Creating a path for the next leaders

Have you noticed that many of the Sacramento region’s CEOs, leaders in the government sector and community organizations have two primary things in common?

A lot of them are baby boomers — and headed quickly toward retirement.

Their impending departure leaves an obvious question: What is the plan for replacing these leaders who are so key to their companies and civic groups?

There’s no doubt that today’s savvy young people, the texters and tweeter generation, need no guidance in technology matters. But what’s the path for them to become effective leaders? How do these talented people become decision-makers, effective communicators, strategists with vision, team builders and acquire all the other characteristics that inspire others to give it their all?

Fortunately, several chambers, organizations and educational institutions throughout the region have recognized the need for training programs for this next generation of leaders of their businesses and our community.

The Sacramento Metro Chamber recognizes that a leadership void will arrive soon. In 1985, the chamber established the Leadership Sacramento Program to develop community-focused business and civic leadership. In an effort to further teach management skills, the chamber established Metro Edge last year for young professionals to gather at leadership workshops, volunteer to help nonprofits and attend educational forums to listen and learn from local government, business and civic leaders.

The same thing is occurring in south Placer County, where Ignite, an organization for next-generation leaders from the ages of 21-40, are receiving mentoring skills from its more seasoned cohorts at the Roseville Chamber of Commerce and community leaders.

Diverse groups such as the Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce and the Nehemiah Foundation’s Emerging Leaders Program also have done an excellent job of establishing curricula that identify and develop up-and-coming leaders.

On the educational front, institutions such as Drexel University’s Center for Graduate Studies are focused on having graduates walk away with much more than the knowledge from completing a top-tier master’s program. The Philadelphia-based university is teaching its working professionals the meaning of volunteerism, providing an abundance of leadership opportunities and instilling the ethic of giving back to the community.

Drexel will host its first-ever Young Professionals Summit on Aug. 18, which will bring together more than 200 young professionals. The evening’s agenda will focus on the role young professionals can play in fueling the economic recovery.

The panelists are Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson; Ana Matosantos, director of California Department of Finance; Kathie Sowa, Northern California president for Bank of America; and Bay Miry, an executive with D&S Development in Sacramento.

The purpose of the Drexel Summit and all of the area’s mentoring programs is simple. Responsible organizations throughout the region want to develop a group of young professionals who will become the leaders in making this a better place to live, work and play.

Leadership programs are investments in the most important parts of our community — its human capital.

Kyle Glankler is a student at Drexel University’s Center for Graduate Studies, where he became the first president of the Graduate Student Association.