When I was an assistant professor, Chancellor Emeritus and Professor John White was kind enough to allow me to sit in on his leadership class for graduate engineers: INEG 5253 “Leadership Principles”. During the fourth week, while reading *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* by Maxwell, I was struck with the fact that I was overwhelmed. After listening to all of the leadership styles, influences, eureka moments, obstacles, failures, strengths, and weaknesses from the four speakers and two books covered to date, I was slowly being buried under a wealth of head knowledge about leadership. During those first three weeks, I was diligently taking notes during class and on the readings, trying to absorb all the information, and striving to implement the new ideas in my classroom, in my research group, and in my personal life, when I realized that the entire framework I was building was about to crumble like a house of cards. At that point, I decided to return to my three core values in order to build a strong foundation to better digest and incorporate the wealth of knowledge gained from the leadership class. My confidence in this decision was reinforced after guest speakers General Steele and Mr. Duke stated the importance of staying inside their value systems, and how this approach provided a foundation for their leadership journeys. My three core values are Understanding, Awareness, and Community. This reflection will look at the information I absorbed from the speakers and the readings in INEG 5253 through the lens of Understanding, Awareness, and Community, and how I’ve woven the information into my current role as a Professor in the Civil Engineering department.

The first value I will reflect on is Understanding. While there are myriad perspectives on the concept of Understanding, one theme came up multiple times during the Leadership Principles class: taking time. This perspective came through in many different ways. Guest speaker Mr. Roberts, for example, advised the class to go slow, give things time, and don’t rush a decision. This concept was enforced in *Leadership on the Line* as well, where authors Heifetz and Linsky spent time discussing that it takes discipline to unplug, slow down, and create moments of transition each day. In my own personal life, I am fortunate to own an electric bicycle. When I bike to work, versus driving a car, my day is completely different, both transitioning from home to work in the morning and from work to home in the evening. I believe these twenty-five minutes of transition, when I don’t have the daily distractions of students, colleagues, and emails, are priceless in my ability to function at work and at home. This time also allows me to have the opportunity to deeply think about both professional and personal issues I am facing, and to simply enjoy nature. During this deep thought, I can take the advice of guest speaker Mr. Pincus, who said that every time you think you have a shot, turn around and look at a new perspective. The final component to the theme of Understanding that was salient to my thinking came from guest speaker Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith was asked by a student during class about how he balances his personal and professional life. He very calmly and confidently said that he doesn’t balance, but he is constantly rebalancing. I often struggle with the amount of time I spend on my work and the cost that it could be charging to my personal life, so this concept gave me a new perspective on how to more successfully address balancing, or rebalancing, my life.

The second value I will reflect on is Awareness. The theme that repeated itself multiple times over the semester in INEG 5253 in terms of Awareness was insight. Insight can take many

forms, both internal and external. In order to have strong insight, it is essential to have the proper information. According to *The Art of War* (by Tzu), information is key. Having key information allows leaders not only to recognize the pieces on the board, but also to give insight on interpreting the pieces. As author Sample stated in *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*, leadership is highly situational and contingent. In my work, the balance between information and situational come out most strongly in interacting with my graduate students. When talking about research or mentoring on life, I must not only consider the various possible scenarios to explore (information), but I must also consider the student (highly situational). Each student has a different background, they each "carry their culture and identity wherever they go" (guest speaker Mr. Peterson), and they each have different goals and aspirations. Additionally, to complicate things even further, according to Dr. White different people see different truths; that is, multiple truths exist. For example, when a situation appears black and white to me, there may be shades of gray that the students see. In order to be a good advisor and mentor, it is up to me to recognize these possibilities and take them into account through Awareness when interacting with my students.

The third and final value I will reflect on is Community. Community has many meanings, yet, in the lens of INEG 5253, I believe the most important aspect of Community is recognizing people. When working with other people, it is important to be mindful of others' speed, according to guest speaker Mrs. Lopez-Willhelm. Some people move fast, some people take the time for deep reflection, and a spectrum of people exist between these two extremes, which means that it is important to recognize the speed of people with whom one works. This is important to remember, because according to *The Prince* (by Machiavelli), a person is judged by the company he/she keeps, and a group is judged by its weakest member. Therefore, when leading a group, it is important to know the characteristics of each member of the team, as people will classify the team according to who they perceive as the weakest member of the community. One way to raise the level of everyone in the team is to lead by giving the impression that the followers are leading (according to *Lincoln on Leadership*, by Phillips). If the leader takes the time to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the team and purposely assigns roles according to these strengths and weaknesses, each member of the team can feel that they are in control of the situation and are integral participants, which builds Community. This will increase productivity and drive team members to be more productive and have higher levels of contribution.

Guest speaker Mr. Long provided much of my motivation to write this reflection by stating that we should use books to help in our leadership and personal development journey, but that we need to apply the concepts to ourselves to build on our weaknesses. This reflection was the first step in applying my learnings from INEG 5253 to my personal and professional life. I hope to continue implementing wisdom gained from this class in the three facets of my professional life: research, teaching, and service. I believe that all three of these facets can accommodate my core values of Understanding, Awareness, and Community. To do this, I will take the words of Wayne Gretzky and strive to "skate where the puck will be." And at the end of the day, these thoughts and this reflection is an academic exercise, so I will need to "sit down, shut up, suck it up, and get to work" (Mr. Peterson).