

2026 Leadership Development Program Proposal
International Council for Arts Deans
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Given the increasing turnover in institutional leadership as well as varying new laws and regulations at the state and federal level, the 2026 version of the ICfAD Leadership Development Program aims to provide universally applicable frameworks that will help participants diagnose and address specific leadership challenges at their institutions. Sessions will focus on broad leadership frameworks, rather than details of academic management. Sessions will devote considerable time to small group discussions and mentoring sessions in between large group sessions. There will be advance reading for each session.

There are six bi-weekly sessions of 2 hours each scheduled on Thursdays 1-3 p.m. Eastern on Sept. 17, 24; October 15, 22, 29, and Nov. 5. Participants and mentors will meet in between sessions to discuss in more detail the prompts from each session. Hallmarks of the program will continue to cultivate values-based leadership, encourage individual mentorship, and provide time for participants to apply leadership frameworks to their particular situation.

Session One: Cultivating, Ethical Values-Based Leadership

- How do your values sometimes compete with one another, with those of your colleagues, or with those of your institution?
- How far can we compromise individually when institutional values are shifting more and faster than ever? When do traditional institutional values and mission conflict with the need to comply with federal & state laws and regulations as they are currently being interpreted?
- How do we adapt when the confluence of values plays out at the departmental, senior administrative, and board room level? e.g., how do we continue to act on our strongly held values for justice, equity, and inclusion when we cannot talk about these values in the same way?
- How do values (or competing or conflicting values) influence your leadership in your particular situation?

Session Two: Adaptive Leadership

- What does it mean to be an adaptive leader?
- How can a leader give adaptive work back to the people without prescribing a solution?
- Given the volatility, uncertainty, chaos, and ambiguity facing our institutions now and into the future, how might you help lead your organization through the adaptive challenges and opportunities that lay ahead? Does strategy still matter?
- What are the risks that you are personally prepared to take to bring change to your institution? Where do you draw the line?

Session Three: Strategic Direction

- How does a leader guide the strategic direction in the current climate in higher education? How does a leader discern the why, what, and how in determining strategic direction?

- What role(s) ought the Board, faculty governance, staff, students, alumni, donors and other constituencies have in the development of a strategic plan?
- What role and impact should artificial intelligence play in your thinking when considering strategic direction and adaptive organizational change?

Session Four: Governance & Personnel

- What tacit assumptions and explicit rules govern decision-making at your institution?
- How do these rules and assumptions impact your ability to lead adaptive organizational change?
- How do we lead and manage people within a values-based framework? What strengths do you bring to working with personnel situations in your unit?
- Do you have any difficult personnel situations that you and your mentor might talk through confidentially together?

Session Five: Self-Assessment -Career Advancement

- Why have you taken on your current administrative position? Why are you interested in pursuing further career paths in administration?
- List your reasons for agreeing to take on an administrative leadership assignment. Why would you leave the flexibility and independence of a professorship to take this on?
- What two to three goals do you have for yourself during your term of service in this role? What goals have you considered important for a future administrative role?
- Personal mission statement
- Career Advancement
- Self-Care

Session Six: Values-Based Communication and Trust-building

- What have you garnered from the ICfAD Leadership Development Program?
- How has your perception of the leadership syllabus for you in your institution evolved over the course of this program?
- What are some ways you might apply what we have learned to foster positive change in my unit?
- How can I use the Language of Ongoing Regard to transform culture in my unit? How do we lead and manage people within a values-based framework?