

UNIVERSITY YMCA

Young Adult Ethical Leadership Model

Philosophy and Pedagogy

*Lead more. Live more.
Lifelong learning at the U-Y.*

HISTORY

The University YMCA started on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus in 1887 and has served the community for 120 years. The University YMCA is one of many Student YMCAs in the United States and around the world dedicated to the development of young adults through experiential programming. The University YMCA is a branch of the YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis.

MISSION

The mission of the University YMCA is to build the ethical leadership capacities of young adults in a context of social justice issues. We do this by combining cross-cultural and community-based experiences with reflective learning. We work through collaborative processes with the University and wider community.

OUTCOMES

We hope for students to have positive outcomes in four priority areas:

- Building community
- Social awareness
- Personal growth
- Ethical leadership capacities

EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS

We engage university students in their community through service, travel, internship, and educational opportunities and help them to learn and reflect at weekly seminars and retreats throughout the year. Our programs include:

- Y- Buddies—school-based and individual mentoring with youth grades 3-8
- Y- Scholars—middle and high school mentoring, tutoring, and higher education exploration
- Y- Tutors—classroom and individual tutoring with youth grades K-5
- Collegiate Achievers—mentoring and support for university students who are low-income, first-generation, and students of color
- Immersion/Environmental Backpack—peer-led service learning trips for university students to explore social justice and environmental issues
- Metro Internship Program—non-profit and corporate internships paired with a University of Minnesota seminar on ethical leadership, social responsibility, intercultural awareness, and professional development

REFLECTION

Reflection is central to the work we do at the University YMCA. Programs utilize a variety of methods including discussions, writing activities, art activities, and interactive games. An important goal of reflection is how their involvement has changed their worldview, their attitudes, their skills and their behaviors. More importantly, how the student's experience will affect their future actions.

SEMINARS AND RETREATS

The philosophy for conducting seminars and retreats is based on the action/reflection model. The work in the community is the action, and the seminars and retreats provide a space for the students to reflect on their experiences and continue to educate themselves. Seminars and retreats help student leaders to learn from each other's experiences, receive critical training, explore social issues, and provide opportunities for peer leadership and community building. This model can transform work in the community into a very meaningful, life-changing experience.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG ADULTS

It is important for young adults to develop as leaders, but it is equally important that they develop a sense of ethics and a belief in acting on behalf of the common good of the community. Through their volunteer work, experiential activities, educational seminars and reflection opportunities they develop values, attitudes, behaviors and skills they can benefit from for a lifetime.

PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The University YMCA offers opportunities for progressive leadership and responsibility. Once involved in the U-Y programs for a year, students can apply to become Volunteer Staff and Coordinators for the following year. In these positions, they actually operate the programs. Coordinators oversee the work of the Volunteer Staff and the Volunteer Staff oversee the work of the participants. The student leaders recruit and interview volunteer participants, set up the seminars and oversee most aspects of the programming under the guidance of the Program Director.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY

Programs that work with youth and in the community provide student leaders with cross-cultural and community-based experiences. We provide training for all student participants to ensure quality programming and help them understand issues that affect communities. We train all of our participants in the principles and practices of positive youth development.

CULTURE OF 'YES'

The professional staff strive to have a "why not?" attitude, allowing students to feel that anything is possible if they are willing to put in the work to make it a reality. In other words, we want students to know they can make it happen if *they* can make it happen. We want students to feel empowered to make decisions, be creative, find solutions, and do good work. It is our goal for students involved in University YMCA programs to feel

engaged in their communities and their work in a real and meaningful way. Many current students, and alumni of the University YMCA, express that their involvement here was the *first* time they felt that they were interacting with the world around them in a meaningful way.

CHANGING LIVES

“Volunteering at the U-Y is by far the best decision I ever made at college. Some of my most cherished moments are of those spent at the U-Y or volunteering with my program, Y-Scholars. I have gained so many things from my time at the U-Y. Most importantly, I have found a place I belong.”

—Jen

“The Y changed who I am—brought out the leadership qualities that I never knew I had.”

—Sarah