

Learning by Leading™ Program Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Learning by Leading™ Program?

At the UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden (APG), we see our highest purpose as inspiring human potential to help people and environments thrive. We developed the Learning by Leading™ (LxL) Program with this in mind and organized it around the premise that students learn best by leading. Therefore, the LxL internships give students opportunities in which high-level, authentic leadership and greater impact is possible.

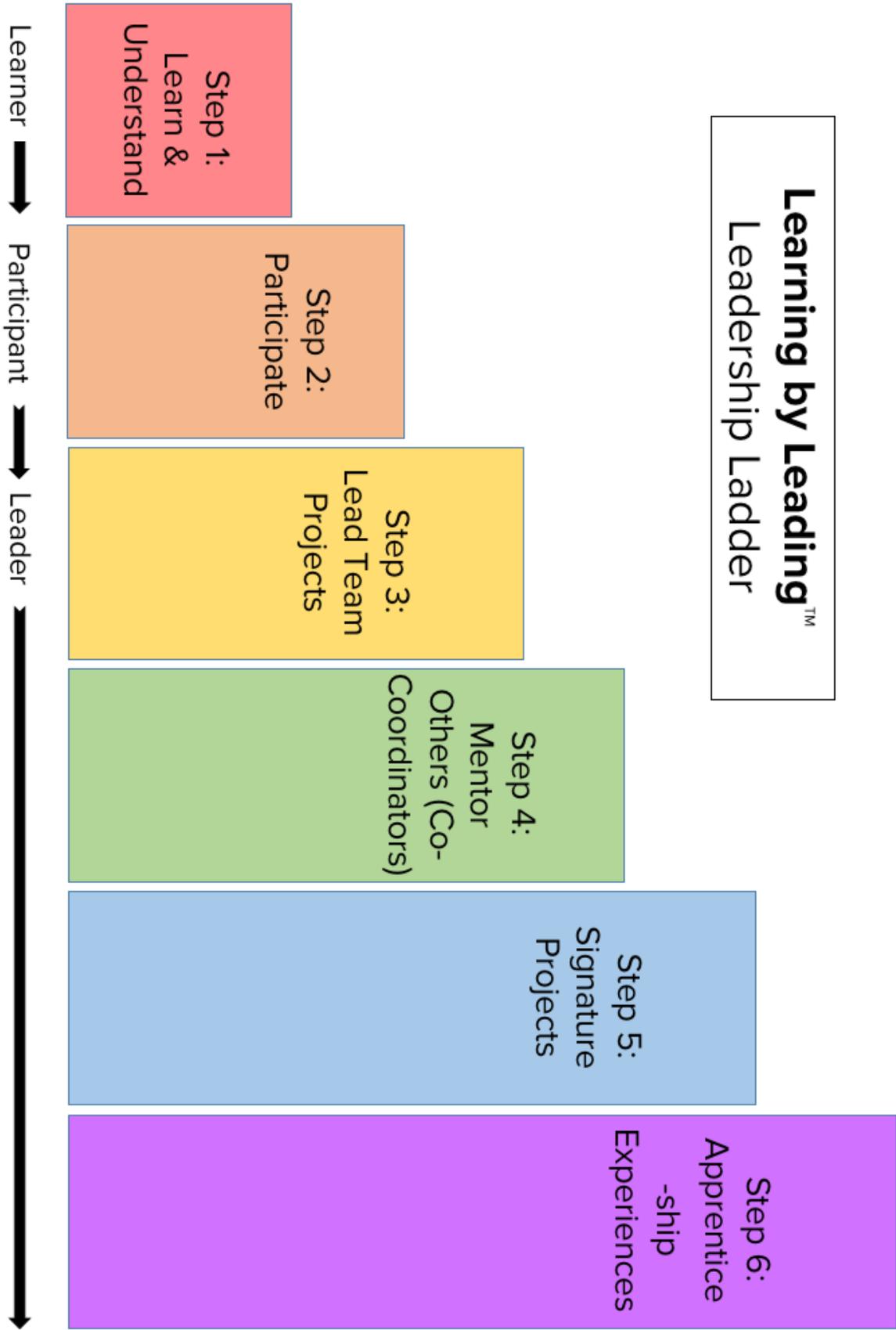
How is the LxL Program different from a traditional internship?

In many traditional internships, students often are learners the whole time they are in the program. While there is a great benefit from students learning all they can, the LxL internships intentionally move students through a “Leadership Ladder” from learner to participant to leader as quickly as possible. Students rapidly take on real-world issues and must take a leadership role in solving them.

What is the LxL Leadership Ladder?

The LxL Leadership Ladder has six steps, from learner to participant and then to four different levels of leadership (see next page). A student does not have to move through the stages in a step-wise fashion, although most students do the first three steps as an intern before moving on to one or more of the last three steps. Step #4, the second “leader” step, is to become a co-coordinator. Step #5 is to do a “Signature Project” A Signature Project is when a student identifies an independent project they want to undertake, usually in the area of a student’s passion. Mentored by a staff person, the student plans and executes their project, often seeking outside funding to help make it happen. Step #6 is to become an apprentice. Apprentices usually want to make public horticulture their career, and they work closely with a staff mentor to take on greater responsibilities within normal public garden operations, be it in horticulture, nursery management, education or other area.

Learning by Leading™ Leadership Ladder



How is an LxL internship structured?

Each LxL internship is led by a staff mentor with expertise and experience in the content area of the internship. They then recruit two student leaders (we call them “co-coordinators”) who help develop, plan and lead the internship. The co-coordinators mentor up to 12-14 interns. At the APG, the co-coordinators are paid (currently \$12/hours for 5-10 hours/week) and the interns get course credit in different departments depending on the internship (3 hours of work = 1 internship credit). At the APG, most internships run for the whole academic year. Some internships will accept new students each quarter/semester.

How do you build in continuity in student leadership and knowledge from one year to the next?

Ideally, there would be a more senior co-coordinator and a more junior one working together. When the more senior co-coordinator graduates, the more junior one stays. In addition, new co-coordinators are ideally recruiting from among the interns who have already experienced the program. Once an internship is up and running, co-coordinators can lead the intern recruitment the quarter/semester before the internship will start. At the APG, most co-coordinators recruit new interns in the spring to start the following fall. Co-coordinators develop recruitment materials (e.g., publicity and applications), develop the criteria to review applications and run the interview and selection process, with mentorship from their staff liaison.

What topics do you cover in the LxL internships at the UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden?

We started with only one internship in 2008, the Arboretum Ambassadors, focused on educational programming. Over several years, the Ambassadors experimented with the internship model, eventually landing on the co-coordinator structure we have today. In 2013, the second internship was launched, focused on edible gardens. Since then, the program has expanded greatly. We currently have two umbrella strands of the program – Environmental Stewardship and Environmental Education and Outreach – with 13 individual internships.

Focus Area/Program Strand	Learning by Leading™ Internship Team
Environmental Stewardship	Sustainable Horticulture Plant Propagation & Nursery Management Curatorial/Plant Records Habitat Restoration & Naturalized Lands SEE Putah Creek (Steward, Explore, Engage) Waterway Stewardship Edible Landscaping Habitat Horticulture Tree Conservation SmartScape
Environmental Education and Outreach	Arboretum Ambassadors GATEways Outreach Museum Education

What qualities do you look for in a staff mentor?

A staff mentor should be someone who is a leader themselves. They should enjoy working with young people and mentoring others. They should be open to allowing students to experiment, while also understanding what projects are appropriate within the parameters of the institution and a reasonable size and scope for students to accomplish within the timeframe. Staff mentors work with garden leaders. They should be comfortable in giving students latitude in coming up with solutions to issues or problems, but also make sure to scaffold experiences so failures or major missteps are minimized. Staff mentors also guide their students to connect their work with the larger institutional priorities so their work can be part of the larger whole.

What qualities do you look for in a student leader/co-coordinator?

A student should ideally show leadership potential, which can sometimes be seen in previous experiences they have had. Have they taken on extra responsibilities in previous job or volunteer experiences? Have they been promoted in a previous job or volunteer experience? Ideally, you will have first-hand experience with students as interns who identify themselves as leaders by their actions during the internship. There is no one type of student that can be a leader. For instance, we've had both extraverts and introverts be amazing leaders.

What is the ideal planning schedule when trying to start an LxL internship?

At the APG, we have found that it works best to hire your two co-coordinators a quarter/semester or summer before you are going to start a new internship. That way, the co-coordinators have time to help the staff mentor envision and plan out the internship before it starts. It is also a great leadership experience for the co-coordinators to start an internship from the ground up. The co-coordinators can also help recruit and select the first group of interns.

What does a year, quarter/semester, and week look like in an LxL internship?

For most internships, much of the training takes place in the fall, planning for the students' projects takes place in the winter, and implementation of projects happens in the spring. During each quarter/semester, the co-coordinators meet weekly for a one-hour planning meeting with their staff mentors. Then the co-coordinators lead weekly meetings with their interns and staff mentor. For education interns, this is usually an hour-long planning meeting, with their educational programs occurring on the weekends. For environmental stewardship interns, this is usually a three-hour block of worktime during the week (sometimes two three-hour blocks) to design and implement their physical-world projects.

How are student projects vetted and chosen?

Staff mentors work with APG leadership to develop priorities and parameters for student projects. More and more, we are working to align student projects with larger campus initiatives and priorities, such as adapting to drought and climate change. Student co-coordinators then take these priorities and parameters and work with their staff mentors to identify specific projects for the interns. Then interns choose which projects they want to do, sometimes taking the role as lead on a particular project and sometimes a team member on another intern's project. Sometimes co-coordinators and interns will bring project or program proposals to their staff mentors to consider.

How do you create a community feeling among the students in the LxL program?

As the program has grown, we've been developing more strategies to create a community feeling and cohesion among the different internships. First, we give each student an LxL t-shirt to wear while they are doing projects or acting as a representative of the program. Secondly, we've created group trainings that help students feel part of the larger program. Right before school starts in the fall, we conduct a training for all the co-coordinators. Then, soon after the fall quarter/semester begins, we conduct an introductory training for all the LxL interns. During the year, we offer one to three optional diversity & inclusion trainings for all interns. At the end of the academic year, we throw a party for all the students. We give a special thank-you gift for all the co-coordinators (we like leadership and plant books) and a year-long membership to all graduating seniors. We ask a selection of seniors and co-coordinators to write or record a testimonial that we can use with donor and other materials. We also encourage all seniors to join our LinkedIn and Facebook networks and to keep in touch with their career trajectories.

How has the Learning by Leading™ program enhanced fundraising capabilities?

We find that LxL is inspiring to both internal and external funders. As campus administrators see how the work of the students is improving the campus both physically and through engagement of the community, we have received more campus funding. For instance, we recently were allocated a significantly larger amount of campus funding, both for capital and operating, due to the way we've been able to show student leadership in getting projects done. We've also been able to leverage campus funding by creating external fundraising campaigns related to these campus-funded projects. For instance, the campus invested significant funds to renovate a section of the Arboretum Waterway, part of the campus storm water system that meanders through the Arboretum. In addition, campus funded a Waterway Steward staff position to care for the renovated Waterway. To leverage this campus investment, we created a Waterway WOW! campaign as part of two giving days (one on campus and one in the community) to raise an additional \$80,000 to start a Waterway Stewardship Learning by Leading™ internship, led by the Waterway Steward, and give that internship the supplies and equipment needed to take leadership for the care of the Waterway.

Other donors have been inspired to give endowments (minimum \$50,000) or bequests for the LxL Program. These donors care deeply about student leadership development, both in general or at UC Davis more specifically. Corporations have also been interested in supporting the program, as they are looking for skilled employees for their own companies. Finally, impact investors, such as foundations, understand that we have grave societal and environmental issues in the world that need solving. They are inspired to support the program because they see this as a way to support our future environmental leaders.

What are some leadership resources that can help me get started building a culture of leadership?

- *Leading in a Time of Change: What it Will Take to Lead Tomorrow* by Peter Drucker and Peter Senge
- *Leading Change* by John P. Kotter
- *Blue Ocean Strategy* by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne
- *Leadership and the New Science* by Margaret Wheatley
- *Getting to Maybe* by Frances Westley and Brenda Zimmerman
- *Learning Organizations: Developing Cultures for Tomorrow's Workplace* by John Renesch and Sarita Chawla
- *Good to Great* by Jim Collins
- *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck

How can I start a Learning by Leading™ program at my garden?

We started working with two pilot gardens, the State Botanical Garden of Georgia (University of Georgia) and the Humber Arboretum (Humber College in Toronto) to start LxL programs at their sites. They found it extremely helpful to visit UC Davis to see LxL first-hand. If you are interested in exploring this possibility and finding out more about the LxL program, we invite you to join our "Learning by Leading™ Community of Practice" (Learning Community). Contact Carmia Feldman (csfeldman@ucdavis.edu) for more information.

How are we scaling the Learning by Leading™ Program?

Through our professional organization, the American Public Gardens Association, we have developed a Learning by Leading™ Community of Practice that currently includes participants from 20 institutions from across North America. There are currently eight Community of Practice institutions that are in planning or implementation phases of piloting a Learning by Leading™ Program at their sites.

1. Humber College, Toronto, Canada (Humber Arboretum + Centre for Urban Ecology)
2. University of Georgia (State Botanical Garden of Georgia)
3. Cornell University (Cornell Botanic Gardens)
4. Rutgers University (Rutgers Gardens)
5. Louisiana State University (LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden)
6. University of Central Florida (UCF Arboretum)
7. Smithsonian Gardens
8. American University (American University Arboretum and Gardens)