers. All of us at the table didn’t consider ourselves engineers. I feel like I can’t consider myself an engineer until I have contributed to a product that is being used by customers. That led to a discussion on the college system and degree program. To earn a bachelor’s degree in computer science, almost all of the classes required are focused on furthering your skills and knowledge. There isn’t a lot of focus on real world scenarios or day-to-day activities of a software engineer. While improving your skills is necessary to be successful in the industry, I feel that having some classes in the degree plan that look at code being used in the industry and software engineer duties would better prepare computer science graduates to enter the workforce.

**Conclusion**

I initially wasn’t going to attend this study as I was signed up for data visualization workshop. The workshop cancelled and I had to sign up for the research opportunity last minute. In the end, I learned a lot from the study and I’m glad that I attended. The biggest takeaway for me from the study was learning about other people’s thought process on leading a group and qualities they look for in a leader. It was interesting to me that a lot of people in our study felt pressure when they are a leader of group because they are afraid to fail. I’ve never felt this fear of failure and I credit it to my 14 years of playing baseball. Baseball is called a game of failure; good hitters get a hit 3 out of every 10 at-bats. That means that a good hitter fails 7 out of every 10 at-bats. Baseball taught me how to fail and that failure is just part of life. I can see how that can be a difficult lesson to learn for some people.

This study was relevant to my major because I’ve taken leadership roles in the past, I’m currently in a leadership role, and I will continue to be in leadership roles in my career. It’s important that I continue to improve my leadership skills so that I can add as much value as I can to the company that I am working for. It’s also important for me to continue participate in activities like these to further my skills so I can be the best that I can be and prevent obsolescing out of the workforce.

**CSE - 4314**

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*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student Id Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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