

Cases in Agricultural Leadership: An Open Access Book Opportunity

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Abstract

Case studies are a valuable instructional tool for bridging the gap between abstract concepts and practical application. That bridge can be particularly elusive when combining disparate concepts like agriculture and leadership, yet that is the challenge facing hundreds of agricultural leadership educators. Undisguised teaching case studies can help, and some are already available in the Association of Leadership Educators' (ALE) Case Study Database, yet more are needed to meet the need. This roundtable discussion will explore ideas and opportunities for an open access textbook. We anticipate rich dialogue with prospective authors, learners, and educators, gleaning insights to guide a path forward for this potential book idea.

Session Learning/Participant Objectives

Participants in the roundtable discussion will be able to:

- Identify undisguised case studies that could enhance leadership education.
- Explore existing leadership case study resources and frameworks.
- Describe opportunities for contributing teaching cases to an open access book.

Session Description

Our modern world is filled with wicked problems, including chronic and increasing shortages in food and natural resources (Kniffin & Patterson, 2019; Redekop et al., 2018; Schuyler et al., 2016). Agricultural leadership programs are working to meet this challenge, including through formal education in at least 227 courses and 51 degree offerings across the United States (Coleman et al., 2021; Cletzer et al., 2022; Muscato et al., 2021; Stedman & Pennington Weeks, 2013; Velez et al., 2015; Weeks & Pennington Weeks, 2022). However, while leadership theory continues to be developed in a proliferation of books written for business contexts, relatively few resources are specific to leadership studies in agriculture (Alexander et al., 2017; Cletzer et al., 2022; Velez et al., 2014). Rare exceptions include *Leadership in Agriculture* (Jordan et al., 2013) and *Food Leadership* (Etmanski, 2017), both of which fail to connect with prominent leadership theories, such as those identified in *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Northouse, 2022). There is an opportunity for leadership educators to collaborate on a modern resource, perhaps following a structure similar to other teaching case study books (e.g., Koonce et al., 2016; Northouse & Lee, 2022; Rowe & Guerrero, 2018). However, input from leadership educators would help guide the ideal format, especially if we pursue an open access book format. As noted in *The Rebus Guide to Publishing Open Textbooks (So Far)* (Ashok et al., 2022), a successful open access book requires both appropriate scoping and community support. That focus and spirit is guiding this roundtable discussion with the Association of Leadership Educators.

The discussion will begin with a brief background on the potential of undisguised and open cases (Fossey & Glover, 2006; Herreid, 2016; Lambert, 2023; McDonald, 2013; Patil et al., 2020). As an example, roundtable participants will have an opportunity to explore a recently published case that explores the leadership aspects of the 2021 cyber attack on a water treatment plant in Oldsmar FL (Kaufman et al., 2023). The conversation will then shift to participants' ideas for other emerging cases and foci, including how students might be involved in developing case studies (Boulocher-Passet, 2016; McDonald, 2013). As part of the scoping process, the roundtable discussion will include attention to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of a teaching case study that make it most useful for educators and most impactful for learners?
- How might we better aggregate and share case studies that can enhance agricultural leadership education?
- What criteria and/or format would be most conducive for structuring and presenting newly developed teaching case studies for agricultural leadership education?
- Who should we invite and encourage to author cases in agricultural leadership?
- What might be key considerations for creation of an open access textbook that could facilitate broad use by leadership educators?

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