SIGMA Assessment Systems
## Talent Development

Using the LCIA in Business Schools

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"The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves."
— **Ray Kroc, former McDonald's CEO**

Business schools aim to teach students how to lead effectively, but they often miss out on an important component of leadership: character. Character is defined as the set of personal values, virtues, and traits that are recognized and appreciated in leaders, and allow leaders to make good decisions. Some examples of character dimensions include courage and accountability. Unfortunately, most business schools focus solely on teaching competencies and fail to address the foundational aspects of character that contribute to building competencies.

To address this gap, some business schools have begun teaching students how to cultivate their leader character through courses and workshops. These business schools take a holistic view of leader development and intend to teach their students ethics and virtuous behavior in addition to the basic knowledge needed to excel in the business world. Another benefit these schools have discovered is that the inclusion of character into their curriculum has differentiated their program from other schools. Business programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels are the most popular academic major in the United States,[1,2] so future students may use factors such as hands-on learning experiences to determine which program they select.
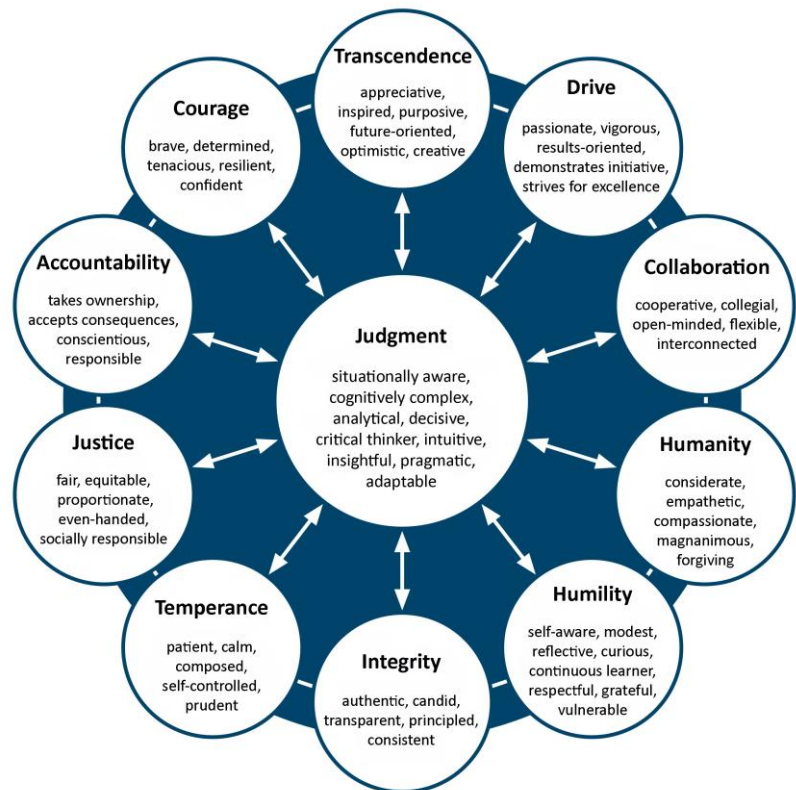
Character-based curricula and leadership development opportunities can provide students with impactful learning experiences and give a business program a competitive edge. One of the most efficient and effective ways to integrate character into curriculum is by using a scientifically validated assessment, such as SIGMA Assessment Systems' Leadership Character Insight Assessment (LCIA). The LCIA was created in partnership with character experts at the Ivey Business School, home of the Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership. This guide will describe how to use the LCIA to introduce students to the concept of leader character in a university and college setting and develop self-aware students who will lead the organizations of tomorrow.

About the LCIA

The LCIA is a scientifically valid measure of leadership character that provides leaders with practical insights for leadership development. The LCIA report and supplementary materials explain what character is, why it builds strong leaders and organizations, and identifies key character dimensions and elements. Most importantly, the LCIA demonstrates how character dimensions influence leadership behaviors. Those who take the LCIA receive a personalized report showing their individual character strengths and information on how they can grow and develop each character dimension. The LCIA provides students with a personalized look at their own character profile and is an effective and meaningful resource for professional development.

Administering the LCIA

The LCIA is administered online and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Test-takers respond to a series of statements about themselves and indicate to which degree they agree with the accuracy of the statements. Their results are generated in a report format. These results provide a profile of current character strengths and opportunities for development.

In business schools, the LCIA can be administered in two ways:

1. **Co-curricular administration (outside the classroom)**: The LCIA can be offered in partnership with an institution's career counselling services, or another professional development program. Smaller LCIA workshops can be offered to clubs, or larger workshops can be offered on an optional basis in a conference setting. Follow-up coaching sessions using the report can also be provided outside of instructional hours.

2. **Curricular administration (inside the classroom)**: The LCIA can be embedded within a curriculum by offering character-based courses or using the LCIA as a supplementary activity in a related class. In particular, the LCIA can provide a strong foundation for discussion and development in classes focused on leadership, organizational management, or professional development.

Why Use the LCIA?

The purpose of the LCIA is to increase the self-awareness required to develop professionally and personally. The more that students know about themselves, the way they interact with others, and the decisions they make, the better leaders they will become in the future. The use of the LCIA in business schools means that future leaders will be better prepared to create more ethical and effective organizations. Students will enjoy learning about themselves through the LCIA and character-based exercises because it will give them practical, personalized insights about their character. Business schools can also benefit from using the LCIA because it differentiates their programs and provides a competitive advantage over other institutions.

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS	**BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS**
▪ Increased self-awareness. ▪ Opportunities for private coaching. ▪ Education aligned with values. ▪ Helpful for both personal and professional development.	▪ Incorporate school values into the curriculum. ▪ Align actions to words. ▪ Can be an integral component of a social responsibility certificate. ▪ Attract purpose-minded students.

Benefits of the LCIA for Students

Increasingly, students at business schools are looking for meaningful work. Generation Z students place a high value on working for organizations that are purpose-driven and aligned with their personal values. This generation also wants schools to teach them how to respond to pressing global issues.[3] Once leader character is incorporated into an educational curriculum, students who care deeply about their values, are interested in lifelong personal development, and want to lead by example in the workforce will likely be attracted to the program. An emphasis on leader character also helps students understand that expressing certain personal values at work can improve the quality of the relationships they build and the decisions they will make.

MBA students at the Ivey Business School have been working with character for several years.[4] These students are benefitting from increased self-awareness by understanding character and applying the results of the LCIA. They learn more about themselves — their strengths and areas of development, particularly as they relate to working with others in professional contexts. The students also enrich their educational experience with one-on-one character coaching sessions to help them apply what they've learned from their reports to their daily behaviors. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Ivey's MBA program has consistently ranked No. 1 in Canada. The benefits provided by these personalized development opportunities are available to students of any program that utilizes the LCIA as part of its curriculum.

Benefits of the LCIA for Business Schools

Business schools can benefit from using the LCIA by putting an emphasis on training well-rounded leaders who not only value the bottom line, but care deeply about their impact in the world and have strong ethics. These leaders tend to fare better during times of crisis.[5] Increasingly, shareholders of organizations are expecting leaders to make strong statements about current events in the world. For example, employees want to know whether their leaders support climate action, and if so, what steps they will take to enact a climate change policy at work. Training leaders who are comfortable showing ethical leadership ensures that graduates are prepared to take on the requirements of the modern

business environment. Training well-rounded leaders can also attract new students, build institutional brand, and open new funding avenues.

How to Implement Character in Your Business Program

It can feel overwhelming to implement character in a business school program. There is certainly a lot to consider. Below is a list of common challenges organizations face when seeking to embed character-based practice in their operations. SIGMA's character experts have compiled this list in the hopes of helping other leaders avoid common pitfalls. Our consultants have also put together a set of strategies for implementing character within organizations. Together, these two lists will equip business school leaders to successfully embed character in their existing academic structure.

Common Challenges

Believing that character is unteachable. The first common challenge is resistance from those who believe character cannot be developed. Character is comprised of virtues like integrity and humility, and people often incorrectly assume that these virtues are innate, that people are born with them and they are unchangeable throughout their lives.

While it may be true that students have innate differences in their character when entering business school, it is an irrefutable fact that character has already been shaped throughout each student's life. Past role models, such as parents, teachers, and coaches, may have modelled virtues for students. These virtues, like patience, self-control, and even-temperedness, influence students to adopt these values in their formative years. These values combine to create temperance, a character dimension. Character is taught and learned over the course of one's life. Beyond teenage years, people continue developing their character throughout their lives by learning from others and reflecting on their progress. Therefore, it's a valid and worthwhile goal for any business school program to continue to mold their students' character as adult learners.

People are unfamiliar with character. Students, professors, and business school leadership teams are likely to be unfamiliar with character. They may have heard of various character dimensions separately, such as the value of a courageous leader, but rarely will they have heard about the LCIA's model for character or considered what their own character looks like. Fortunately, SIGMA provides many materials, such as this guide and other LCIA resources that can familiarize stakeholders with the LCIA's model for character and inform them on the benefits of teaching, assessing, and reflecting on leader character.

Getting administration and educators onboard. To fully implement character in a business program, administration and educators need to be onboard. For instance, a board of directors need to see the demonstrable value of character in a learning environment, and professors need to understand how it can fit into their current teaching syllabus. Ensure meetings are arranged with these key contacts to get them on board with teaching character.

Professors can and should model character within the classroom as well. Students look to their professors as an example of moral behavior, so instructors should be ready to justify the decisions they

make. For instance, in group work scenarios in class, some students will try to do less work than others in the group, leading to complaints. The perceived fairness of how a professor responds to these complaints can be indicative of whether they "walk the talk" when teaching the value of character dimensions like justice and collaboration.

Methods of Implementing Character-Based Education

1. **Character spotting activities.** Character spotting involves observing another leader interacting with others and learning to identify the dimensions of character they are exhibiting. Activities that involve watching video clips of past leaders' speeches or interactions with others are effective character spotting methods. Biographical movies and video clips are also a great way of having a third-person perspective of a business situation.

2. **Role-plays.** Course instructors can select common business scenarios to act out in class with students, and have students discuss the best course of action based on the ethical dilemmas in the situation. To find examples of these scenarios, instructors can discuss cases that have made headlines in recent business news or choose standard dilemmas leaders often face in the workplace. An example of a standard dilemma leaders face is the difficult conversations they must have with direct reports, especially following a layoff. By discussing the nuances of the situation and the ensuing response, the class can determine whether certain character elements could have helped in informing an appropriate response to the challenge.

3. **Service learning.** When students are required to volunteer with community organizations that serve vulnerable and marginalized populations, they are more likely to want to behave ethically.[6] Consider making service learning a required component of a course marking scheme. After participating in volunteering opportunities, have students discuss which character dimensions were used in their experience, and which ones they saw other members of their team exhibiting. Continue the discussion by asking what they learned from their work, and how these lessons may inform their future careers as well.

4. **Reflection activities.** Have students write about their learning experiences over the course of the character development program. Some thought-provoking prompts include:

   - Five years in the future, what kind of leader do I want to be? What about 10 or 15 years in the future?
   - What are some things I have learned about my own character strengths and areas of development?
   - What is the most important fact I have learned about leader character?

   Direct written reflection activities allow students to take a more holistic look at what they have learned and to summarize their most meaningful takeaways.

5. **Mentorship.** Character mentors can be past alumni from the program who are currently leaders in various capacities in different industries. Ensure that the pool of mentors is comprised of leaders who have a reputation for thoughtful decision-making and ethical leadership. It is best to match students with mentors within industries they are interested in. Students can organize

time to meet one-on-one with mentors to get advice on what sorts of challenging problems their mentors have experienced during their careers and how they may have used character to solve leadership problems.

SIGMA Can Help

Now that you have learned about the many benefits of teaching character in business schools, you may be interested in how the LCIA can be integrated to your business school program. SIGMA's character experts can provide suggestions for how to integrate character into your existing curriculum, work with you to design a character development course, or offer group debrief sessions to your classroom after your students take the LCIA. If you would like a bespoke solution beyond these ideas, we would be happy to work with you as well. If you are interested, give us a call or contact us below.

Contact Us

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