



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Division of Academic Affairs

## STUDENT LEADER CHARACTERISTICS GUIDE

**Lead with Purpose • Serve Others • Grow Through Experience**

**LEADERSHIP IS MORE THAN A TITLE.** Student leaders influence others through their choices, character, communication, service, and willingness to take responsibility. Leadership can happen in the classroom, an organization, a team, at work, or anywhere you help others move toward a positive goal.

### 1. Characteristics of an Effective Student Leader

**Integrity:** Do what is right, keep your word, and make choices that reflect strong values—even when no one is watching.

**Responsibility:** Follow through on commitments, meet deadlines, and take ownership of your actions and decisions.

**Communication:** Listen carefully, express ideas respectfully, ask questions, and keep others informed.

**Respect:** Value different perspectives, treat people with dignity, and create an environment where others feel heard.

**Initiative:** Notice what needs to be done and take appropriate action without always waiting to be asked.

**Dependability:** Be someone others can count on to show up, contribute, and complete responsibilities.

**Teamwork:** Work with others, share responsibility, recognize contributions, and focus on the success of the group.

**Adaptability:** Respond constructively when plans change, challenges arise, or a new approach is needed.

**Confidence with Humility:** Believe in your ability to contribute while remaining willing to learn, receive feedback, and admit mistakes.

**Service:** Use your leadership to support others and improve your campus, organization, team, or community.

### 2. What Student Leadership Looks Like

- Arriving prepared and on time.
- Following through when you say you will do something.
- Speaking up respectfully when an issue needs attention.
- Listening before making assumptions.
- Helping a teammate or classmate succeed.
- Being willing to complete necessary work—not only visible work.
- Taking responsibility for mistakes and making corrections.
- Representing your organization and university professionally.
- Encouraging others instead of competing for all the recognition.
- Knowing when to lead, when to collaborate, and when to ask for help.

### 3. Leader vs. Title Holder

| Title Holder                      | Student Leader                                |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Waits for recognition             | Focuses on contribution and impact            |
| Uses position for authority       | Builds trust through actions                  |
| Blames others when problems occur | Takes responsibility and helps find solutions |
| Wants to be heard                 | Communicates and listens                      |
| Works only when observed          | Follows through consistently                  |
| Protects personal credit          | Shares credit and develops others             |

### 4. Leadership Self-Check

- ☐ I follow through on my commitments.
- ☐ I communicate respectfully, even when I disagree.
- ☐ I listen to ideas that are different from my own.
- ☐ I accept feedback and use it to improve.
- ☐ I take responsibility when I make a mistake.
- ☐ I help others feel included and valued.
- ☐ I manage my time so leadership responsibilities do not replace my academic priorities.
- ☐ I look for ways to serve and solve problems.
- ☐ I represent myself, my organization, and my university professionally.
- ☐ I encourage others to grow as leaders.

### 5. Academic Leadership Matters

**Your first responsibility as a student leader is still being a student.** Leadership includes managing your academics, attending class, communicating with instructors, using campus resources, and asking for support when your responsibilities become difficult to balance.

### 6. Build Your Leadership Skills

**Practice communication:** Volunteer to present, facilitate a discussion, or communicate a team update.

**Ask for feedback:** Ask a trusted mentor, advisor, instructor, or peer what you do well and what you can strengthen.

**Take on responsibility:** Choose meaningful responsibilities that require planning, follow-through, and collaboration.

**Reflect:** After an event or project, identify what worked, what did not, and what you would do differently.

**Develop others:** Share knowledge, encourage participation, and create opportunities for other students to lead.

### 7. My Student Leadership Development Plan

|                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A leadership strength I already demonstrate:</b> _____      |
| <b>A leadership characteristic I want to strengthen:</b> _____ |
| <b>One action I will take this month:</b> _____                |
| <b>A person who can mentor or support me:</b> _____            |

How I will know I am improving: \_\_\_\_\_

### Remember

**LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE ROOM.  
IT IS ABOUT HOW YOU SHOW UP, SERVE, INFLUENCE, AND HELP OTHERS SUCCEED.**