

Testimonials – Cohort 4

The employee leadership development program was a wonderful experience where I was able to learn new skills, strengthen my knowledge of the University and also connect with an amazing group of colleagues from across campus. My favorite part of the course was the connections I made with so many great people who I would not have interacted with if I didn't do this program. I highly recommend this program to anyone looking for professional development opportunities at WMU.

- *Laura Kirkendall, Assistant Director Service Center – Facilities*

Participating in the Employee Leadership Development Program (Cohort 4) was transformative. The experience provided invaluable discovery, development, and networking opportunities. I particularly valued hearing directly from various leadership across the institution, which gave me deep insights into how our university operates. Equally important was connecting with my cohort—a group of talented professionals from different areas who have become ongoing collaborators and resources. This leadership experience exceeded my expectations, and I strongly encourage anyone interested in understanding our university more deeply to apply.

- *Roshona Porter, Director, Housing and Resident Life*

The insights the class gave me into the structure and operations of WMU have been instrumental in developing my abilities to support the University Libraries and WMU as a whole. Even more rewarding has been the close personal and working relationships I formed through the course. They are simply invaluable. Unexpectedly, the course also benefitted my personal life, giving me increased confidence to do what I can and grace to accept what I can't without so much self-recrimination.

And I had a ton of fun!

- *Marijo Loper, Executive Assistant, Libraries*

The Leadership Program at WMU presented by Human Resources is a great opportunity for motivated individuals who are interested in furthering their knowledge of the University and its internal processes. I'm a seasoned employee who has interacted with nearly every division on campus but was surprised to learn new perspectives and challenges that different units face on a day-to-day basis. My biggest takeaway from attending the Leadership Program is realizing that I cannot, or should not, attempt to put

myself in someone else's shoes without a full understanding of their situation. We ARE all part of the same Team and will succeed or fail together.

- *Jacob Wood, EHS Specialist*

The WMU Leadership Development program is a great way to meet other individuals at WMU from different areas of the University. What surprised me the most about this program was the amount of new information I learned regarding budgets, aviation, and athletics. If you are looking to advance your career as a Bronco, this is a great way to get started.

- *Nathan Baxter, Assistant Director of Accounts Receivable*

The Employee Leadership Development Program has been one of my favorite experiences so far at WMU. Each month you will visit a new site across campus and learn about everything from the university's budget to our famous Cold Case program. The classes are fun, informative and you get to meet and network with colleagues from every department in the University. I feel like I have a better understanding of our daily operations, know more administrators and now have a co-hort of colleagues I can connect with. Well worth the investment!

- *Donielle Easlick, Program Manager, Montgomery Essential Needs*

I'm grateful to have been selected to participate in the 24-25 Employee Leadership Development Program. Learning from campus leaders alongside this year's cohort of professionals was an enriching experience!

I've made some wonderful connections with my colleagues, toured interesting spaces on campus that I had not been to before, was encouraged to step outside of my comfort zone, and was able to traverse both physical and mental challenges alongside my peers.

Having the opportunity to connect directly with, and learn from not only President Montgomery, but various members of the President's Cabinet as well, was an especially valuable part from my perspective.

This program offered opportunities to learn about various aspects of WMU's operations, its academic and student affairs, and about all of the moving pieces that allow WMU to have the impact it has on its students, its staff and faculty, and on the southwest Michigan and surrounding communities as a whole.

I must conclude with a special thank-you to Bob Brady for all of the time and effort he dedicated to bringing this program together. He did a fantastic job planning, coordinating, and communicating with us all. Shout out to him for his efforts and care, and for his commitment to giving us all the best experience possible. He was informative, organized, flexible and welcoming, which really made the experience something to look forward to each month.

For anyone new to WMU or anyone finding themselves visiting the same places, spaces and people on campus day to day, this program is a great opportunity to shake it up and explore more about the bronco community from people on campus who provide valuable perspectives and insight from a bird's-eye view.

- Cadence Joan Warr, Data Coordinator, College of Aviation

My experience in the Western Michigan University Employee Leadership Development Program, Cohort 4 (2024-2025), was incredibly enriching and transformative. This program provided a unique and invaluable opportunity to deepen my understanding of effective leadership principles and practices within the university setting. It also offered incredible insights into the roles of higher-ups in the University and the complex behind-the-scenes processes they carry out.

Through a well-structured curriculum, engaging workshops, and insightful discussions, I gained practical strategies for fostering team collaboration, enhancing communication, and navigating complex organizational challenges. The program's emphasis on self-reflection and peer learning was particularly impactful, allowing me to identify my strengths, address areas for growth, and develop a more nuanced approach to leadership.

The connections forged with fellow cohort members and the guidance from program facilitators have been instrumental in my professional development. I highly recommend the WMU Employee Leadership Development Program to any university employee looking to cultivate their leadership potential and contribute more effectively to the success of Western Michigan University.

- Casey White, Administrative Assistant II, College of Education and Human Development

Being a part of the Leadership Development Program was a wonderful experience that I think everyone should take advantage of if they are given the opportunity to do so. I really enjoyed learning about the different departments across campus and how they operate. Sitting in rooms with various directors and VPs of their respective departments was beneficial as we were given the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about different leadership styles and approaches.

My biggest take away from this program was the understanding that organizational success hinges less on positional leadership and more on a leader's connection to their team and their grasp of internal processes. Effectively guiding a team requires knowing your people, identifying what empowers them, and understanding their needs for improvement. This perspective will be instrumental in my continued work and professional development here at the University. I'm truly grateful to Bob and Warren for this experience!

- Jasmine Jefferson, Academic Advisor, Department of Psychology