# Leading Inclusively

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) are becoming every day, everywhere terms. Scholarly articles and research support the many benefits and reasons for intentionally nurturing inclusive conditions that promote equitable consideration and opportunity. As our work environments become increasingly volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous, inclusive leadership is necessary to promote work cultures that bring about and champion inclusive conditions to foster adaptability and bring about success.

## What is Inclusive Leadership?

The Center for Talent Innovation has identified six behaviors that define inclusive leaders. They are: ensuring that team members **speak up and are heard**; making it **safe** to propose novel ideas; **empowering** team members **to make decisions**; **taking** advice and **implementing feedback**; **giving actionable** feedback; and **sharing credit** for team success. Individuals in teams whose leaders exhibited these traits expressed feeling welcome and included in their team, free to express their views and opinions, and that their ideas are heard and recognized. Practicing these behaviors promotes a work environment of fairness and respect; one where employees can feel confident to participate in decision-making and inspired to bring forth all they have to offer; where they feel they are heard, valued. A work environment to which they feel they belong.

If you took a second look at the word "feel" in the previous paragraph, you are right to notice. While diversity can be quantified, inclusion is very much in the eye of the beholder. According to LinkedIn's Global Recruiting Trends 2018,

> *"You can't have diversity without inclusion and belonging. Here's why: diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance, and belonging is dancing like no one's watching. Belonging is the feeling of psychological safety that allows employees to be their best selves at work. Even at the most diverse of companies, employees will disengage and leave if they don't feel included and accepted."*

Creating environments where individuals have a sense of belonging, is what makes inclusive leadership so challenging and so transformational.

### Why it matters?

*Leading inclusively brings about high engagement, increased performance, and morale. It manifests itself in recruitment, retention and overall results. More importantly, inclusive leadership sends the message to the organization that inclusion matters; that we all share accountability for courageously speaking up to empower and maximize the contributions of all employees throughout the organization and equitably supporting their belonging and participation.*

## What Traits are Needed for Inclusive Leadership?

There are six traits that underpin inclusive leadership: self-awareness, social awareness, curiosity, courage, resilience and collaboration.

### Self-Awareness

- [Unconscious biases](#) are leaders' Achilles' heel and can severely restrict our vision and ability to make rational decisions.
- Self-aware leaders are highly sensitized to their own implicit stereotyping or attitudes and groupthink.
- Leaders pay attention to situations and factors that may cause them to fall into personal biases, such as time crunches, fatigue, and other stressors.
- Self-aware leaders understand that fairness does not equate with "same," rather needing different things at different times.

> **DE&I numbers at a glance:**
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> When employees perceive that their organizations are committed to and supportive of diversity and inclusion, their **ability to innovate** increases by **83%.**
>
> When more employees feel included, the company will increase work **attendance** by almost **one day per employee**.

### Social Awareness

- Leaders have a deep understanding of how their own culture impacts their worldview and how it influences their expectations of others.
- They recognize that no one culture is smarter than another.
- Socially aware leaders are tolerant of ambiguity and able to navigate and adapt to social cues as needed.
- Leaders seek local context to gain knowledge about politics and relationships.

### Curiosity

- Inclusive leaders have an open mindset and are truly interested in how others view and experience the world.
- Curious leaders have a high tolerance for ambiguity.
- Leaders with curiosity ask good questions and possess empathy.
- Curious leaders withhold drawing conclusions or rushing to judgement.

### Courage

- Leaders must speak up and challenge the "way we've always done things." Bucking this trend takes courage at three levels – with others, with the system, and within themselves.
- Challenging entrenched attitudes and mindsets requires leaders to be prepared for the spotlight to shine on them and often in risky ways.
- It requires leaders to have the courage to be vulnerable about themselves, their biases (only hire MBA's), and their limitations. It requires a healthy dose of humility.
- Leaders must be willing to learn from criticism and listen to points of view very different from their own.

### Collaboration

- Inclusive leaders leverage group intelligence to create diverse thinking and innovation.
- Collaborative leaders create spaces where people are empowered to offer alternative points of view.
- Inclusive leaders facilitate flow of ideas, encourage autonomy, and healthy conflict within teams.
- Collaborative leaders adopt a disciplined approach to team composition and participative decision-making processes.

### Resilience

- Being an inclusive leader takes time, energy, and commitment.
- Resilient leaders intentionally stay in alignment with their own personal values and sense of fairness.
- Inclusive leaders prioritize diversity and inclusion as a business imperative.
- Resilient leaders make hard choices about resources to continuously improving practices to meet the needs of others.

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## How Can I Become a More Inclusive Leader?

UF Training & Development's [Leadership Toolkit](#) and many of its [courses](#) offer resources and opportunities for skill building in all of the key competencies mentioned earlier. You may use these resources for you own development or to support the growth of those you lead. Additionally, connecting with your college area or unit's [Diversity Liaison](#) will provide you with access to resources and help strengthen the network.

## DE&I At University of Florida

At UF, diversity, equity and inclusion support President Fuchs' task force has identified the following as its #1 aspiration: an exceptional academic environment that reflects the breadth of thought essential for preeminence, achieved by a community of students, faculty and staff who have diverse experiences and backgrounds. Accordingly, Antonio Farias became UF's first [Chief Diversity Officer](#) in July 2018.

Farias' guiding principle is *difference in the service of democracy*. His comprehensive approach to change toward advancing diversity, equity and inclusion at UF rests on the idea of "freedom within a framework." His three main objectives are to continuously **signal the UF mission** and #1 aspiration; to create a sustainable and resilient **structure capable of supporting every Gator**; and **shape our climate and culture**. Aware that there is much diversity within the university and recognizing our land grant institution's mission, he has created a team of Diversity Liaisons from various areas of the university to act as nexus who intersect, collaborate, transmit information, ideas, resources and share difficulties and best practices throughout the University of Florida.

## Infographics
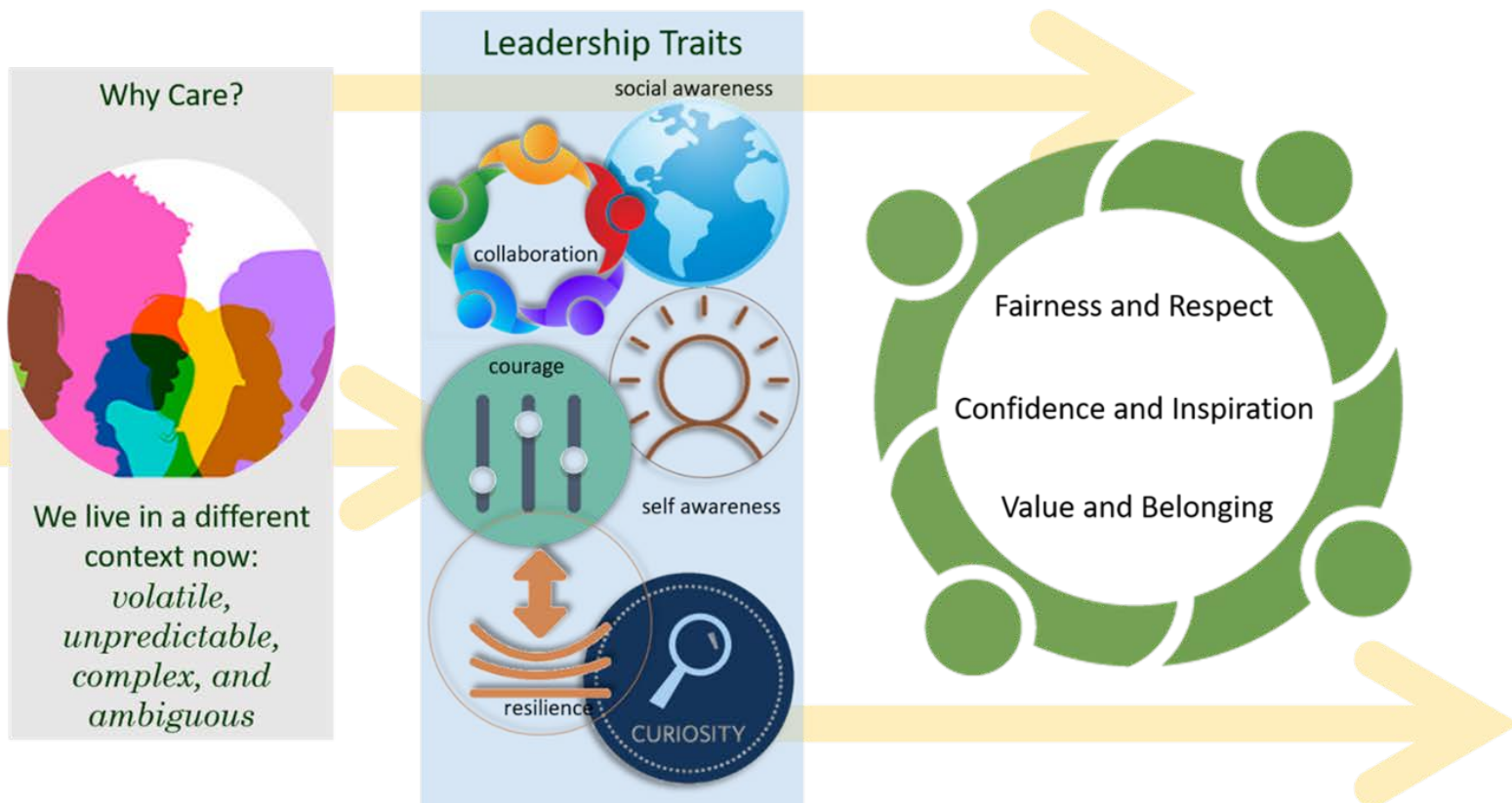
## References

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