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EL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE
COMPOSTELA: THE PILGRIMAGE
OF A GROWING LEADER

*"Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends, but
is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers . . .
the mind can never break off from the journey."*

—Pat Conroy

*"A true journey, no matter how long
the travel takes, has no end."*

—William Least Heat Moon

My experience through the Leadership Program at Andrews University is like a pilgrim's journey through El Camino de Santiago de Compostela. El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, known in English as The Way of St. James, is a Catholic pilgrimage route from St. Jean Pied de Port, France, through northwestern Spain to Santiago de Compostela, España (Figure 1). For more than 1000 years, pilgrims have walked this 780 km route (484.66 mi) to collect a "Compostela" or document that states that the person named therein had successfully completed the route for religious reasons, most notably, to pay reverence to the remains of St. James, which are claimed to be in the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

[Picture: Brad Map]

[Figure 1: El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, from St. Jean Pied de Port, France, to Santiago de Compostela, España.]

The Metaphor

Although El Camino has been known in Catholic circles for centuries, it has not been until the recent release of the film *The Way* (2011), starring Martin Sheen and produced by his son Emilio Estevez, that Americans

through the Pyrenees to the supposed resting place of St. James' remains. It has been reported throughout the years that El Camino has been traveled by thousands of people from of all sorts of life. Among them are Charlemagne, Pope Calixtus II, King Alfonso II, El Cid, and many noblemen, priests, farmers, beggars, healthy, sick, blind, lame, rich and poor, women and men.

What is interesting is that it takes quite a bit of planning to accomplish this trip successfully. Just look at the wealth of expert advice on the Internet on the El Camino Santiago website (2011). Here are some important insights.

First, a pilgrim must plan his time. There is no set time to complete the journey. Some pilgrims travel quickly, some do it in spurts or stages, and some go at the journey very slowly. Most people average between 20 and 25 km per day. The important point to note about time is that the journey requires effort. Travelers must make progress continually if they are going to reach the destination. There are physical challenges that one must overcome and that can consume time, but that is the beauty of the journey—the satisfaction of completing a difficult task.

All pilgrims face difficulties along the path and have to overcome bad times. But no El Camino traveler is ever alone. The people on the same journey will help and encourage any pilgrim along the way. People may enter the journey on El Camino alone or in a group; some make the journey alone, but many travel together. They meet many interesting people along the way and make many new friends. There are times when pilgrims want to walk alone and there are times when they want to join up with others such as at a local hostel or eating establishment at day's end.

Pilgrims also plan their resources for the journey. Most plan a budget of 25 to 40 Euros per day. They take the opportunity to eat with locals in small villages and enjoy the company and gastronomy that comes along with it. These interpersonal interactions with so many people help pilgrims to carry on till the end.

Expert travelers of El Camino offer sound advice on how to pack for the journey. The caution is to not to overpack and be weighed down with a lot of unnecessary equipment or supplies. They strongly caution pilgrims not to take on more than they can handle. The essentials are all that is needed to complete the journey, no matter its length. The essentials for a successful trip along El Camino include a sleeping bag and mat, 2-3 cotton t-shirts, a couple of pairs of comfortable lightweight

Camino guide book so the traveler will never get lost. And above all, the one lesson pilgrims should take with them is: If in doubt, ask!

At the El Camino de Santiago (2011) website, a traveler documented

that I am at the finish line, I am solidified in the realization that I will continue to grow as a leader for as long as I continue to draw breath!

One critical element in the Leadership Program was the requirement for students to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which would serve as a "road map" through the doctoral program. My IDP included a vision statement for my leadership and it documented how I would reach an acceptable level of proficiency in 20 different competency areas through professional experiences, projects, reflection, coursework, and a dissertation. I created my IDP, which not only documented what I had already accomplished as a leader, but it also projected areas

there are my fellow travelers, that is, the other students in the program. We have traveled many kilometers together, working our way through difficult passages, celebrating in each others' successes, and providing a continuous support mechanism. Then there are the locals, that is, the professors and support staff in the Leadership Program. These people are the experts who know how to navigate the different stages of the journey and who offer never-ending advice and encouragement. They even feed you! Finally, there are the guidebooks themselves, that is, the experts in the competency areas that led me along the way and helped me to form my belief system. Some of the great leaders I encountered at different stages along the journey include Fred Jones (2000) and his *Positive Classroom Management*; Marzano (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) with his *Classroom Instruction That Works*; Joyce (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2004) and his *Models of Teaching*; DuFour and Eaker (1998) with their *Professional Learning Communities*; and Reeves (see Besser, Anderson-Davis, & Peery, 2008) with the Data Team process. And of course there are many others who led the way for me to be successful in this journey.

Milestones

An important component in planning a journey is the creation of a travel plan or road map that takes the pilgrim through the different stages of El Camino. I see the different stages of El Camino in the development of the competencies. One stage of my journey represents a star competency area of an effective teacher/instructor. A star competency is one area in which a student has to show a level of competency significantly beyond the mere proficiency level. Being an effective instructor of students, an instructor of instructors, and mentor/coach to instructors and other educational leaders has been the essence of my professional career. A second stage in the journey was the effective change agent with skills in planning and implementing change, developing human resources, and public relations. My work includes planning and implementing change, helping people transition through the change process, helping people develop their fullest potential, utilizing those people skills for the good of the individual as well as the organization, and promoting public relations. Like pilgrims who help each other along El Camino, I constantly work to bring people along, whether that be through professional development, encouragement, nudging, mentoring, reaffirming, motivating, or empowering. A third stage of the journey represented the competency of an effective organizer. In my work I function often in an organizing

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