

Delasia Rice  
Fordham University - Graduate School Specialist  
Leadership Academy Class of 2024  
Mentor: Diandra Prescod  
Executive Summary

## **DEVELOPING MINORITY MEMBERS INTO LEADERSHIP ROLES**

*Research Questions:* How can we be intentional about developing our minoritized members (e.g., black and brown, queer and trans) into leadership roles within the association? What role should the Leadership Academy play in these endeavors? How do we stay ahead of the curve?

### **METHODOLOGY**

*Qualitative:* With help from my mentor, I've reached out to members of NCDA who have had in the past or currently hold leadership roles within NCDA (i.e. Board of Trustees or Chair of a Committee). In total, I was able to interview 4 leaders, 2 of whom have been participants of the Leadership Academy. I conducted 30-minute interviews with each and asked them 2-4 questions related to the diversity in leadership within NCDA, how it can work to develop minority members, and their thoughts on the Leadership Academy and its role.

*Quantitative:* I created a 19 question survey using Google forms that was distributed to the NCDA members. The survey had questions on members' participation in leadership roles within NCDA and opinions on DEI. There was also a section for members who were in the Leadership Academy to answer. The purpose of the survey was to understand leadership roles in the organization and learn about how members view DEI issues.

### **FINDINGS**

*Qualitative:* As mentioned above, I conducted 4 interviews with NCDA members who currently or previously held leadership positions. Questions and themes will be in Appendix A. Overall, it seems like the current and past leaders agree that DEI needs to be a pillar within NCDA and to be intentional in developing minority leaders, it needs to be a constant conversation. Something we are always working on and something always improving on. We need DEI more at the

forefront of the workshops / webinars provided. From that it needs to start with membership, are we being intentional with even getting minority members? Based on the June 2023 Membership report, only .4% of members are considered a gender minority and 37% considered ethnic minority. How can we start with increasing and maintaining minority membership in general? Lastly, the interviewees are also in agreement that the Leadership Academy should be defined: what is the purpose of the leadership academy? It should be more than project focused and it should serve as the pipeline in developing leaders.

*Quantitative:* 169 NCDAs members responded to my survey.

- When asked on NCDAs development of leaders, the open responses were split. Majority of the people feel NCDAs does a great job with developing its members into leaders. They feel like the opportunities are there and it is up to members to find it themselves and take advantage of the opportunities. Some people feel even though the opportunities are there, networking and support is still needed to get the opportunities (i.e. connections to people in leadership positions).
- There were some members who feel NCDAs can do better with developing leaders and below are excerpts of what they said:
  - “It would be great to gain access to opportunities for newcomers. Networking is important, but opportunities for those who may not know as many people, especially for members of color, would really make these opportunities more attainable.”
  - “Passive advertising doesn't always work, invitations to attend a conference with discounts might help for many in the underrepresented areas.”
  - I would love to see more intentionality around bringing in underrepresented/minoritized leaders - perhaps a focus group of those who have been and stayed involved in leadership positions would help clarify what key factors contribute to this

- Additionally, many responses brought up the importance of mentorship in NCDA and providing more support for international members.

*Other:* I've reached out to the DICI and Membership committee: I did not get a response from the DICI committee. The response from the Membership committee was that the committee is fairly new and there are currently no targeted initiatives to recruit or retain minority members.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This project had a couple of limitations. Based on some of the comments, the survey may have had too many components. Next time, I would have a survey that focuses solely on minority members, their experience in NCDA, leadership experience if they have any, and any suggestions or recommendations. I feel the survey I created was focused too much on leadership academy and I would have preferred for it to focus on minority members. Another limitation is the amount of interviews conducted. Since there were only 4 and only 2 were a part of the Leadership Academy, it may not be considered an efficient amount of data to pull from.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Ideas for future research includes doing a study on minority members' sense of belonging and willingness to join leadership would be a great next step. On the survey, in the Likert Scale (Question 18), when asked if they feel NCDA provides opportunities for minority members, values minority members, etc., majority of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed identified as one or more of a minority demographic. If we can understand how they are feeling and how they feel they are being represented, we can get a better understanding of a) how to fully support them and b) how NCDA can create more opportunity and sense of belonging for them. Another idea for future research would be to conduct several focus groups. One area of the focus group can be on minority members and their interests in leadership roles, another one on minority members who've had leadership roles within NCDA, and the third on past leadership academy members and getting their areas of enjoyment and areas of improvement for the

program. This will allow NCDA to gain a better perspective on these three areas and will get further input from a wide range of members from these 3 groups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on all of the findings and suggestions in both the interviews and the survey, here are some recommendations for initiatives and ideas that NCDA can work toward and implement. How can we be intentional about developing our minoritized members (e.g., black and brown, queer and trans) into leadership roles within the association?

- **Membership Campaign:** Membership committee can work to recruit more diverse members
  - “We do a good job, but we can do better. Being Hispanic, I am still shocked at the low number of Hispanic members and believe we can do a better job recruiting and retaining this population.” - Survey Question 19 response
- **Sense of Belonging / Affinity Groups:** Before we can talk about developing minority members into leadership, there needs to be a deeper dive into how these populations of members feel about NCDA and how it handles DEI. Implementing Affinity groups of different populations would also be a good idea to start forming a sense of belonging.
- **Mentorship:** As several members mentioned, mentorship is important in getting involved in NCDA as well as just general professional development. Many mentioned that mentorship was one of the main reasons they wanted to be a part of the Leadership Academy. Another thing that came up was the importance of people making connections and introductions for them in rooms that matter. It would be important for NCDA to continue and build upon the already established mentorship program. It would also be important for current and future leaders to continuously make connections for others and make a point to engage with members.

What role should the Leadership Academy play in these endeavors?

- **Expand Leadership Academy:** How are we defining Leadership Academy? There should be targeted efforts in getting minority members into the Leadership Academy and ensuring there is access for all members. Secondly, the Leadership Academy should serve as a pipeline for members into leadership roles. In addition to having a project, the Leadership Academy should work to actually help participants develop leadership skills and learn about NCDA and prepare for leadership roles.

How do we stay ahead of the curve?

- **Benchmark other organizations:** This topic requires much more research and strategy. The first step would be looking at other professional organizations and seeing their plans on developing underrepresented members into leaders. It is also important to look at how they handle DEI in general.
- **Future Research:** Implement what is listed in future research section

## Appendix A

### INTERVIEW RESPONSES

1. What are your thoughts on how NCDA can improve on having more diverse leadership?
  - a. Themes:
    - i. DEI needs to always be apart of NCDA's plan- needs to be a pillar of NCDA
    - ii. Starts with membership: Look at members of minority groups, and see where we stand
    - iii. Targeted efforts to get BIPOC population involved into mentorship program and LA
    - iv. Intentionality (Address what needs to be addressed and seeking out minority members)
2. In what ways would you have the leadership academy be involved with leadership within NCDA and developing minority leaders?
  - a. Themes:
    - i. Leadership academy should be about developing leaders within NCDA, should be at the forefront
    - ii. Seeking out diverse members, encouraging them to apply
    - iii. Leadership academy should be the pipeline into leadership within NCDA, should work on getting more minority members to join
3. For leadership participants: Can you speak about your experience within the leadership academy?
  - a. Themes:
    - i. Access to other leaders (introductions should be made)
4. For leadership participants: How do they feel the academy can improve (in regards to developing leaders)?
  - a. Themes:
    - i. Leadership Academy needs to be fully defined - what is its true purpose?
    - ii. The leadership academy should be dedicated to and tailored for developing the future leaders
      1. Leadership lessons, skills - developing leaders and not just project based
      2. Ensuring that this is where the the DEI is starting