

**EMPOWERING  
AGENTS OF  
CHANGE: THE  
WOMEN'S  
LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE  
2021, RISING BY  
LIFTING OTHERS**

**S T U D Y   G U I D E**



**NANYANG GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL**

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# INTRODUCTION

Hello participants!

Welcome to Empowering Agents of Change: The Women's Leadership Conference 2021, organised by Nanyang Student Council's External Department. We are Julia and Faith, the Overall-In-Charge of the event, and along with our Organising Team members, Amelia, Eliana, Cai Ting, Kimberly, Zheshu, Huay Xian, Jiayi, Natalie, Aaryanna, Chan Yan, Kyra and Shin Yang, we warmly welcome you to this year's conference.

The conference is the first of its kind, and it aims to inspire students to empower themselves and raise awareness on the importance of female leadership. What you are currently reading is the study guide for this conference. It contains some background information you will need to make the best of your time throughout the conference. The Organising Team has provided a short introduction to the 5 Practices of Exemplary Leadership, as well as 10 case studies that we will be using throughout the conference, of which one case study will be assigned to each group for more in-depth exploration during the conference.

While we hope that this guide will prepare you better for this conference, we also understand that some of the content could be a little heavy - we would like to clarify that none of the case studies are meant to criticise any stakeholders, but rather to bring to light salient issues happening in the world around us. What is more important is that as young leaders ourselves, we can empower each other to bring change to our environment, both now and in the future.

# INTRODUCTION

This list of case studies is not exhaustive, so you are strongly encouraged to do your own reading as well. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Women's Leadership Conference will be executed online, rather than face-to-face in a physical conference. Despite the limitations arising from this, we encourage you to participate in this conference with an open mind and heart, with meaningful discussions and friendships forged along the way.

With that, we wish you a fruitful time ahead and we look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Best regards,  
Julia Ho and Faith Sng  
OICs of the Women's Leadership Conference  
On behalf of NYSC External Department

# THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

WHAT ARE THE  
FIVE PRACTICES OF  
EXEMPLARY  
LEADERSHIP?

## INTRODUCTION

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership came about when the co-authors of The Leadership Challenge, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner first set out to discover what effective leaders do when they are at their personal best. These five practices were the core behavioural patterns displayed by the thousands of people they interviewed, from a range of cultures, genders and age.

# 1. MODEL THE WAY

Leaders set examples and establish principles concerning the way team goals should be pursued and model the way they'd like the people they serve, as well as the rest of the team to be treated. They create standards of excellence. Through goal-setting and the setting of different milestones in a team's journey, they enable and motivate their team members to achieve small wins that bring the team a step closer to achieving their larger objective. They create opportunities for their team to capitalise on their strengths and strive for improvement in their weaknesses, and guide the team on their road to success.

## 2. INSPIRE A SHARED VISION

Be it in school or at work, all projects often start with a common goal or vision in mind. Leaders envision the future and confidently convey a unique image of what the team can become. Through effective persuasion, leaders inspire their team to work towards the vision. This end goal is what motivates the team through setbacks and celebrations and it is important for every member to believe in this vision. In order to inspire a shared vision amongst the team, we should first believe in it ourselves and trust in the fact that we can empower one another as a team to make a difference.

### 3. CHALLENGE THE PROCESS

Sometimes, taking a leap of faith is not easy, but it is something necessary for leaders to do when the time calls for it. After inspiring a shared vision, it is important to reflect on the status quo and identify what can be done to improve it so as to achieve this vision. When faced with obstacles on the road to success, we have many options to overcome them; we could go over them, or we could go around them, or perhaps there are more innovative ways that you have in mind as a leader! Regardless, as leaders we need to constantly challenge the process, looking for ways to improve and take suitable risks, but more importantly, take the mistakes and setbacks that we face from these risks as learning opportunities.

## 4. ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT

Leaders increase collaboration and build spirited teams. They find ways and means to actively involve others. Their aim is to achieve and create a strong atmosphere of trust, in which a team is trusting of one another to fulfil their part in achieving a common goal. Leaders foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. They make each member of the team, in all their strengths and shortcomings, feel valued and respected. This allows the leader and their team to work more cohesively and productively in the long run.

## 5. ENCOURAGE THE HEART

Of course, as we motivate one another to achieve our team goals, it is also important to celebrate team achievements and hard work. As leaders, it is important to recognise the efforts put in by our fellow teammates when a goal has been attained. Similarly, it is also crucial that we provide emotional support for one another when the team faces setbacks. It is only by encouraging the heart that we can keep the hope and determination within alive, such that this burning passion will carry the team to greater heights.

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Which of the 5 practices do you think is the most important? What do you think shapes this belief?
2. Which of the 5 practices do you think you need to work on more as a leader? Why?
3. Have you ever experienced any of these practices (either displayed by yourself or someone else)? How did you feel and why?



# INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

## THE TEN CASE STUDIES

### INTRODUCTION

These case studies showcase role models from different sectors in society - the Arts, Social Work, Environment, Business, Science and Politics. Based on your understanding of the 5 Practices of Exemplary Leadership, you could consider how this has been displayed by the people mentioned in the case studies, as well as how this is closely interlinked with female leadership and cooperation between male and female leaders.

# XIAO HAN

No matter how arcane your Spotify playlist is, I'm sure you've heard of JJ Lin, Stefanie Sun or EXO before. But have you heard of the lyrical mastermind behind their works? Xiao Han is a Mandopop lyricist with an impressive list of awards and nominations under her belt. Though it's hard to picture a time when she wasn't so well-established, Xiao Han has faced an uphill battle in order to attain her level of success. This lyrical genius started her professional life in a vastly different field of work — medicine. With a PhD in virology, Xiao Han started as an A\*STAR researcher in the same year she signed with her first music publisher. Merging her two worlds of art and science together proved to be a challenge, with her colleagues showing disdain and disapproval towards her music career.

Despite having her fair share of criticism, Xiao Han soldiered on in balancing research work and songwriting, and even set up a publishing company and school called Funkie Monkeys. Juggling her various commitments as a songwriter, researcher and mother quickly took a toll on her mental health. Instead of being beaten down by the various hardships she has endured, she challenged the process and took these experiences as a wake up call to do something about her condition for the sake of her family. Her resilient attitude in the face of adversity inspires others to find the strength to overcome their own mental health struggles.

## CASE STUDIES

# XIAO HAN

Xiao Han continues to write music to this day, striving to uplift others through her music.

- How does Xiao Han's life story exemplify the practice of "challenging the process"/ any other practice of exemplary leadership?
- How do Xiao Han's challenges reflect some common struggles in overcoming stereotypes and challenging the status quo?
- What can we learn from Xiao Han's resilient and passionate attitude, and how can we apply it in our own lives?

# ERICA PLYBEAH

Erica Plybeah is the founder and CEO of a Memphis-based transportation med tech company named MedHaul, established after seeing her grandmother, a type 2 Diabetic double-leg amputee, struggle with getting to her appointments. By working with transportation companies and healthcare providers, MedHaul automatically assigns drivers with suitable vehicles to the patient according to their needs and medical information, which reduces the administrative effort that hospital or clinic personnel take to arrange rides. This hence makes it easier for special-needs patients to access smooth transportation to get to their appointments on time. Ms Plybeah deliberately focuses on providing service to the southeastern United States instead of expanding into city areas, as she notes that it is where some of the lowest income and sickest people are. Her innovation increases collaboration between different service providers, creating a more efficient transportation system, as well as relieving both the patients' and staffs' burdens.

- How is the motivation behind Ms Plybeah's service different/ similar to other businesses?
- How would you collaborate with external parties to serve your school?
- Taking Ms Plybeah's innovation as an example, what are some other creative initiatives that you can roll out to serve your school?

# SAMANTHA THIAN

Samantha Thian, 27, is the founder of Seastainable, a social business that supports marine conservation. She is also a sustainability manager at HAVI Global Solutions, which provides supply chain management services. Since she started her journey in Scuba diving, she has modelled the way for many people around her by picking up litter every time she sees it, regardless if it is on the beach or in the ocean. She has uplifted communities, inspiring a shared vision with her unbridled youthful optimism, rallying others to support her in the journey towards keeping our environment clean. Since then, she has lead projects such as East Coast Beach Plan, which has compromised over 300 clean-ups at East Coast Park, working with many other like-minded people who want to keep our environment clean, and also founded Seastainable, of which half of the profits goes towards the Seastainable grant, which provides financial assistance to regional projects that aim to strengthen local communities in terms of sustainability and conservation.

- How can we model the way through our day-to-day actions?
- What is something you are passionate about, that you'd like to inspire others to be involved in?
- How can you use your passion to uplift others?

# JANE GOODALL

Goodall, who was interested in animal behaviour from an early age, left school at age 18. In 1960, while visiting a friend in Kenya, she met celebrated anthropologist Louis Leakey who recommended her to embark on his project on studying primates in Gombe. Even though she didn't have the proper qualifications for the job, she still took up the job due to her love for animals and never questioned her competence despite her near impossible mission. Her research was groundbreaking, including the discovery of tool making in chimpanzees which convinced several scientists to reconsider their definition of being human. In 1977 she co-founded the Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research, Education and Conservation (commonly called the Jane Goodall Institute) in California; the centre later moved its headquarters to the Washington, D.C. area. Believing that positive change begins with kids, she also created the Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots (1991), a youth service program which grew out of conversations she was having with young people and is now active in more than 86 countries and has hundreds of thousands of groups, with members in kindergarten, at university and everything in between.

- What values does Jane Goodall show that you can apply when working on projects in school?

# ANGELA MERKEL

Commonly referred to as the de facto leader of Europe and the most powerful woman in the world, it's no surprise that Angela Merkel is so well-received as the first female Chancellor of Germany. Her leadership is marked by her steely reserve, from standing up to Donald Trump to allowing more than a million Syrian refugees into Germany. Merkel's biggest success since steering the region's largest economy through the 2008 financial crisis back to growth, is her commendable management of the coronavirus. With a notably low fatality rate and a high-functioning test and trace system in 2020, Germany's containment of the pandemic is attributed to Merkel's prompt and effective response. She grasped the severity of the situation very early on, immediately assuming a leading role in coordinating a lockdown across all 16 federal states in Germany.

While the exceptional ability to weather crises comes naturally to her, Merkel "struggles to relate to the people; the very characteristics the people cherish most in her — her reliability, diligence, and level-headedness — also create a sense of distance". This is what made her televised speech in March 2020 all the more impressive and sincere, speaking directly and frankly to the German people, and allowing them to see her as the duteous and utterly capable leader who was there when her country needed her the most.

## CASE STUDIES

# ANGELA MERKEL

- How does Angela Merkel's leadership journey exemplify the practice of "encourage the heart"/ any other practice of exemplary leadership?
- How does Angela Merkel's management of the pandemic serve as an example of servant leadership?
- What can we learn from Angela Merkel's leadership style, and how can we apply it in our own lives?

# JACINDA ARDERN

Jacinda Ardern is a New Zealand politician who in August 2017 became leader of the New Zealand Labour Party and then in October 2017, at age 37, took oath as the world's youngest female head of government at the time and the youngest Prime Minister of New Zealand since 1856 after her party formed a coalition government with Green Party and New Zealand First following the 2017 general election. Furthermore, Ardern later became the world's second elected head of government to give birth while in office. Recently, she has won plaudits for her successful handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. On June 8, 2020, the country was the first in the world to declare itself free of coronavirus. Her leadership is rooted in kindness, and she practices empathy to connect with the people and uplift others. This is seen especially when she promoted unity and compassion after the March 15 mosque terror attacks.

- How has she encouraged the heart as the leader of a country?
- What do you think are some challenges she has faced when trying to inspire a shared vision amongst her citizens during the pandemic?

# KATHRIN JENSEN

Kathrin U. Jansen (born 1958) is Head of Vaccine Research and Development at Pfizer. She graduated with a doctoral degree in microbiology, biochemistry and genetics from Phillips-Universität in Germany, and completed postdoctoral work at Cornell University. Few people have led large-scale scientific research projects, and even fewer have spearheaded development of life-changing vaccines. Kathrin Jansen is one of those few who has made a mark in science and global healthcare. She initiated and led development of the world's first vaccine for cervical cancer, Gardasil, and most recently, in her role at Pfizer, helped orchestrate the record-time creation of a Covid-19 vaccine through inspiring a shared vision. Jansen is a minority in her field and throughout her career she has witnessed some discrimination against women in science as a male dominated industry. But she doesn't let that hold her back, and instead works well with her male coworkers. She also uses her experiences to help lift up other women by being a role model and inspiring other women to excel in their industry.

- How has Kathryn Jansen challenged the process to get to where she is today?
- How has she modelled the way for other aspiring women in STEM?
- What challenges have you/your team faced before when trying to achieve certain goals? How have you led yourself and others to overcome them?

# KAMALA HARRIS

Kamala Harris, (born October 20, 1964, Oakland, California, U.S.), 49th vice president of the United States (2021– ) in the Democratic administration of Pres. Joe Biden. Kamala earned a law degree (1989) from Hastings College. She subsequently worked as a deputy district attorney (1990–98) in Oakland, earning a reputation for toughness as she prosecuted cases of gang violence, drug trafficking, and sexual abuse. Harris rose through the ranks, becoming district attorney in 2004. In 2010 she was narrowly elected attorney general of California—winning by a margin of less than 1 percent—thus becoming the first female and the first African American to hold the post. After taking office the following year, she demonstrated political independence, rejecting, for example, pressure from the administration of Pres. Barack Obama for her to settle a nationwide lawsuit against mortgage lenders for unfair practices. Instead, she pressed California's case and in 2012 won a judgment five times higher than that originally offered. Harris's book, *Smart on Crime* (2009; co-written with Joan O'C. Hamilton), was considered a model for dealing with the problem of criminal recidivism. She was the first woman and the first African American to hold the post. She had previously served in the U.S. Senate (2017–21) and as attorney general of California (2011–17). Harris has also emphasised the need to support small minority-owned businesses which have suffered disproportionately during the pandemic, showing her kindness and willingness to uplift others.

# KAMALA HARRIS

- How do you think Kamala Harris' inspires people through her ability to overcome her various challenges?
- What do you think you can learn from her and apply as a leader in your own school?

# MARIE CURIE

Marie Curie was a physicist and chemist, best known for her pioneering research on radioactivity, which contributed greatly to the future development of nuclear energy and the atomic bomb. Together with her husband Pierre Curie, research and investigation led to their discovery of two highly radioactive chemicals radium and polonium in 1898. Of these, radium was found to be able to treat surface and body cavity tumours, though cancers in many other sites were still considered incurable then. However, her passion for her work, despite being in a male-dominated field, continued to inspire more scientists to discover new treatments for cancer. More of her contributions include her help during WWI, where she organised a mobile radiographic unit (a type of x-ray procedure) to help examine wounded soldiers before surgery. She also campaigned for free access to international scientific literature and for internationally recognised symbols, allowing easier exchange of scientific knowledge worldwide. Marie Curie eventually passed away due to leukemia caused by prolonged exposure to radioactive substances. Marie and Pierre Curie's work has not only allowed significant advancement in the world's technology and understanding of science today, but also led more scientists to use their discoveries to improve and benefit society.

- How can you serve others through your interests? What are some ways in which you can challenge yourself to expand your service beyond just doing what you like?

## CASE STUDIES

# MARIE CURIE

- How did Marie Curie inspire more to follow in her footsteps of scientific discovery? How can you motivate the people around you in order to work towards new goals together?

## CASE STUDIES

# MARY BARRA

Mary Barra is an American businesswoman who has been the chair and chief executive officer of General Motors since 2014. Barra is the first woman to lead one of the big three automakers in the U.S., investing billions in electric vehicles, self-driving cars and a ride-share service called Maven. She has uplifted other women by rallying for equal pay to all genders. In 2018, General Motors was one of the only two global businesses that have no gender pay gap. She has succeeded in enabling others to act, fostering collaboration in the business by giving her subordinates the space to freely express their opinions, initiating a communication strategy where communication moves both ways on the hierarchy ladder, uplifting her subordinates and peers alike.

- How else do you think you can communicate with others effectively as a leader?
- How can you create a space in which your team members can freely express their opinions as well?
- How does Mary Barra's story inspire you to encourage the heart?

# GENERIC QUESTIONS

This set of questions can be used as time fillers if time permits. Feel free to rephrase them according to your own discretion.

1. Think about a female leader in your life who has inspired you. Tell us more about what she has done and how she has uplifted you/your team.
2. Take 10 min to research on a woman leader in a field of your own interest. Share with the group why you chose her and what you have found out. How does this woman leader show the leadership practices we have discussed ?
3. How do you think we can encourage one another to uplift others ?

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