

NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2025](#) / [July](#) / Taking Leadership Lessons to the Community

TAKING LEADERSHIP LESSONS TO THE COMMUNITY

NEW PROGRAM PARTNERS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP LEADERS.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | July 14, 2025*Read time: about 2 min*

Christopher Newport's focus on leadership is well-known nationally, as the President's Leadership Program (PLP) continues to grow and Leadership Studies offers insightful classes.

Now the focus on the field is widening.

The University has launched a program that invites area residents to benefit from CNU's leadership expertise and helps local companies build the leadership skills of their employees.

The first workshop, "Effective Teams," was facilitated by PLP Director Lacey Grey Hunter at TowneBank's main corporate campus in Suffolk. About 35 TowneBank employees participated in the emerging professional education programming that combined theoretical knowledge with hands-on applicable simulations.

Leadership is one of the University's core values. In addition, a primary tenet of CNU's Strategic Compass is connecting with the community. The new program is a dynamic way to bring together both priorities in a way that will form partnerships and allow people to cultivate critical leadership skills.

"It is an opportunity to grow in a way that is good for CNU and good for the community," said Dr. Sean Heuvel, Director of Graduate and Professional Enrollment. "We are always looking for ways to interface with the community. This gives us the opportunity to fill a niche in the community."

The leadership training complimented TowneBank's internal leadership training, called the LEAD Associate Program.

Working hand-in-hand with local companies "reinforces everything we do. "We are playing on our strengths and at the same time fulfilling the needs in our community," Heuvel said.

The leadership programming resonated with the TowneBank employees, giving them a chance to hear an outside perspective of leadership and to apply the lessons as they work to successfully advance their careers, said Meredith Elliott, senior vice president and LEAD Program manager.

"They were excited about it," Elliott said. "There was such a comfort and relatability to Lacey Grey's presentation style and concepts.

"It was wonderful," she said. "Everyone really enjoyed it. There were a lot of real life applications that rang true."

The goal is to offer the University's emerging professional educational programming to more community and industry partners in the near future.

"Christopher Newport has a deep and enduring commitment to leadership and learning and development," Hunter said. "With a national reputation for cultivating leaders who drive positive change in the communities, we are excited to partner with local organizations and schools to expand leadership development opportunities for young adults, entry, mid and senior level professionals. Through these partnerships, we aim to equip and empower individuals at every stage of their leadership journey with the knowledge, skills and ethical foundation to meet the needs of their communities."

"Christopher Newport has a deep and enduring commitment to leadership learning and development," Hunter said. "Leadership is not just something we study; it's something we do. We have a national and international reputation of cultivating leaders who act, step up, solve problems, and create positive change in their communities.

"We are excited to partner with local organizations, business, and schools to expand leadership development opportunities for young adults, entry, mid and senior level professionals," she said. "Through these partnerships, we aim to equip and empower individuals at every stage of their leadership journey with the knowledge, skills and ethical foundation to meet the needs of their communities."
