

DevelopingLeaders

Executive Education in Practice



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A View from the Trees...

A conversation with Clark Callahan, Executive Director, Tuck Executive Education at Dartmouth

Clark Callahan is quite clear, “We are in the behaviour change business,” he says. Callahan, who has been the Executive Director at Tuck Executive Education at Dartmouth for eleven years, has a deep understanding of the executive education market and the way it is evolving. “The idea of a VUCA environment has been gaining increasing attention since the financial crisis started and the world it describes—volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous—resonates with what we have been experiencing for a while now.”

For Callahan this means that he sees leaders taking on more responsibility at younger ages as they deal with the complexities of a fast-changing global business environment. To deal with these challenges, it's not the learning of codifiable knowledge that will bring about the greatest impact, but rather developing new *behaviours* that help manage the constant flux and change that modern day leaders are faced with.

It is perhaps worth noting that Callahan makes this observation from the relative quiet of the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. Tuck is the hidden gem of the Ivy League business schools – it does not have the brand recognition perhaps of Harvard, Wharton, Yale or Columbia, but has the legacy of being the first graduate school of management, founded in 1900, serving as the prototype for the many MBA-granting graduate programs that followed. Tuck is one of the four professional schools of Dartmouth College, a member of the Ivy League. Tuck is certainly smaller than its peers – but what it lacks in size and brand it more than makes up for in other areas. Tuck, due to both its relatively small size and its location comfortably away from the urban metropolises, has a strong and intimate community feel to it – and as a result, perhaps is more aware of the benefits of the 'human' element in organizations than larger institutions can be. “Business schools are broadly similar,” observes Callahan and so the quirks and differences of each play an important part in defining why they can each deliver certain benefits.

As noted, Tuck is located off the traditional commercial flight-paths, in the picturesque town of Hanover, New Hampshire in northern New England. The school sits in leafy surroundings on the banks of the Connecticut River looking across to the woods of





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Vermont on the other bank. It is a tranquil setting – and one that plays its role in the executive education process. “VUCA is the vortex we are working in,” says Callahan “and so being able to remove over-worked and over-stressed executives from their daily ‘vortex’ to come to the thoughtful peace of Hanover is, in itself, a beneficial thing to do.” The opportunity to stop and reflect in a structured way about their organizations and their leadership styles is a profoundly vital one for today’s managers – and by changing the setting from a fire-fighting, downtown environment to a more contemplative, bucolic one helps achieve that, ironically, in quick time.

Though Tuck is no holiday camp. It is an academic powerhouse, with some globally renowned faculty. The Thinkers50 biennial awards for top management thinkers, had four professors listed in the latest 2013 announcement: Vijay Govindarajan, Marshall Goldsmith, Richard D’Aveni and Sydney Finkelstein, who is Associate Dean for Executive Education. Callahan is clear that the intimate atmosphere at Tuck, where the faculty are in frequent contact with each other, provides a valuable intersection of critical capabilities. All the best schools have a breadth of faculty – but it is being able to bring them together to think cross-functionally that makes a real impact in the inter-connected world of today. The academic rigour of Tuck is not in question with luminaries such as these and their colleagues making up the faculty. But Callahan sees that changing behaviours requires more than just the input and instruction around current thought-leadership of its faculty. It is also the opportunity to cross-pollinate those ideas and apply them in diverse settings.

The notion of diversity runs deep at the school. Callahan is a firm believer in seeing more women in senior positions; there is on-going research from Tuck faculty exploring the effect of gender diversity in the MBA class, as well as a focus on developing women into executive roles. For more than 30 years, Tuck has offered a portfolio of programs geared towards underserved diverse populations, designed to give them the tools to develop more profitable businesses. Several of these programs are subsidized by the Institution

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to make it affordable for minority audiences. And for women leaders who are on the fast-track to the top echelons of global organizations, there is the Smith-Tuck Global Leaders Program for Women, a collaboration with Smith College, an all-women's liberal arts college in nearby western Massachusetts. Participants of the Smith-Tuck program are faced with unprecedented uncertainty in the global markets they manage as well as having to deal with gender bias.

Another approach that Tuck is taking to tackle the VUCA vortex with innovative business practice is through bringing in faculty from across the broader Dartmouth College community. By blending together themes from history, government, the arts, and even brain sciences they see that this diversity of input from the liberal arts can have a real impact on leadership development and self-awareness.

The Tuck Leadership Experience, which ran last year was an experiment to see how, by mixing academic and outdoor challenges, the leadership energy and focus can be re-invigorated and harnessed. Led by Prof. Finkelstein, senior executive alumni from the business school and wider Dartmouth College, came together in August to participate in a week of activity that included hiking and canoeing excursions in the Upper Valley region, Shakespeare work-outs, cooking classes and a cappella sessions – all structured around facilitative and discursive exchanges, to build greater self-awareness. The feedback was, according to Callahan, extraordinarily positive and in addition to running the program going forward, the program has led the school to explore how they can include even more immersive and experiential elements in all their leadership programs.

The school is now working with Dartmouth's Hood Museum of Art to leverage the 70,000 works of art that 'all tell a story' to open the minds and perceptions of leaders to wider possibilities and connections. Callahan says that Tuck increasingly sees itself more as a *Leadership School*, which incorporates the technical disciplines of traditional business schools – but realises that what actually brings about the changes in organizations is the ability of its leaders to execute the strategies – and that is fundamentally down to them applying and adapting the right mindsets and behaviours, appropriate to ever-changing situations – rather than any specific model or management process.

This seems to be the right direction for business schools – bringing together a diverse range of inputs, from traditional management thinking and further afield, and structuring them in a way that allows participants to see the world more broadly and holistically, so they can adapt solutions constantly with our ever-changing environments. And there can be few more attractive places to do this than in the Upper Valley region of New Hampshire at Dartmouth College.



Despite much discussion about the need for leadership development in corporate and public organizations, and the considerable industry that surrounds it, this is the first authoritative periodical focused entirely on this area.

Developing Leaders looks at the critical confluence between the provision of executive education and the real everyday needs of organizations to strengthen their management teams, their corporate performance, and their leadership.

The publication presents the latest thinking and most recent developments in both academic and commercial executive education provision worldwide, what it is achieving and which are the best models for success, sharing the experience and expertise of top leaders and world class educators.

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