



## The African-American Leadership Program

Leadership developer Dr. Lea Williams delves into the CCL approach and finds much to her liking.

### Lea E. Williams

Interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs/  
Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research  
North Carolina A&T State University

Dr. Lea E. Williams was running a leadership program in Greensboro, N.C., when the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) offered her a scholarship to attend one of its programs. She readily accepted, choosing The African-American Leadership Program. “Of course I had been aware of CCL by reputation for a long time,” she said. “This gave me a chance to compare a top-tier leadership organization’s approach to what we were doing with the National African-American Women’s Leadership Institute (NAAWLI).”

Williams discovered some familiar territory at CCL, in its focus on personal and professional growth through self-reflection, skills-building and networking. But she found the structure to be completely different. While the NAAWLI experience is tied to community service and takes place over several months, the CCL program packs multi-rater assessments and feedback, group interactions, experiential exercises, classroom learning, one-on-one coaching and goal-setting into one week.

Comparisons aside, Williams was impressed by the 360-degree feedback, calling it “a strong component because you get a candid assessment of how others perceive you as a leader.” Also valuable was the availability of an on-site coach “to help you figure out effective strategies for improving your leadership skills.”

Williams said she particularly appreciated the group discussions, where peers explore work issues and share on-the-job experiences. “People were open and honest, talking about the unique challenges they faced as people of color. CCL provided a safe setting where we could candidly express ourselves in ways less guarded than in the workplace.”

Williams said that even individuals who work in

“The 360-degree feedback is a strong component of The African-American Leadership Program because you get a candid assessment of how others perceive you as a leader. The program also has an on-site coach to help you figure out effective strategies for improving your leadership skills.”

black organizations, as she has done for most of her career, need that sense of security to open up. “No matter where you are, whether it’s a predominantly black environment or one that’s diverse – you still wouldn’t talk as freely there as you would in a venue like this.”

In her book *Servants of the People* (1996, St. Martin’s Press), Williams wrote about the leadership styles of leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. As for her own leadership style, she said she has attained a comfortable understanding of her strengths and how to leverage the strengths of others. “I’ve learned that I don’t have to have all the answers,” she said. The results of her CCL assessment affirmed what she believes about herself. “I was pleased about that.”

Leadership development is no longer part of Williams’ job description since she stepped away from NAAWLI in late 2006 to concentrate on the demands of her academic post at North Carolina A&T State University. But she continues to share what she has learned over the years, including at CCL, through informal mentoring of those around her. “For me,” she says, “having a positive impact on people’s lives is what it means to be a leader.”

For more  
information:

Visit  
[www.ccl.org/aalp](http://www.ccl.org/aalp)

or

Contact  
CCL-North America  
+1 336 545 2810  
[info@leaders.ccl.org](mailto:info@leaders.ccl.org)