

# THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AN NCAA DIVISION III CASE STUDY

## RESEARCH FROM THE FRONT PORCH

*“BY INTENTIONALLY EXHIBITING SERVANT LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES, A COLLEGE COACH MAY BE ABLE TO CONTINUOUSLY PRODUCE A CULTURE THAT LEADS TO WINS, CHAMPIONSHIPS, AND STUDENT-ATHLETE GRADUATION.”*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Servant leadership prioritizes the empowerment and moral development of one’s followers. In this case, the NCAA Division III head coach showed he was a servant leader to his athletes by exhibiting the following behaviors grounded in strong communication: empowering followers, helping followers grow and succeed, behaving ethically, and exhibiting conceptual skills (i.e., leader competency).
- There is strong evidence of a contextualized link between servant leadership and team culture (i.e., artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions) based on the findings of this NCAA Division III head coach.
- Servant leaders can perpetuate an effectively functioning team culture. By intentionally exhibiting servant leadership attributes, a college coach may be able to continuously produce a culture that leads to wins, championships, and student-athlete graduation. The coach utilized assumptions (i.e., student-athlete graduation and winning) and values (i.e., blue-collar mentality, accountability, resiliency) to create this team culture.
- Athlete empowerment is a key component for perpetuating strong team cultures. Servant leaders can solidify the foundation of a team’s culture by soliciting input from athletes and coaches, sincerely listening to stakeholders, and acting on their input to form a high level of reciprocating trust.

## QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

- How can I apply empowerment and moral development to build team/organizational culture as a servant leader at my institution?
- How would a coach at my institution espouse servant leadership behaviors effectively?
- Why is it important for a coach at my institution to learn to empower athletes from a servant leadership perspective?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

<https://business.pacific.edu/campus-directory/pete-schroeder>



**Sean Dahlin, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor  
Central Washington  
University  
[sean.dahlin@cwu.edu](mailto:sean.dahlin@cwu.edu)  
Twitter: @seandahlin27



**Pete Schroeder**  
Assistant Professor  
University of the  
Pacific  
[pschroeder@pacific.edu](mailto:pschroeder@pacific.edu)

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Visit the Center’s Research Brief Library

Explore the UW’s Intercollegiate Athletic Leadership Graduate Program