Humans are at their best when they are deeply connected to other people, live with purpose and authenticity, and work to fulfill their unique potential. Together, these concepts encompass the philosophical ideal of human flourishing, and form the foundation of great and ethical leaders. For Dr. Bret Crane, 2021 Teacher of the Year in the Huntsman School of Business, the cultivation of human flourishing among his students is essential.

“Leadership is not just about what you do, but also about who you become,” says Crane, who focuses on Learning, Empathy, Authenticity, and Drive (LEAD) to help students develop their leadership potential. “These four pillars are helpful, but when you put them together, they become synergistic and complementary, and then you create real contribution as a leader.”

Crane is a facilitator of students’ learning and a promoter of self-discovery. His classes help students develop a strong sense of self awareness, discover what’s unique and valuable about them, and learn how to apply that to add value wherever they may be.

Human flourishing and ethical leadership are intertwined. “You’re less likely to make ethical violations when you have a clear understanding of what your most important values are and how they’re operationalized every day. You’re more ethical if you consider the needs of other people before making decisions,” says Crane. “Purpose, authenticity, and self-actualization help our students to ultimately be ethical and to flourish. That’s why these principles are so important.”

Crane has consulted on leadership issues with American Express, Honda, Lowe’s, and General Mills, among others. Crane is an associate professor in the Department of Marketing and Strategy and the Executive Director of the Stephen
R. Covey Leadership Center. Since joining USU in 2015, he has developed a multi-year holistic integrated leadership program that provides hands-on opportunities to discover, practice, and experiment with leadership. Students participate in transformative experiences to develop self-confidence and life direction, learn how to utilize their own strengths, serve others by helping elementary school students develop leadership competencies, see leadership in an international context, and present business problem solutions to executive alumni in a case competition.

Dr. Jim Davis, head of the Department of Marketing and Strategy, observes, “Student engagement is perhaps Professor Crane’s greatest strength. I have rarely seen a professor so actively engaged with students and who so proactively develops programs and activities for even more engagement. It is his passion and where he seems to find energy as a professor.”

Crane challenges students, “Leadership is not a position, but a choice. Choose to be a leader every day by stepping outside your comfort zone and challenging the status quo, seeing and connecting deeply with others, making progress in your personal purpose and living your most important values. Choosing to be a leader every day is choosing a life of meaning and contribution and a way of life that enables you to flourish.”