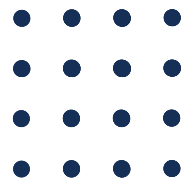


# IMPACT OF SUNY SAIL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS



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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations  
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## IMPACT OF SUNY SAIL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

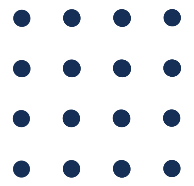
Leadership development programs are used as a tool to train individuals within an organization to effectively lead departments, change initiatives, and individuals. Furthermore, these training programs have been used as a retention tool across many organizations. While research suggests that leadership development programs provide several benefits to the individual, providers of these programs have difficulty measuring their direct impact on career advancement and return on investment.



The **State University of New York (SUNY) Strategic, Academic, and Innovative Leadership (SAIL) Institute** is an initiative aimed to provide professional development and leadership training for faculty, staff, and students across 64 campuses within the SUNY system. The SAIL Institute offers innovative leadership development opportunities using a fee for service model, providing campus members affordable training, while aiming to strengthen the SUNY system leadership pipeline (SUNY SAIL, 2022). Since their initiation in 2016, they have launched 17 new programs and served over 600 higher education leaders.

After six years of operating, SAIL does not have a viable mechanism to track alumni who have participated in their programming, and thus are struggling to communicate their impact. This capstone project aimed to help SUNY SAIL better understand impact on program participant's career advancement.

# PROJECT DESIGN



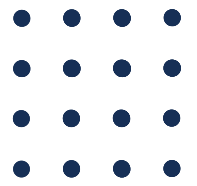
Prior to collecting and analyzing data, an extensive literature review was conducted focused on understanding how to define career advancement, how leadership programs are historically evaluated, individual benefits of leadership development programs, and challenges experienced in trying to advance careers.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, three data sources were used to answer project questions including 46 alumni impact survey responses, 4 SUNY SAIL program pre- and post-test assessments, and 17 semi-structured interviews derived from the alumni impact survey respondents.



## Project Questions

1. How has participation in a SUNY SAIL program impacted participants' career advancement?
2. How has SUNY SAIL participation affected confidence, beliefs, and skillsets related to leadership capabilities?
3. What challenges or barriers do participants encounter with career advancement?



# FINDINGS



**Participation in SAIL has not directly impacted career advancement**



**Program impact can be measured far beyond career advancement**



**Identifying specific leadership capabilities gained was difficult**



**Participation does not negate challenges to career advancement**



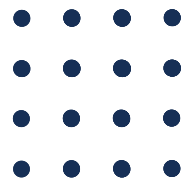
**Lack of coordinated recognition and follow-up limits future advancement**

Although only 14 of the 46 survey respondents indicated they had advanced their career since program completion, SUNY SAIL program participants found their experiences to be impactful in ways measured beyond advancing their career. Themes such as navigating the higher education landscape, connecting with others, gaining more self-awareness, and the ability to self-promote were all aspects of participation that proved impactful.

Additionally, findings uncovered that advancing one's career can be difficult, and participating in a leadership development program does not negate those challenges. Limitations such as encountering biases in the hiring process, missing out on opportunities due to the organizational structure, and holding oneself back were highlighted as reasons individuals had not been able to take the next step.

Furthermore, while participation does allow for individuals to self-promote, interviewees felt that SAIL could do a better job of both recognizing their successful completion in the program to key decision makers and providing follow-up opportunities to connect with colleagues and hiring managers.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a standardized evaluation process



Using a four-step approach, informed by Holton, Guskey, and Kirkpatrick's frameworks, SAIL can establish a standardized evaluation process utilizing short and long-term components to understand program learnings and impact, and track participants' career advancement over time. The four steps include defining overall outcomes, creating a career advancement database, implementing short-term evaluation tools, and curating a 12-month follow-up protocol.

Design a recommendation protocol



Building upon the evaluation strategy, SAIL should design a recommendation protocol to better communicate program participants' successful completion. Using a report to communicate leadership recognition, key decision makers in the SUNY system would have real-time data and access for their talent pipeline. Creating a post-program newsletter could serve as a way to expand participants' exposure and promote future SAIL offerings. Last, offering an annual reception with key SUNY system stakeholders provides an additional opportunity to connect and celebrate high performers.

Build a digital community



Program participants felt a strong sense of connection with others when participating in SAIL programs. Building and nurturing a digital community would help sustain relationships that individuals are building organically during their program. By awarding digital badges and using a technology platform, participants can easily identify other alumni, re-engage with each other, celebrate wins, provide support during challenging times, and share job postings. SAIL could also use this as a way to more easily monitor career progress.

Identify Challenges & Strategize



SAIL must include opportunities for program participants to identify challenges they have experienced in trying to advance their careers and offer strategic activities during program sessions to help navigate and mitigate those challenges. Considerations such as expanding the mentorship component, reflection activities, or exclusive resources such as mock application and interview processes could help participants be more successful in the future.

# SAIL INSTITUTE

Empowering Strategic, Academic,  
and Innovative Leadership

100%



respondents would  
recommend SAIL  
programs to a  
colleague

## CONNECTION

When you participate in a SAIL program, you can guarantee that you will build lasting relationships with leaders from all over SUNY. Access to peers, program facilitators, and decisions makers will help accelerate your career.

## SELF-AWARENESS

most frequently coded skill  
gained in the survey & interviews



Program participants find significant impact in understanding how to navigate the complexities of higher education as a leader. Overall percent change in self-assessed growth in the higher ed trends category by **44%**

## NAVIGATING HIGHER ED

### MINDFULNESS

second most frequently coded  
topic in the survey



72%

respondents rate  
their SAIL experience  
as impactful or most  
impactful on their  
leadership journey

# EMPOWERING STRATEGIC, ACADEMIC, & INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

.....  
april 2023



## CONGRATULATIONS 2023 CIO LEADERS!



resources



“It was enlightening to hear from different kinds of leaders with different perspectives, or ways of thinking, and kind of challenge your automatic way of thinking to incorporate new ideas.”

“I cannot say enough about the Mindful Leadership Program. I have recommended it to so many colleagues... it was truly life changing, and impacted the way I approach my job, my colleagues, and work situations.”



“My influence changed. I started approaching my colleagues differently, especially others who don't report to me. I was able to communicate better, engage with them, now things are more connected.”

With SUNY SAIL, your experience opens up bold new paths, and long lasting relationships.



CIO Leadership Academy Participants – April 2023

### **Mentor Database**



Connect with a mentor or a sponsor!



### **Digital Alumni Network**

Join our Microsoft Teams Channel to stay connected with your colleagues.

### **Executive Coaching**

Private and confidential coaching support for leaders at all levels.



### **Claim Your Badge!**

Claim your digital badge and display it on your LinkedIn profile!

### **Career Advancement Database**



Send us your career updates!

up next



### **Leaders Learning Live**

April 20 | Enrollment & Retention  
July 20 | Cabinet Dynamics  
August 17 | Strategic Planning



### **SUNY Reception**

Join us to celebrate our SAIL alumni with SUNY system administration at our annual recognition reception.