A new program teaches businesses the importance of developing their own pool of leadership.

When McDonald’s CEO Jim Cantalupo had a sudden heart attack in April, the company named a successor within hours. Previously serving as president, the new CEO was ready to jump in place. All businesses — large and small — must have succession plans for leadership to ensure continuity. After all, leaders may die or retire or move to other companies. “Businesses need to develop their pool of leadership talent if they want to stay market leaders,” said Tim Kizer, director, Walton College Center for Management and Executive Development. “This talent must be prepared to take charge when the time arrives. This is one of the reasons we created the Emerging Leaders Program, an executive education program that prepares managers to think on a higher level.”
"We conducted focus groups with seven Arkansas corporations and found a real need," Kizer continued. "There are programs for the highest level executives and for supervisors, but nothing for upper-middle managers."

**Turning Managers into Leaders**

The Emerging Leaders Program began with a pilot program in January 2003 and has now graduated over 80 high-level managers. "The impact of this program on Arkansas is already being felt," Kizer said. "It is designed to help people think like leaders and see how decisions affect the whole organization."

The nine-day program focuses on the intersection of interpersonal skills and analytical abilities to impact organizational performance. Greg Fike, M Ed '94, EdD '02, the Center associate director for executive education, said, "The first three-day session covers emotional intelligence, a concept made popular by business guru Daniel Goleman. There are many examples of how leaders with these strong skills can affect business performance." Fike leads all the sessions, which use current and former executives as instructors.

Curtis Coleman, president and CEO, Safe Foods Corporation, leads the first session on teambuilding using the servant-leadership model, in which good leaders see themselves serving people that work for them and demonstrate high-levels of interpersonal relationships and social skills.

"The course offers participants valuable tools for making the ‘growth jump’ from management to leadership, giving them the opportunity to interact with business leaders with diverse leadership styles," said Coleman.

"The Program opened my eyes to the idea of emotional intelligence," said participant Scott McNair, senior vice president of Tyson’s Wholesale Club Division. "I enjoyed the speakers. They challenged me in ways I hadn’t thought about."

Cal Kellogg, BSBA '77, MBA '78, PhD '85, vice president of enterprise development services, Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield, covers a section on systems thinking and the balanced scorecard. Balanced scorecard leadership asks people to look at the company’s strategy from four perspectives: customers, internal, innovation and learning, and financial.

"The program does an excellent job of challenging managers to get out of the ‘box’ of thinking about departmental or functional issues and forces them to think about issues facing the whole organization," Kellogg said.

"Based on feedback, one of the most important components is the work that is done with each individual based on their emotional intelligence results," he added. "The program is an excellent blend of tools, practice, discussion, and participant self-examination."

Participant Kelly Beers, director of laboratory services for Safe Foods, said, "What the program did most was to make me be aware of my working environment. I am now continuously thinking about ways to enhance positive interaction between myself and direct reports. I have learned that becoming a leader requires learning from mistakes and thinking through decisions to anticipate possible outcomes."

"The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve... Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."  
ROBERT GREENLEAF, MARKETING RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION, AT&T

Alicia Berkemeyer, manager, Enterprise Pharmacy Operations, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, said, "The program made me aware of my strengths and weaknesses as a manager and equipped me with tools to help me be a more effective leader. I found the networking with other leaders was great as well."

The last three-day session is taught by Dan Nabholz, former chairman and CEO of Nabholz Construction Corporation. "Management is a people thing. My part of the program was to bring real life experiences and get the participants to think about their own work with a real project," he said. "I present seven different decision points during my time as head of Nabholz Construction." The participants discuss how they would have made those decisions and then learn how they were actually made and the results.

"It is a fun program. These are all very accomplished managers, so it is a lively discussion," Nabholz said. "This innovative course is a critical part of the Walton College’s outreach mission — keeping the college integrated into the Arkansas business community."

Participant Roy Preuett, director of data processing for Dillard’s, said, "I use the tools I acquired in this program everyday. They make my crystal ball a little clearer as I see the future."

For information on the Emerging Leaders Program, go to the Web at: cmed.uark.edu/emergingleaders.asp