

November 2023



Letter from the Executive Director

This lovely park bench sits in the city park next to where I will vote next week. A bench located at the crossroads of Minneapolis' history as a mosaic of peoples and cultures from around the world. A little worse for wear, but still emanating the hopeful, welcoming energy of a city in motion.

The story of our shared histories continues to present us with opportunities and challenges to practice our deepest moral and emotional intelligence skills, with purpose and empathy.

Have your **Freeze Exercise** skills been put into good practice over the past month? The call to pause and assess the situation, your own emotions, and whether (or how) to (re)act in a given moment?

The fundamentals of self-aware communication are central to how we structure the Future Leaders Academy's Leadership Workshop. Just think how critical those skills are today when seeking to understand others' positions is critical finding a hopeful way forward.

This month we feature Future Leader Ibrahima Fall, a 2nd year student at St. Cloud State University. He's already an elected student leader of two important student groups on campus. He has big dreams and we're proud to be part of his leadership journey.

We meet (virtually) for about an hour each week. We decided this was a rhythm that worked well for us and the goals we're working on together. Things change, something might come up when you have a full life, but we're there for each other and it's a highlight of my week to be part of the conversation.

I also find the conversations to be stretching my own skill-set as a listener and advisor. It's something I've done quite a bit of in my life, especially in my previous roles as a supervisor and student capstone project advisor in a number of settings, but still learning and hopefully growing myself in a world that sometimes has its own agenda for you to react to on a given day.

Last night, I attended a talk about US diplomacy and its need for change, presented by a retired diplomat and former ambassador, that felt directly relevant to who we are as an organization as we strive to create change by supporting research, reflection and growth for current and emerging leaders.

One of the ambassador's points was that there is virtually no professional development, beyond language learning, available to a foreign service officer during their entire career. His role now is to try and change that.

And one of his jokes was about his frustration with the common usage of "to be diplomatic" as the opposite of being frank, when from a diplomat's perspective, to be diplomatic is to be say what you want to say in a way that's agreeable, understandable and relatable to others. That ability to be diplomatic requires a healthy commitment to practicing the Freeze Exercise and empathy, to be sure, in addition to a close reflection on one's [values](#) in a dynamic environment.

Whether you're a professional diplomat or an everyday leader focused on your family and community, these are the skills for life.

We hope you'll join us as a Mentor, encourage those you know to bring their Future Leader selves to the Future Leaders Academy (apply by Dec 1!), and share our fellowship opportunities within your networks.

Have a great month and look forward to meeting our two new Board Members in these pages in December!

- Brian Hammer, PhD

Executive Director | bhammer@t2pri.org | +1 612.843.5017

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Think2perform Research Institute 501(c)(3) | 706 2nd Ave S, Suite 271 | Minneapolis, MN 55405 USA

t2pri.org | Contact: Brian Hammer, PhD, Executive Director | bhammer@t2pri.org | +1 612 843 5017