

KLA: Meeting Its Objectives?

No
Records

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"Leaders are born, not made." If true, then even born leaders need training and encouragement. If false, then the importance of "making" leaders cannot be overlooked. One thing is for sure: societies have always searched for new and better leaders. Examples and illustrations range from the Bible's Old Testament to modern day presidential elections in the United States. In response to this age old search, a number of things have been done to encourage born leaders, or make new leaders, and train them in skills necessary for effective leadership.

One thing that has been done, especially in the area of local leadership and volunteerism, is the establishment of "leadership academies." Objectives of local leadership academies include providing for better knowledge of the local community and awareness of the need for more volunteers and leaders in the local area. Because the qualitative and quantitative search for leadership is constant, the success of leadership academies can be crucial to the discovery and development of future leaders.

Since the Kosciusko Leadership Academy (KLA) has been in existence for over a decade, now seems an appropriate time to check its effectiveness. The purpose of this paper is to look in the mirror and see if KLA is meeting its objectives. This is not intended as a criticism of KLA, nor intended as baseless self-promotion. It does not purport to be a conclusive evaluation of KLA, but is limited in its scope (by necessity) to a single questionnaire mailed out to all KLA alumni. While the conclusions and interpretations reached by this author should be useful, it

must be noted that they are by no means exhaustive, and should not prevent future inquiries into this general area by similar or divergent methods.

One more caveat should be noted prior to the discussion on the information learned from the questionnaire. Fortunately, KLA has not been stagnant, but has been evolving since its inception to better meet perceived needs. Due to modifications in KLA's approach over the years, some survey results may be inaccurate when compared to current KLA activities and methods (ie, positive items may have been incorporated permanently into the program, and negative items may have already been addressed and/or corrected). However, due to the importance that KLA can play in local communities, it is essential that it continues to focus on meeting the needs of the participants.

THE SURVEY

The one page questionnaire was designed to elicit quality responses and significant statistical data without being so oppressive or overwhelming as to discourage response altogether. Advice on white paper length at the commencement of my involvement with KLA was analogized to a mini-skirt: long enough to cover the subject and short enough to make it interesting. This same basic goal was strived for in the questionnaire.

For purposes of gathering information, the questionnaire was enclosed with a survey directed at obtaining information for a KLA

alumni directory. A joint cover letter was sent out with the questionnaire and survey to approximately 200 people believed to be KLA alumni. (Note: One purpose of the KLA Alumni Directory was to establish actual alumni. The number 200 is approximate and substantially correct.) From those sent out, over 50% (105 in total) of the questionnaires were returned. A copy of items sent out to alumni is attached to the end of this paper as "Appendix A".

The survey results will be discussed in accordance with their numerical classification on the questionnaire. Interpretation and explanation on each individual question is grouped with statistical responses in the particular question. Overall conclusions are reserved for the end of the paper.

QUESTION 1

"Please list any memberships or involvement in charitable and/or volunteer organizations

- a. prior to completion of KLA
- b. after completion of KLA"

Because a primary goal of KLA, and leadership academies in general, is to find and train future leaders, this question is a logical starting point. None of the terms in this or any other question were expressly defined, but were left up to the responding party to interpret. Statistically, the responses are categorized as follows:

	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
More Involvement After KLA	47.6%	(50)
Same Amount of Involvement	33.3%	(35)
More Involvement Before KLA	9.5%	(10)
No Response	9.5%	(10)

The author recognizes the inherent oversimplification in interpreting these results in that there was no attempt to identify or control any outside variables. However, even the correlative consequences of the responses are impressive. Nearly one-half of the responding population became MORE active in the community after KLA. As noted below, there is a strong correlation that KLA had a heavy hand in these results. Significantly, two of the thirty-five responses that community involvement stayed roughly the same after KLA took special time to note that their community involvement did not increase in number, but did increase in depth. This supports another laudable leadership academy objective: quality of participation.

Further statistical analysis verifies the quantitative increase in community involvement by KLA alumni. Ninety-five of the questionnaires were used in this analysis. Ten questionnaires were omitted because their response cross-referenced a response to the other survey located at Appendix A. In order to promote privacy, all questionnaires were left anonymous, making it impossible to cross reference these ten questionnaires. Also, ten additional questionnaires statistically noted above as "no

response" were categorized as no involvement before and no involvement after for this quantitative study. The findings are organized with the first number representing the number of community involvements per person; the second number representing the number of questionnaires in that category; and the percentages relating to the responses in each category. The results:

<u># of Involvements pre-KLA</u>		<u># of involvements post-KLA</u>	
0 - 33	34.7%	0 - 20	21.1%
1 - 26	27.4%	1 - 21	22.1%
2 - 13	13.7%	2 - 17	17.9%
3 - 13	13.7%	3 - 12	12.6%
4 - 7	7.4%	4 - 13	13.7%
5 - 0	---	5 - 3	3.2%
6 - 3	3.2%	6 - 4	4.2%
		7 - 1	1.1%
		8 - 2	2.1%
		11 - 1	1.1%
		13 - 1	1.1%
<hr/> Average = 1.44 involvements per person pre-KLA		<hr/> Average = 2.41 involvements per person post-KLA	

These findings show that involvement increased by almost one activity per person after KLA. Also, "no involvement" decreased 13.6%, and involvement in one activity or less decreased 18.9%.

The overall conclusion for this question is inescapable - KLA increases the participant's community involvement in a significant way. With this established, particular impacts of KLA were explored in the questionnaire.

QUESTION 2

"Did you have any particular positive or negative experiences/reactions while in KLA, personally or professionally?"

Yes
No
Explain"

This question was designed to attract responses on specific impacts of KLA, good or bad. The raw numbers totaled as follows:

	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Yes	61.0%	(64)
No	31.4%	(33)
No Response	7.6%	(8)
Explanations	67.6%	(71)

The most surprising result is that over two-thirds of the responding population gave written explanations. Of the seventy-one explanations, only two contained negative experiences/reactions to KLA. One complaint was that there was not enough leadership training. The other was on a specific program, and felt that there

was an overemphasis on personal goals and not enough emphasis on family goals. As noted earlier in this paper, it is difficult, due to the anonymous nature of the responses, to know if KLA has adequately responded to these situations since their occurrence.

Other explanations are broken down as follows:

	<u>% of Explanations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Learned and became aware of community	38.0%	(27)
Meeting new people/making friends	29.6%	(21)
Good contacts/networking	14.1%	(10)
Continuing relationships since KLA	12.7%	(9)
Individual KLA programs	7.0%	(5)
Responsibility for community participation	7.0%	(5)
Moderator	5.6%	(4)
Learned about leadership	4.2%	(3)
Working with White Paper partners	4.2%	(3)
Professional growth	2.8%	(2)
Being selected to KLA	2.8%	(2)
Dedication & cooperation of local leaders	2.8%	(2)
Providing new leaders	1.4%	(1)
Teamwork in general	1.4%	(1)
Confidence gained	1.4%	(1)
Impact of small community	1.4%	(1)
Prepared for new responsibilities	1.4%	(1)
Met professional women	1.4%	(1)
Observing impact over time	1.4%	(1)

This is a veritable laundry list of goals for any leadership

organization. The most numerous responses also indicate that KLA is serving equally essential goals in educational and social arenas. Similar explanations were made in response to the next question on KLA's preparation for leadership.

QUESTION 3

"Do you think KLA better prepared you for leadership in the community, workplace, etc?"

Yes

No

A brief explanation is encouraged, but not required."

This question clearly explores whether KLA is training participants for leadership. Two questionnaires were received that marked both "yes" and "no". Out of fairness, one was recorded as "yes" and one as "no". The overwhelming response indicates positive preparation by KLA:

	<u>% of Total Ex- planations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Yes	85.7%	(90)
No	11.4%	(12)
Somewhat	1.0%	(1)
No Response	1.9%	(2)
Explanations	64.8%	(68)

The overall numbers indicate that KLA alumni have been prepared for new leadership roles in staggering numbers. It is

hard to imagine that an approval rating could be much higher. Again, a surprising number of explanations are noted.

Those who responded "no" and gave explanations did so as follows:

	<u>% of Total Ex- planations</u>	<u>% of Responses</u>
Leadership present pre-KLA	4.4%	(3)
Did not learn leadership from KLA	4.4%	(3)
KLA leadership is closed society	1.5%	(1)
Trained in community leadership but not workplace leadership	1.5%	(1)
No specific results from KLA	1.5%	(1)
Grew up in community	1.5%	(1)
No training, only informed of possibilities to serve	1.5%	(1)
Need more leadership development focus in programs	1.5%	(1)

This can further be broken down into:

training pre-KLA	5.9%	(4)
KLA somehow insufficient	11.8%	(8)

Although 8 negative comments are minimal when compared to 68 explanations and 105 questionnaires, the criticisms should be taken constructively and worked on by KLA leadership. As noted above, it is impossible to determine whether some of these problems may have been corrected during KLA's evolution into its present state.

Those who responded "yes" and gave explanations did so as follows:

	<u>% of Total Ex- planations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Knowledge of and insight into community	42.6%	(29)
Contacts/networking	32.4%	(22)
Increased confidence	11.8%	(8)
Importance of participation	10.3%	(7)
Help in profession	5.9%	(4)
Re-identified areas of leadership	2.9%	(2)
Spectrum of knowledge presented	2.9%	(2)
Prepared for leadership	2.9%	(2)
Awareness of current issues	2.9%	(2)
KLA sped up involvement	1.5%	(1)
Help in family	1.5%	(1)
Friendships	1.5%	(1)
Leadership sessions	1.5%	(1)

These explanations show several things. First, people's positive experiences/reactions seem to be directly related to their opinion that KLA prepared them for leadership. Meeting people, networking, and learning about the community are valuable to people as leadership aids as well as having an overall positive experience in KLA. One alumni's response typifies these results: "an understanding of what makes our community work helped me to get more involved in community activities." Also, a significant number

of people gained self-confidence through KLA, another primary goal of the organization. These explanations are also insightful into whether KLA is satisfying the needs of its participants, the subject of the next question.

QUESTION 4

"Did KLA achieve its purpose with you, personally and professionally?"

This question was designed to elicit a simple "yes" or "no" response. Again, two alumni checked both "yes" and "no", and so one was recorded as "yes" and one as "no". The results show an overwhelming vote of confidence for KLA:

	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Yes	91.4%	(96)
No	4.8%	(5)
Mixed	1.0%	(1)
No Response	2.9%	(3)
Explanations	--	(0)

This overall satisfaction with KLA was initially surprising. However, as our KLA class drew to a close, one could sense KLA's momentum. Any initial doubts or cynicism subsided with each subsequent program. By the end of our class, KLA seemed to come full circle and fulfill the expectations raised at the initial

session. This is verified by these numbers.

Although an explanation was not requested, I was somewhat surprised that there were no comments to this question. Over nine out of ten alumni simply concluded that KLA had met its objectives. The final area of exploration was the strength of KLA's impact.

QUESTION 5

"How would you characterize KLA's impact on you today?
Strong? Moderate? Weak? Other?

Has it changed over time?"

This question was designed to get a sense of how long-term KLA's impact continued on its participants. The first set of results are on the strength of KLA's impact:

	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Strong	28.6%	(30)
Moderate	53.5%	(56)
Weak	11.4%	(12)
Other	4.8%	(5)
Other	(1)	
Very Strong	(1)	
Significant	(1)	
Non Existent/ No Impact	(2)	
No Response	1.9%	(2)

The results on this question are a good example of KLA's

impact, and the diversity of its participants. Over 80% felt KLA's impact was moderate to very strong. There are a multitude of speculative reasons for the fact that over one-half of alumni responded that KLA's impact was moderate: (a) training and leadership skills prior to KLA; (b) KLA aiding in leadership skills but not in an extreme fashion; (c) positive community or workplace involvement that has transcended KLA; or a variety of other reasons. However, when these results are read in conjunction with those to previous questions, there is little doubt that KLA's impact is significant.

The second part of question five asked whether KLA's impact has changed over time. Those responses are broken down as follows:

	<u>% of Total Explanations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Yes	32.4%	(34)
No	44.8%	(47)
Somewhat	1.0%	(1)
No Response	21.9%	(23)
Explanations	28.6%	(30)

The somewhat significant percentage (almost one-third) of those who said that KLA's impact had changed over time contained a surprise. The explanations (as detailed below) show that some people feel KLA's impact continuing to grow over time, and changes the author's initial assumption that any change was equivalent to

KLA's impact weakening. The explanations for those who responded "yes" were as follows:

	<u>% of Total Explanations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Weaker over time	46.7%	(14)
Stronger over time	16.7%	(5)
Lack of contact with KLA	6.7%	(2)
Change in family commitments	3.3%	(1)
Not as involved	3.3%	(1)
Other interests	3.3%	(1)
Change in participant, not KLA's impact	3.3%	(1)

The explanations for those who responded "no" were as follows:

	<u>% of Total Explanations</u>	<u># of Responses</u>
Active involvement	6.7%	(2)
Recent KLA graduate	6.7%	(2)
Expects more contact in future	3.3%	(1)

The explanations indicate that KLA's impact may weaken over time for some participants. However, it should not be assumed that such weakening is always caused by KLA's ineffectiveness in some way. The explanations contain plausible reasons for non-activity which are more personal to individual participants. Active

community involvement plays a major role for those who have not felt a change in KLA's impact over time.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

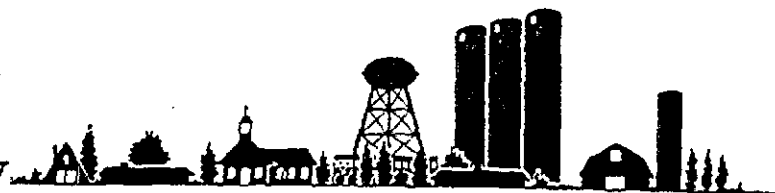
The results from the questionnaire communicate that KLA is doing a very good job in meeting its objectives. KLA alumni are more involved in the community; most had positive experiences in KLA; most feel better prepared for leadership; and almost all feel that KLA achieved its purpose, personally and professionally. As with any survey or evaluation, some results can be viewed as borderline, some as negative. However, the results as a whole show a very positive impact being made by KLA. Borderline results should not be taken negatively, but constructively. No organization is perfect or meant for everyone. Hopefully KLA leadership will look at these results and use them to make KLA even better and reach out to the needs of even more people. The conclusion is clear: KLA IS MEETING ITS OBJECTIVES.

However, KLA's objectives should constantly be re-evaluated to meet changing times and changing needs. One suggestion is to leave one or two programs open initially, and survey each class at its first session. These open sessions could then be used to fit particular needs of the group or individual requests. One class may request more leadership training, while another may desire a program on a topic not previously anticipated. Added flexibility on the part of KLA administrators may solve some of the needs expressed by the questionnaire. The initial challenge of KLA to

find and train leaders and volunteers for community involvement remains unchanged. KLA should continue to challenge itself to better meet the needs of its participants, and to discover those needs as early as possible.

Whether leaders are born or made, or some combination of the two, KLA is an extremely useful tool in enhancing the quality and quantity of leadership in our county. KLA needs to continue to evolve its program to adjust to changing times and changing needs. As long as it continues to meet its objectives, KLA will continue to educate and provide essential services to local communities.

Kosciusko Leadership Academy



February 5, 1992

Dear Member of KLA Alumni:

We are members of the Kosciusko Leadership Academy class of 1991-1992. This letter is being sent to you in conjunction with two white paper projects. One white paper project consists of gathering information to produce an updated KLA alumni directory for alumni, our classmates and area businesses. The other white paper project consists of gathering information to assess KLA's impact professionally and personally.

We ask that you answer the enclosed questions as truthfully and completely as possible and return the response in the enclosed, self-addressed, envelope at your earliest convenience.

We hope to have all responses returned by March 6, 1992.

Thank you for your participation and assistance with our white paper projects.

Sherri Miller

Sherri Miller

Rick Bettinger

Rick Bettinger

Kirk Weikart

Kirk Weikart

NAME: _____

KLA CLASS OF _____

WHITE PAPER PROJECT: _____

CURRENT HOME ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

CURRENT PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT: _____

CURRENT ASSOCIATIONS, DIRECTORSHIPS, AFFILIATIONS, ETC.:

INTERESTS: _____

IF I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY, I WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN OR HELP WITH

1. Please list any memberships or involvement in charitable and/or volunteer organizations

a. Prior to completion of KLA _____

b. After completion of KLA _____

2. Did you have any particular positive or negative experiences/reactions while in KLA, personally or professionally?

Yes ___ No ___ Explain _____

3. Do you think KLA better prepared you for leadership in the community, workplace, etc.?

Yes ___ No ___

A brief explanation is encouraged, but not required.

4. Did KLA achieve its purpose with you, personally and professionally?

Yes ___ No ___

5. How would you characterize KLA's impact on you today? Strong? Moderate? Weak? Other?

Has it changed over time? _____

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