**Individual Assessments**

Leader identity is the essential component a leader must develop and understand intimately to embark on the journey of continuous learning and development, be an authentic leader, and balance the complexities that exist in executive leadership. According to Day et al. (2011), "...to maximize learning (or development), the appropriate treatment must be matched to the aptitude level of the learner. aptitude is often defined in terms of readiness" (p. 24). To understand one’s readiness having a framework for your preferences and a picture of how one shows up as a leader is critical. The leadership assessments I have completed throughout the DEL journey have helped me better understand the things I know about myself and those I did not recognize or perceive differently.

Three areas that have influenced my development process during the DEL and have solidified my leadership identity focused on the EQ findings that focused on my well-being and happiness, specifically optimism, self-regard, self-actualization, and interpersonal relationships, the NEO findings in the area of my psychosocial assessment focused on my health and the Clifton Strengthfinders assessment that identified I was an influencer with my dominate strength being an activator and strategist.

I always have considered myself to be a person that sees the glass half-full; I am usually the life of the party and, in general, feel happy. However, I was unaware that the elements that build your well-being and happiness include your interpersonal relationships, self-regard, self-actualization, and optimism. Although my scores seemed pretty balanced, it was an area that could have used improvement. In 2020 my Happiness/Wellbeing Score was 103. With my mentor, we began exploring optimism and happiness and how to embrace having more. I read two books, Learned Optimism: *How to Change Your Mind and Your Life How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* by Martin E. P. Seligman and *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* by Seligman, Martin E. P., Atria. These books helped me see happiness and optimism from a different perspective and identify situations where I may become performative in the emotions of optimism and happiness instead of leaning into the genuine sentiment and mindset that drive the emotions. This reality made me more conscious of how I responded to the good and bad things that happened to me. Being more authentic about how I felt in any given situation helped increase my optimism and happiness even when I was not exercising those emotions.

By becoming more conscious and intentional in connecting with my emotions and defining them more authentically, I moved my well-being score in my EQ 360 from 103 to 107. With specific growth in the area of optimism, whose scores went from 102-104; self-regard, whose scores went from 103 to 105 and interpersonal relationships, whose scores went from 103-111.

These EQ 360 findings aligned with the NEO psychosocial assessment concluded: "Somatic Complaints: This person may be prone to discount physical problems and minimize the severity of somatic symptoms and medical complaints. In healthcare situations, it may be important to check for problems even when she reports no difficulties." Self-care has not been a priority in the past; however, in the past two years, I have taken more intentional steps to take the time for self-care and pay attention to my health needs. I am becoming more in tune with my body and understanding that balancing work, family, and school requires asking for help and sometimes saying no to things that will not allow me to stay balanced. I have learned to put myself first in more situations to be more present, supportive, and helpful to my family, friends, staff, and organizational stakeholders.

Finally, during a 2021 staff retreat, my staff suggested we take the Clifton Strengthfinders and analyze the individual and collective strengths. The assessment provides an individual with their top 5 strengths. My top 5 strengths are achiever, strategic, individualization, activator, and communication, and all are driven by my nature to influence. These findings have helped me understand my preferences when facing challenges or innovating. Focusing on the team’s strengths and understanding the existing gaps have helped us strategize and plan better to miss blind spots as we develop new services and products and implement strategies and tactics.

These assessments have helped me actively focus on my leadership development to solidify my leadership identity to be a more effective executive leader. I feel joy, and my well-being is in greater balance in my life. As a result, I can approach things with more optimism and react to challenges and the unexpected with a level of confidence and ease I would not have done in the past. I have stronger self-regard and, as a result, engage in my relationships more authentically with greater vulnerability.

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