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## Authentic Leadership in Higher Education

The Oxford English Dictionary defines authenticity as the quality of being authentic, genuine, or of undisputed origin.

Authentic leadership is about being true to oneself and leading with sincerity and integrity. Often, a person's upbringing and childhood play a significant role in shaping their leadership style. When leaders grow up in an environment that values honesty, openness, and empathy, they are more likely to lead in a genuine way. Simple experiences from childhood, like helping others or being part of a close-knit community, can teach valuable lessons about connection and trust. Authentic leaders often embrace simplicity, focusing on clear communication and straightforward actions rather than complex strategies. Their ability to relate to others with warmth and understanding fosters a positive atmosphere, encouraging collaboration and innovation. Overall, authentic leadership thrives on the foundations laid in early life and the genuine character of the leader.

Authentic leadership is a genuine and self-aware approach to guiding others, rooted in honesty, transparency, and strong ethics. In higher education, this leadership style significantly impacts how institutions function, shaping the experiences of students, faculty, and staff.

By embracing authenticity, leaders in higher education build trust within their communities. For instance, a university leader who openly discusses personal and professional challenges creates a deeper connection with students. When students witness their leaders navigating real-life struggles—such as balancing work and personal commitments—they feel more motivated and understood.

A key aspect of authentic leadership is active listening and inclusivity. This collaborative approach enhances teamwork and innovation, ultimately enriching the learning environment for students.

Ethical integrity is another hallmark of authentic leadership. Leaders who uphold fairness, equity, and transparency set a powerful example.

Furthermore, authentic leadership encourages personal development for both leaders and their communities. When educators share their own growth journeys—including challenges and lessons learned—they inspire students to embrace their own paths with confidence and authenticity.

In summary, authentic leadership is essential in higher education because it cultivates trust, collaboration, and ethical standards. Leaders who remain true to themselves while uplifting others create a supportive and dynamic academic environment. This not only enhances institutional success but also prepares students to become principled leaders in their future endeavors.

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