

# Eta Sigma Gamma: Preparing Leaders Today for Tomorrow's Challenges

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*Management is doing the things right; leadership is doing the right things.*

Peter F. Drucker

There is no one definition for a leader or for leadership, but most people can identify a leader and can provide qualities of a good leader or good leadership. The founders of Eta Gamma Gamma – William Bock, Warren Schaller, and Robert Synovitz – all displayed a critical characteristic of leadership by having and acting on a vision. A vision to create a national honorary for the health education profession. Their vision changed the dynamics of health education preparation programs. Try and imagine a health education department without an ESG chapter, how different not only the department would be but the college, university, surrounding community and health education profession. Eta Sigma Gamma was created by true leaders and four decades, 3000 members and 82 active chapters later, ESG is producing leaders that not only uphold the high ideals of ESG but are also making a difference within their chapter, at their university, within the community, and within the health education profession, regardless of work setting.

## What is Leadership?

Leadership has been defined by many in a variety of ways. Most would agree that good leadership requires passion, vision, integrity, communication and organization skills, confidence, commitment and creativity. Leadership is about change — motivating and inspiring people to change. Jim Collins (2005) describes leadership capabilities that follow a five-level hierarchy (see Figure 1). Examination of these levels through the ESG lense suggests that all levels of leadership are being learned and modeled through teaching, research and service activities at the university, community, and national levels for both students and faculty alike.

Highly capable individuals make contributions through talent, knowledge, skills and good work habits (level 1). All Gammans meet this level of leadership through the variety of education, research and service activities provided at the university and within the community. Leadership skills are being developed when a health fair for middle and high school parents is implemented, when a resume writing workshop is conducted, and when National Health Education Week events are organized. Knowledge of overall health, health education planning and coordinating, and being creative and innovative are the beginnings of developing good leadership skills. Good work habits are developed by juggling school, family, work and social lives.

Active team members contribute to the group's overall achievement in meeting goals and objectives (level 2). Successful chapter projects require active team members

who work together and contribute to the project's overall success. Projects are successful because team members share their "talents." Such talents include creating health communication messages, developing databases, contacting local agencies for donations/contributions, preparing a press release, and developing the event's evaluation. The key to this level of leadership is contributing, being an active team member. The efforts by many make for successful Gamman projects.

Organizing people and resources toward meeting defined goals and objectives, is level 3 or being a competent manager. ESG Chapters (and advisors) provide a "safe place" for individuals to begin developing the requisite skills needed to be an effective health education professional. Events and projects do not happen on their own; someone takes charge and organizes not only people but the process to make an event go from being an idea on paper to reality. Being a competent manager takes practice; chapters are a great place to practice management and leadership skills. In these "practice" sessions Gammans can reflect on their management style and effectiveness, so the next time they are in charge, they will be more efficient and effective.

Collins' level 4 unveils the effective leader, the individual who is committed to a clear vision and pursues that vision with vigor. Many chapter advisors exhibit this level of leadership through their commitment to providing students

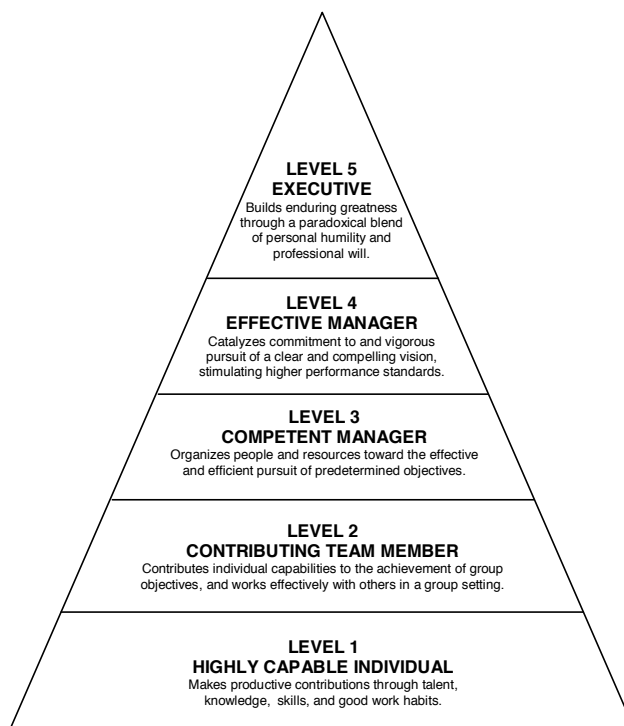


Figure 1. Leadership hierarchy (Collins, 2005)

with an educational experience outside the classroom that allows them the opportunity to succeed and sometimes fail in their health education efforts. Chapter advisors model and guide Gammans in developing leadership skills.

The highest level of leadership, as described by Collins, is a blend of personal humility and professional will (level 5). The founding and subsequent leaders of ESG exhibited this type of leadership.

### Creating a Culture of Leadership

For the past 40 years ESG has provided the foundation for leadership development for its members and for the health education profession as a whole. Eta Sigma Gamma members have become leaders in their community and/ or workplace by being a school board member, being an active member of a task force, chairing a committee, or serving their professional organization to name only a few leadership roles Gammans have and continue to play.

Eta Sigma Gamma has created a “culture of leadership” (Kotter, 2001) by challenging young professionals early in their careers to lead, take risk, and learn from successes and failures. Learning early a variety of leadership skills and perspectives prepares one for the challenges of leadership and how one can bring about change. In 1994, the Milbank Memorial Fund published a report entitled *Leadership in Public Health* which describes the need for leadership in public health and suggests the skills needed today are far different than the skills of yesterday’s leaders. Today’s health education leaders are confronted with complex issues that are intertwined with social, education and economic issues. These complex issues require leaders; leaders that take risk, leaders that learn from failures, leaders that know how to motivate people for change.

Through humility, vision and professional will, William Bock, Warren Schaller, and Robert Synovitz created a means by which health education leaders could be trained to take on the challenges that confront us as professionals. During

the first 40 years Eta Sigma Gamma has been home to many health education leaders, imagine what the next forty years will bring.

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... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ... Spirit of ESG ...



*As a young professional, membership in Eta Sigma Gamma had a profound influence on how I viewed the profession, leadership, and most importantly, professional passion. My membership continues to inspire me. Having the extraordinary opportunity to be mentored by Loren Bensley, Warren Schaller, and Charles Carroll, it was through both the formal and informal activities of Eta Sigma Gamma that I had the opportunity to observe, learn and understand core concepts of professionalism. I truly believe that this is the true “Spirit of ESG” and is an opportunity that each member can take advantage of through active participation in the honorary.*

*David C. Marini, PhD  
Alpha Chapter*

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