



# Student Leadership Academy **PhotoVoice Project** **2023-2024**

# Student Leadership Academy PhotoVoice Project

PhotoVoice is a pedagogical tool, aimed at empowering students to delve deeply into relevant issues while considering the implications for social justice and change. In this project, students engage with a focal topic, expressing their perspectives through photos and narratives. The aim is to foster critical thinking, enhance advocacy skills, and promote civic engagement. Through this process, students develop writing and communication abilities, apply concepts to real-world scenarios, and collaborate effectively (Brecher, Day, Ezekeil, Litonjua, Shaffer & Tandon, 2021).

For their Capstone Project, participants were asked to reflect on their leadership journey through PhotoVoice, and were given the prompt “I engage in Transformational Leadership when...”. Participants shared personal anecdotes reflecting on moments of engagement, or observations on leadership. Emotions associated with transformational leadership were discussed, and participants used photographs to visually depict their reflections on transformational leadership.





**“By fostering an environment of active participation and hands-on learning, I strive to empower engineering students to develop the technical skills necessary for success in their future careers.”**

**Hayden Ehler**

4th year -Electrical Engineering

I can assist students in engaging with a subject or topic they may not have previously envisioned themselves enjoying. By fostering an environment of active participation and hands-on learning, I strive to empower engineering students to develop the technical skills necessary for success in their future careers. This approach not only equips students with valuable technical knowledge but also instills in them a sense of confidence and purpose, preparing them for success in the workplace and beyond.

Student-led workshops are a necessary addition to the curriculum, as they allow students to connect with peers who share their experiences and understand their difficulties. These events not only give students a workplace advantage, but also help cultivate interest in design teams and student societies where these skills can be applied. In a world where employers expect more than ever from our students, it is vital to adapt our curriculum and take advantage of the software and tools that keep students on the cutting edge.



**“As I reflect on this moment, I am reminded of the power of inclusive decision-making and the profound impact of fostering an environment where every voice is valued and heard.”**

**Jibrán Hagalwadi**  
4th year - Neuroscience

I participate in transformational leadership when I convene a focus group of Together@Dal mentors to discuss program improvements. In this photograph, captured during a pivotal focus group session for the Together@Dal mentorship program, the essence of transformational leadership shines through the collective unity and shared commitment of the mentors. Dressed in Together@Dal merchandise, the group exudes a sense of solidarity and purpose, symbolizing the collaborative effort towards program improvement. As a fourth-year neuroscience student at Dalhousie University, my Capstone project centered on restructuring the mentorship program to enhance mentee engagement and sustainability. Through introspective discussions and candid feedback from mentors, we embarked on a journey of collective reflection and growth. This photo encapsulates the culmination of those efforts — a tangible representation of the meaningful dialogue and collaboration that fueled our transformative journey. It embodies the spirit of transformational leadership, where diverse voices converge to drive positive change. As I reflect on this moment, I am reminded of the power of inclusive decision-making and the profound impact of fostering an environment where every voice is valued and heard. Together, we are not just shaping a program; we are nurturing a community of support, empowerment, and growth.



**“Much like the ‘Grandmother Maple’ tree displayed here, a transformational leader nurtures a thriving ecosystem of growth, driving meaningful progress within the team and beyond.”**

**Kaitlyn Blakney**

3rd year - Microbiology & Immunology

I participate in transformation leadership when I enable and support growth on a multitude of levels. Much like the “Grandmother Maple” tree displayed here, a transformational leader nurtures a thriving ecosystem of growth, driving meaningful progress within the team and beyond. The tree’s roots represent the foundation of transformational leadership - the values, vision and integrity that anchor the team. The roots provide stability and nourishment to sustain and grow the organization. The tree trunk symbolizes a leader’s role in providing structure and support. Like a strong tree trunk, a transformational leader offers guidance and encouragement to foster an environment where individuals can grow personally, and the organization can grow to meet its goals. The tree’s branches reach outward, like extending out to build relationships with partner organizations. A transformational leader recognizes and celebrates each team member’s unique talents and strengths, encouraging them to explore new opportunities. The tree’s leaves demonstrate the outcomes of transformational leadership, the results of innovation, collaboration and positive change. Just as trees transform throughout their life cycle, leaders transform as they grow. Participating in transformational leadership means cultivating an environment where growth occurs at every level, like each part of a thriving tree.



**“When practicing transformational leadership, I value open communication, approachability, and curating a culture that doesn’t only tolerate mistakes, but views them as opportunities for growth and reflection.”**

**KJ Goruk**

1st year - Master of Science in  
Experimental Psychology

I practice transformational leadership when I channel my energy towards empowering others to recognize and leverage their unique abilities, passions, and identities. This involves outwardly embracing my own imperfections, silliness, and vulnerabilities, in an effort to cultivate an inviting and cheerful team environment. The photo provides a glimpse into the 2023/2024 DalOut (Dalhousie’s Queer Society) executive team retreat in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. At this retreat, facilitated by the wonderful Robyn Brown-Hewitt of Dalhousie’s Multifaith Services, the team shared an abundance of laughs, ideas, stories, and discussed our dreams and hopes for the future. When practicing transformational leadership, I value open communication, approachability, and curating a culture that doesn’t only tolerate mistakes, but views them as opportunities for growth and reflection. This photo captures a moment from the retreat where the atmosphere was so uplifting and filled with pure Queer joy that I had to snap a photo!

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**“Enthusiasm was high. Inspiration abounded. Possibilities seemed infinite. I found myself in a team that couldn’t stop throwing around ideas.”**

**Kriti Maini**

3rd year - Political Science

Reviving. Rebuilding. Reconnecting. These are just some of the thoughts that went through my head as I came to terms with the realization that I would be involved in re-establishing the Dalhousie Arts and Social Science Society (DASSS). Fallen victim to the lulls in student participation over the Covid years, this faculty society had become inactive until a group of like-minded and enthusiastic students decided to pick up the threads again. As Co-President, I was fortunate to be one of them.

This neatly presented opportunity to start fresh promised to be inherently transformational. Enthusiasm was high. Inspiration abounded. Possibilities seemed infinite. I found myself in a team that couldn’t stop throwing around ideas. Slowly but surely, the confrontation with responsibility came too, in the need to re-establish precedents, procedures, and connections.

This spirit of rebuilding led me to design my capstone project around establishing a full DASSS Society Council to ensure full representation from constituent student societies across the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. I stumbled upon this collection of title placards in the society storage boxes, but it is my sincere hope to see them in use.

Investing in DASSS has been the highlight of my undergraduate career, letting me participate in the process of bringing forward transformational change. I am set to continue my journey as DASSS president for the 2024-2025 academic year. But I do so with the more profound realization that it will be, like it has been, arguably more transformational for me in return.



**“Transformational leadership to me means being an inclusive community changemaker. It means supporting historically marginalized communities, becoming allies, and contributing in meaningful ways that can uplift their causes.”**

**Mayank Ramchandani**  
4th year - Neuroscience &  
Computer Science

This moment was captured in front of Dalhousie’s Indigenous Community Engagement Office in the Millbrook First Nations Community during my third Co-op work term in Fall 2023. This work experience, along with my four-month residence in Dalhousie’s Truro campus gave me a transformative and eye-opening experience of what it means to work and live in an Indigenous community. I was exposed to several aspects of indigenous art, language and culture including immersive visits at the Mi’kmaq Museum and the Indigenous students centre in Truro campus. My capstone project is about enhancing engagement in first-year Indigenous and queer students. Through my conversations and experiences on campus, I observed noticeable gaps in the first-year student experience for Indigenous and queer students, which can be significantly improved and transformed by connecting them with upper-year peer mentors from these communities to help build stronger support networks. Transformational leadership to me means being an inclusive community changemaker. It means supporting historically marginalized communities, becoming allies, and contributing in meaningful ways that can uplift their causes. I firmly believe in the need for better support systems to empower students from Indigenous and queer communities, fostering an environment where everyone can thrive.





**“I see the impact we can have by fully understanding individuals and their needs. I see the children, families, and community that I know. I see my why.”**

**Mitchell Mathieson**

1st year - Master of Health Administration  
& Juris Doctorate

**Transformational Leadership: Why do we do it?**

I am grounded in my why. At the Ronald McDonald House Charities Atlantic (RMHCA), we support a diverse range of families and often experience the highest and lowest aspects of children’s healthcare.

In this image, Lightning McQueen came to visit for a child’s birthday. Every time I see this image, I see the child, jumping with excitement, eyes wide open, with a grin as wide as their face. I see the impact we can have by fully understanding individuals and their needs. I see the children, families, and community that I know. I see my why.

Difficult moments are inevitable in healthcare. This image, however, represents the change that we can make by knowing our why, and understanding our community. My capstone project focused on expanding professional development accreditation for Master of Health Administration (MHA) students to include social responsibility, equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility. Incorporating these topics will strengthen our community and create situations just like this image, where individuals receive the support they deserve.

For health leaders, transformational change is imperative. By understanding our why, and engaging with our community, it can then take place.



**“Each person brings a unique brilliance, like distinct strokes on a canvas. Alone, they shine; together, they compose a symphony of innovation, unraveling complex challenges.”**

**Mitchell Wright**  
2nd year - Medicine

I participate in transformational leadership when I ensure diversity is respected. Each person brings a unique brilliance, like distinct strokes on a canvas. Alone, they shine; together, they compose a symphony of innovation, unraveling complex challenges. This photo embodies unity amidst diversity. Each plant is a metaphor for the collaborative spirit, where ideas, voices and efforts converge to create something greater than the sum of its parts. It is a mosaic of unique contributions woven together to form a collective achievement. At the centre is the sunlight to remind us of life's purpose and beauty and that leadership should be a source of growth and success. In this fusion, we find beauty, growth and the celebration of rich diversity.



**“I understand that leadership isn’t about being the loudest voice, but the most attentive ear. It’s about recognizing the unique strengths within each individual and fostering an environment where they can flourish.”**

**Omotayo Bankole**

4th year - Law Society & Justice

In the midst of a sea of eager faces, I practice transformational leadership when I embrace the responsibility of guiding fellow students towards their potential. From this podium, I don’t just speak; I listen.

I understand that leadership isn’t about being the loudest voice, but the most attentive ear. It’s about recognizing the unique strengths within each individual and fostering an environment where they can flourish. As I look out at the hopeful gazes before me, I am reminded that true leadership is not about commanding authority, but about empowering others to find their own voices and become leaders in their own right.



Photo credit:  
Casper Macaulay

**“Indigenous medical students deserve better, deserve to be able to put their energy into studies instead of demolition. To not be demolition, when you are a sledge hammer, means you need space where you are not.”**

**Jordin Fletcher**  
3rd year - Medicine

Walking through these doors as a first-year medical student, the cold, hard marble, told me about how these walls were built through actions of genocide. Paintings framed in gold of worshipped colonists exuding wealth. The blood of all of our relations, extracted, hung to look onto onlookers, to look down upon. An Indigenous woman walking into this space feels like a sledgehammer. When you break something down - you use energy to break, when, in this space, you cannot be anything but a sledgehammer - walking through the doors extracts energy in the amount required for a sledgehammer to make space within marble. Sledgehammers transform -

What about love. This feels too negative.

Indigenous medical students deserve better, deserve to be able to put their energy into studies instead of demolition. To not be demolition, when you are a sledgehammer, means you need space where you are not. Space for healing, space for connection and community-strength in numbers. Can I leave my sledge... armour. At this door.

Do I too need to be marble, to resist the constant throes of assimilation - if I am marble, am I myself anymore, at all



**“By reframing my role and consciously stepping back to let others step up, I found the true face of transformational leadership — not just in name, but in action, spirit, and shared humanity.”**

**Eshan Arora**

4th year - Honours in Medical Sciences

I participate in transformational leadership when I help diversify the next generation of science leaders.

Navigating through my medical sciences degree, my journey was replete with feelings of imposter syndrome, a common phenomenon amongst underrepresented minorities in higher academia — particularly in STEM fields.

Serendipitously, however, I found my footing within the nurturing fold of the Dalhousie Science Scholars & Leaders Program (DSSLP) — and in turn, offered my hand to those facing similar quandaries. My leadership bloomed from the seeds of belonging — I developed a First-Year Interest Group (FIGS0021: Science for Everyone) that stood as a mosaic of diverse backgrounds.

Being eager to demystify the unwritten rules & resources of academic life that serve as barriers to those without the privilege of generational knowledge, I proactively recruited students and fostered passive learning, challenging the sterile rigidity of lectures with the warmth of culturally attuned engagement.

Moreover, I drove a transformation of the FIGS into a DSSL-Society, to promote student leadership in practice. Through embracing the lessons and mentorship from the High-Performance Leadership Academy, I unlearned the solitary pursuit of tasks, discovering instead the artistry of delegation — painting opportunities for others to thrive in.

Advising, supporting, and empowering — my leadership became a harmony of actions that passed the torch by providing an accessible scaffold where others could climb, checking in without overbearing, and sharing opportunities instead of hoarding them.

Overall, by reframing my role and consciously stepping back to let others step up, I found the true face of transformational leadership — not just in name, but in action, spirit, and shared humanity. This humbling and enlightening journey has been my canvas, and the legacy created together will be a shared venture of human potential realized.



**“Representation is essential to build back trust after years of systemic racism. ‘We need more people who look like us; it will encourage us to come in.’”**

**Nathan Barton**

4th year - Microbiology & Immunology

I wanted to run focus groups for this topic to present a phenomenon I have lived and experienced. Years of racial inequality have caused many members of the Black community to distrust the healthcare system. For students from “Canada’s Largest Black Community,” North Preston, it takes a one hour and forty-minute commute to Dalhousie one-way on public transit. This illustrates the barriers that many Black students face in pursuing their education. Furthermore, it should evoke empathy for the students’ frustration in actively searching for mental health and health support on campus. Dalhousie’s Black Student Advising represents the importance of safe cultural places on campuses. For many students, the BSAC was a place to find mental health support through peers and advisors. The picture I chose is a mural in Mulgrave Park. The artist Jeremy Williams said that art is not about a person but reflects the community back to itself. To me, it symbolizes the importance of representation in healthcare for all members of our community. Representation is essential to build back trust after years of systemic racism. “We need more people who look like us; it will encourage us to come in.”



**“My leadership approach over the past year has been guided by a strong commitment to collaboration and empathy.”**

**Alexandra Randolph**

4th year - International Development Studies with a Minor in Law, Society & Justice

I participate in transformational leadership when I am filled with pride, determination, and a sense of responsibility. The Student Leadership Academy capstone project was initiated to prevent the unnecessary involvement of youth in the child welfare system with the criminal justice system.

My leadership approach over the past year has been guided by a strong commitment to collaboration and empathy. I have strived to create a space for open dialogue, listening to perspectives and challenges regarding the child welfare system that may lead to law enforcement involvement. I am particularly grateful for the relationships I have built with various stakeholders in the community. These connections, such as the one with an assistant professor at the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie, hold immense potential for future collaborations on research regarding children in the child welfare system. I have also established connections with multiple individuals within the Student Leadership Academy, which I am keen to maintain.

By developing partnerships and utilizing resources, I plan to implement pilot programs that offer much-needed support and resources to at-risk youth and their families. As I look back on my progress so far, I am both encouraged by my achievements and mindful of the challenges ahead. While there is still much work to be done, I am confident I can make a meaningful impact in the community with continued dedication and education.

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