



H.O.P.E.

honoring our neighbor ♦ organizing for justice ♦ practicing peace ♦ encountering God

Role of Employee Leaders

H.O.P.E. Employee Leaders are essential in making H.O.P.E. programs successful. Describing the role of an Employee Leader can be difficult—and experience suggests that only time with your team will truly clarify your role. Caveats aside, below is a general description of your unique role.

The first task at hand is to acknowledge that the word ‘leader’, if understood in a traditional sense, may be a misnomer. Each H.O.P.E. group is probably best understood as a ‘team’. The Student Leaders are the team captains, and the Employee Leaders are the assistant coaches. Employee Leaders are very influential throughout the experience, but are often ‘behind the scenes’, quietly supporting and challenging the Student Leaders and the Participants. The ideal is that the H.O.P.E. experience is mostly student-facilitated, with support, as needed, from Employee Leaders.

A few past Employee Leaders have reported that they initially felt they were doing little more than what a student participant was doing; that’s okay. However, most also indicated that as the experience progressed, key opportunities and challenges arose that demanded their more active support and guidance. Some examples of these opportunities and challenges include:

- Sharing their insight from a faith perspective, to complement students’ own exploration of their faith. Often your experience will be helpful in bolstering and deepening the reflections.
- Modeling mature, respectful and honest sharing during reflections (if a Employee Leader is open in their sharing, students often follow this lead).
- Working with Student Leaders to ensure that they manage meetings and reflection effectively.
- Helping Student Leaders negotiate the conflicts that inevitably arise among and between team members.
- Working one-on-one with Participants who struggle to fit in with the team, and / or who struggle with the ideas being presented.
- Supporting students as they deal with illness and other difficult realities that are often encountered in-country.
- Being a conversation partner with students upon their return as they deal with the challenge of integrating their experience into their lives at Stonehill.

Ultimately the role of each Employee Leader is unique—each team and differing circumstances demand a distinct role. The most influential determinants of your role are likely to be the experience and ability of your Student Leaders, and the chemistry of the team—the stronger these two elements are, the more you will be a vigilant fellow-traveler. If your Student Leaders are less experienced and / or you encounter challenging group dynamics then you will have to play more of an active role.

The most important thing you “do” is be present; be a member of the group and be involved. Your presence has many tangible impacts—your presence lends legitimacy to Student Leaders, breeds Participant confidence in the process, and both Student Leaders and Participants are assured knowing that should circumstances demand it you can provide a fire extinguisher and / or compass.

Employee Leaders are expected to:

- Meet initially with your Student Leaders and co-Employee Leader to discuss the vision of the program, each person’s hopes, fears, expectations, interpretation of each others’ roles, communication and feedback methods, etc.
- Check in with Student Leaders, as needed, to support and challenge them.
- Attend most of the weekly H.O.P.E. Meetings.
- Attend all Employee Leader Training Sessions.
- Attend the Commissioning Mass.
- Be in communication with the H.O.P.E. Director regarding problems or issues that arise and that require special attention.
- Evaluate the program and process with the H.O.P.E. Director both before and after the trip.
- Acquire any documents necessary for travel, as well as any immunizations you choose to acquire.

On-Site:

- Participate actively, as much as possible, in all of the on-site activities and work projects.
- Participate actively in reflection sessions, offering insight gleaned from your own experiences, as well as posing thought-provoking questions for the group.
- Support student leaders in assuring that H.O.P.E. policies are followed.
- Provide leadership and support in the event of an emergency. (Employee leaders have the “final say” when issues of safety arise.)
- Serve as the responsible party for all financial exchanges for the trip, including carrying necessary funds for the trip, securing necessary receipts, and keeping a log for all expenses incurred.
- Meet each day with the leadership team to check in on what is going well and where improvements may be made, in addition to addressing the schedule for the day.

The Role of the Student Leader:

The student leaders are responsible for coordinating virtually all aspects of the site experience.

- Student leaders will be equipped and ready to lead daily reflections.
- Student leaders should help the host community coordinate the group(s) and work projects.
- Student leaders are available to help individual students process the experience.
- Student leaders are responsible for making sure that all members abide by H.O.P.E. policies.