

Leadership--Personal Perspectives and Lessons Learned

Food Systems Leadership Institute

Vic Lechtenberg, Purdue University
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Good evening. This is a distinct pleasure and honor to have the opportunity to speak with such a distinguished group of university leaders. This Leadership Institute is a very special program and I congratulate all of you, first on being willing to dedicate a significant amount of time to furthering your leadership skills and, second on being accepted into this program. Just being here tells a lot about your accomplishments and about the confidence that your peers and superiors have in you as future food system leaders. If I was still in a leadership role at Purdue, I would likely be trying to recruit some of you.

Aside from being able to visit with all of you, it is also a treat for me and Grayce to be able to reconnect with a number of our former Purdue colleagues. As many of you know, Chancellor Randy Woodson, Vice President Al Rebar, Dean Linton, are all close colleagues from a previous life. It is always enjoyable to reconnect with good friends and colleagues.

I am also pleased to be able to see the operation of this Institute up close and personal—and to congratulate Mort Neufville on his role in guiding the development of this program over many years. I understand Mort left early this morning but it was at least a decade and a half ago that Mort led a small brainstorming group to address the broad issue of developing more effective academic leaders. That effort led to this Institute. Most of us who participated in that very interesting activity contributed an idea or two (some ideas much better than others) and then moved on to our other lives, but for Mort it became a passion. His passion and dedication has made it all happen. He took a disparate collection of ideas and crafted a first-rate leadership development program. Mort, if you see this, my compliments!

About six weeks ago Carol Reilly reminded me that this event was on my calendar. I had not forgotten—but also had not started thinking about the task. Her note got me started. I asked if she had any guidance as to what you all might like me to talk about. She suggested several subtopics.

Personal Perspectives

Carol suggested that I might briefly trace my leadership journey, from faculty to Provost, perhaps identifying some of the lessons I have learned along the way. I will try to do so, but I must confess that this is a bit uncomfortable for me as I am one who believes leadership is not leader centric. It's much more about those you lead. So while I am a bit uncomfortable talking about myself—that is what I have been asked to do, so I will give it a shot. Some of the lessons

I have learned along the way have been reinforced more than once—or perhaps a better way to say it might be that I have learned the lesson over and over!

Youth. Carol suggested that I might talk briefly about my leadership path from college through my administrative roles and into retirement. As I have looked back, this is a good way to categorize my leadership path. Some of my lessons were learned very early and have stood the test of time.

My path has been nothing extraordinary, at least not in my mind. But, as I thought about Carol's charge, I think I might even go back to before becoming a student and faculty member. I was active in 4-H and assumed leadership roles in the club at a pretty early age. We had a no-nonsense leader who insisted that we follow Robert's Rules of Order and that we know parliamentary procedure. Those skills have, in retrospect, served me well over many years. I really did not master Robert's Rules, but I did learn enough to fake it—and later on I learned that relatively few of the people with whom I worked know as much as I did. Having a sense of how to guide a meeting and how to migrate toward an agreeable outcome has been an important skill. Certainly, one that can be learned.

I was in athletics in high school, assuming leadership roles as appropriate, including being President of our Senior Class. I should acknowledge that it was a very small class—it did not take a lot of votes to be elected.

During these formative years I learned a couple lessons from my Dad—one that he instilled in us kids from early on and a second that I did not recognize until years later. I should point out that I am the oldest of seven children in our family and the first—on either side—to attend college. Dad attended school through the 8th grade and then starting farming in the early 1930s, a very challenging time. Though he lacked much in way of formal education, he was a very bright person—and he taught us all a lot. One of his often repeated mantras was that “if you can't say something good about someone, it is better not to say anything.” Over the years (we lost Dad a few years ago at age 97) I observed that he often did not engage in a number of family conversations, the sort that frequently evolve at family gatherings and often involve more community gossip than fact based information. Looking back, however, I believe his relative quiet was just “practicing what he preached.”

The second lesson I learned from Dad was about mentoring. We had a number of one-on-one conversations about college when I was a junior and senior in high school. He was committed to getting me to go to college—although he was always soft sell about it. He won the arguments and I enrolled and graduated from the University of Nebraska, as did all of my brothers and sisters. Looking back, I now recognize that he realized early on that if the oldest did not attend the University, his chance of getting the others to attend were much reduced. He pushed me into being the role model that he wanted to have—without my knowing it at the

time. Some would say that is a mark of leadership—being able to get someone to do what you want without them realizing that it was not actually their idea.

College. In college I was active in several option clubs, Ag Education and Agronomy Club, a couple honorary organizations, and served as a leader at various levels. In one of these roles I learned something from the organization advisor that I have long remembered—and tried to practice. I was president of the Agronomy Club which had a number of standing and ad hoc committees. One of my responsibilities was to appoint committee chairs and members. My first attempt did not pass muster with the faculty advisor. He pointed out that next year I would not be around—and neither would at least two of my fellow officers and nearly all of the committee chairs I was proposing. The long term success of the Club depended on having experienced and sustained leadership. He suggested that I might consider populating the committee chair positions with sophomore students—trying to especially identify those who might emerge as potential officers by next year. I did not recognize it at the time, but this was a good leadership lesson. Paying attention to the next generation of leadership is important in any organization whether it be a student club or a research university. It is important to have people in your leadership team who can do your job—hopefully as least as well as you do, perhaps after a bit of growth and experience.

This is one of the lessons that I have had reinforced from time to time through my career.

Faculty and professional: As a faculty member and in my early professional career I had the good fortune to work in the plant-animal interface. I worked on aspects of forage crops that determined nutritive value for ruminant animals. As a result, I needed to work with animal scientists, agricultural engineers, economists, and soil scientists. I developed an academic perspective that was broadly based—I did not see research and academic challenges with a narrow disciplinary focus. This served me well as my career unfolded—but was an attribute that I did not recognize at the time.

As a young faculty member, I had an experience with colleagues in another department that has found its way on to my “Lessons Learned” list. That lesson is that **Leaders Matter!** I was working quite effectively with a colleague in another department. That department had experienced a head change. In less than a year, as we were developing our plans for the next year’s joint experiments, my colleague commented at one of our planning sessions that he did not think his new head really wanted him working with folks in other departments.

Fortunately for me, my colleague was a rather senior chap, and quite independent. We continued to work together anyway. However, I certainly observed that the level of cooperation with faculty in that department declined over time. It took years --and two department heads to recover. Looking back, I would characterize this department head’s

philosophy as that of a **War Lord**—I'll have more to say about such mindsets later, but—in my view—it is not an especially effective leadership approach in today's academia.

In terms of professional societies, I was active in the Crop Science Society, serving on the Board and as President of the Society. About the time I was leaving the Crop Science Presidency, I was asked to serve on the CAST Board and eventually chaired the CAST Board. All were growing and learning experiences. The CAST board—at that time—was especially interesting. I learned some important lessons about structure of organizations and their governance.

At a relatively early age (I was 37), I had the opportunity to engage in administrative leadership at the college level—in the Office of Agricultural Research. This opened new opportunities professionally and I migrated toward broader national agricultural leadership positions and less within the crop and plant science community.

In about 1996, Congress rewrote the research title to the farm bill and created a new advisory board—called the NAREEE Advisory Board. I served as elected chair of the NAREEE Board for its first 6 years. This was another growth opportunity. During this time, I was aided immensely by my relationship with Senator Richard Lugar. Lugar chaired the Senate Ag committee for many years and I had many opportunities to testify before Congress (both House and Senate) on Agricultural research and education issues. These were all learning and growing experiences.

During this time I developed close friendships with several key Hill staffers and USDA leaders. As a result, I was asked to serve on the BARD (U.S.—Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation) Board of Directors—in about 2001. I served for 13 years on the BARD Board. This was an additional growth experience.

I made a conscious decision to pursue national leadership opportunities at the broader agriculture level rather than within Agronomy and Crop Science. One could certainly argue the pros and cons, but my professional engagement with the Agronomy and Crop Science communities tapered off quickly after the mid-1990s. I felt the opportunities for broad, national impact were greater going that path than if I had stayed strictly within the Agronomic and Crop Science realm. I did not feel I could do both.

The last phase of my leadership journey has been at the University level, starting in 2004 as Vice Provost for Engagement. Prior to 2004, I had spent seven years in research administration, four years as Executive Associate Dean of the College and 11 years as Dean of Agriculture. Once I left Agriculture and became engaged at the Provost and President's level, my involvement in general agricultural leadership activities declined significantly. I became much more involved in advocacy and leadership activities within the state and region. One of the perspectives I gained was that, within academia, agriculture is much more active nationally than other university colleges. I also observed that, partly as a result of agriculture's political

involvement, the relationship between the senior leadership at the University and the leadership in Agriculture, in many institutions, is strained. This strain is historic and can be traced to early days of federal funding and control of funds and research agendas. Where these relationships are more wholesome, Agriculture is more integrated within the University's administrative and funding structure.

Since about 2001, Purdue was been firmly committed to advancing economic prosperity and I was able to engage in that space quite readily. My agricultural background was quite helpful. Twice during this latter phase of my leadership career, I served as Provost for an interim period, and also as Vice President for Government Relations—again on an interim basis.

In 2015 I entered Emeritus status but I continued to stay engaged nationally, where and when I could, and served on the National Academies Division of Earth and Life Sciences Advisory Committee and the Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources—both for 6 years. More recently, I have also chaired two National Research Council reviews and one BIFAD review. (I was once introduced as a “serial retiree.”)

Models of Leadership, Resources and Skills Development

That is enough about me *per se*. Let me now focus in a bit more detail on my thoughts regarding leadership and on some lessons that I have learned that might be applied widely. There are a number of models of leadership—and many books written. I am not necessarily a student of leadership but I have observed a couple styles over the years on which I would like to comment briefly.

1. **Command and Control.** You probably all know folks who would fit this style. Nothing can happen without their personal approval. They relish rules and regulations. In my experience, the most common sector in academia in which to find these folks is in the fiscal side of the operations. Although, the academic side has its share as well. Lack of delegation and concentration of authority are characteristics.

More broadly, the regulatory world is, in my experience, often populated by “command and control” advocates. Their focus is often on processes. In my experience, a focus on rules and processes locks-in existing states of technology. Innovation is stifled. Regulations that focus on goals and outcomes, on the other hand, stimulate innovation and cost reductions—and ultimately are more effective desired outcomes.

The big problem with command and control approaches in academia is evident in a little story told to me early in administrative career by a very close friend and colleague who had recently entered administration. His comment was that “Academia is a lot like the military. We have a very clear chain of command: president, provost, deans, department heads etc.,

much like the military. One big difference, however, is that the faculty are not part of the chain.”

2. **War Lords.** You probably also know leaders who would fit this description. I had a colleague dean at Purdue who told me once, shortly after I was named dean, that good deans are good war-lords. In my experience, war-lords are hard to work with, hard to cooperate with. This particular dean left Purdue shortly after I became Dean of Agriculture and the president asked me to chair the committee to search for his replacement. I had a great committee and was impressed by the committee’s insights and their aspirations for future leadership. They talked about the need to engage more across campus and to be more interdisciplinary. Early in one of our meetings, after listening to their discussion for a while, I pointed out to the committee that the rumor on campus was that faculty in their college were not permitted to be part of a cross-campus team effort unless they were the lead investigator. The most senior member of the search committee immediately said that was not a rumor, it was indeed a directive from the dean! That reflected a war-lord at work! The department head I mentioned earlier (who I encountered early in my academic experience) embodied this mindset as well. Both were very pleasant folks but they clearly put boundaries around their domains. They built fences—fences they did not even see or know existed.

My belief is that if you try too hard to control your domain and protect your turf too aggressively, the domain you control will shrink over time. I always thought it more important to “**influence a large world than to control a small one.**” I tried to get people from Agriculture infiltrated all across campus in committees, leadership positions etc.

3. A third model and one that I resonate with is Robert Greenleaf’s model of **servant leader**, which I will say more about in a moment.

I strongly encourage all of you, if you are serious about your leadership careers, to carve out time to devote to enhancing your knowledge, skills, and understanding of leadership. There are conferences, workshops, Institutes like this one, books etc. that can be good resources. If you pick up one idea from a conference, it can be well worth the time. Early in my leadership pathway, I tried to attend at least one leadership development activity each year. I also read about some of history’s great leaders. Two of my favorites were Lincoln and Eisenhower. They both embodied a leadership style that I came to admire and tried to emulate.

There have been at least three scholarly resources that I have found useful and that have shaped my thinking on leadership. These include:

Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness-by Robert K. Greenleaf

Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership by Howard Gardner

Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership by L.G. Bolman and T.E. Deal

I found that Greenleaf's ideas of Servant Leadership is a model that I resonated with, that it fit my style. Greenleaf's premises are that:

- Leaders are servants—serving the needs of those they lead. This does not mean the “the organization is run by the inmates.” One can take firm stands and be decisive AND still embody a servant leader mindset and philosophy
- Fundamental change is motivated by desperation or aspiration (inspiration)
- One leads by enabling others
- Greenleaf asks “How do you tell a servant leader is at work? People around them grow!”

I think servant leadership fits what we want to see as academics—our charges developing to their maximum potential. Our job as academic leaders is to facilitate their growth to the best of our ability. That is certainly the sort of leaders I experienced at the various stages of my career, the sort of people who encouraged me to go where I might not otherwise have gone, the sort of people I looked up to.

Recently, I was at a social gathering and one of the other attendees was one of my former department heads, now retired. Purdue had just announced the appointment of our new interim Provost—the dean of Agriculture. We talked about the fact that we have had a number of university leaders come through Purdue Agriculture. My colleague said something that made me feel really good. He said it was fun to be a head when I was dean because he always knew that I had his back. He was not afraid to make decisions because he knew that if things did not work out exactly as he hoped that we would find a way to make corrections. I always maintained that when something did not go right, it was much more important to “fix the problem” than to “fix the blame.”

This former head also told me that he felt one of the most significant leadership decisions made in his time in Purdue Agriculture was when I announced at a department heads meeting that we would have 30 faculty vacancies the next year and that half would be filled by applicants who brought molecular biology expertise to the College. I did not recall that particular meeting—but I do recall the decision and the impacts that it had for years to come.

This may be a good place to tell a short story that I like to recall when talking about leadership. When I was Associate Director for Agricultural Research, I helped organize an “executive in the classroom” program for the College of Agriculture. We invited a corporate leader (usually the CEO, if we could get them) to campus to meet with students and faculty and give a seminar. One of our guests was a chap named Curt Askelson. He was CEO of Pfizer at the time. Askelson was a WWII vintage guy.

One of our students asked a great question—and I have long remembered Askelson’s answer. The question was: You make decisions every day that affect the lives on thousands of people, how do you sleep at night? After short reflection, Askelson answered quite succinctly. He said it was true that he did have responsibility of tens of thousands of employees worldwide—and their products affected the lives of millions of people—often in truly life and death circumstances. However, he pointed out that the decisions he made paled in comparison to the decisions that some historical leaders have had to make. Never had a decision of his determined the fate of the nation or the world. He cited political and military leaders in WWII as examples of such individuals. He said whenever he found himself feeling a bit uppity or important, he would recall Marshall, Eisenhower, Churchill, Roosevelt and others. The decisions he was faced with seemed much less important in the context of that thinking.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, Askelson said he had never made a decision that he had had to completely reverse. Similarly, he had rarely made decisions that did not require mid-course corrections. If one has reasonably good information, institutional intelligence, and vision; the general direction in which one needs to go is usually clear. What is most important is to get started—to try to get everyone moving in more or less the same direction. There will be stumbles and some redirections will be needed, but rarely will you need to do an about-face. There will be ample opportunities to do mid-course corrections—and many people will openly point these out to you.

I thought Askelson had a great answer—and I have long remembered it. Askelson’s comment embodied the thinking of a servant leader. He tried to get his charges going in the same direction and gave them the flexibility to move—and to correct errors later.

Gardner’ Message: Gardner’s message is quite different. It is more aligned with projecting a vision. Gardner puts leaders into two categories: **direct and indirect**. Gardner chronicles the leadership careers of about 20 twentieth century leaders.

Direct leaders appeal directly to the masses. Political leaders often fall into this category.

Indirect leaders have much more limited audiences. He cites Einstein as an example of an indirect leader. He had incredible impact on the world—but probably never truly communicated with more than a handful of like-minded people.

Gardner maintains that **good leaders tell good stories**. The world is awash in stories and people follow those who are good story tellers. This is about creating a vision. After listening to a presentation by Gardner, early in my time as Dean, I realized that I needed to go about communicating our vision to the people of Indiana much differently than I had been. Someone told me once that a good leader can tell you to go to hell and make you look forward to the trip. That would be a good story teller!

Indirect leaders can tell sophisticated stories. Think Einstein's message, or scientific messages (and leaders) generally. They can tell sophisticated stories.

Direct leaders, on the other hand, must tell simple stories—stories that appeal to the mind of a five-year-old. And, Gardner believes, sophisticated story tellers must also tell simple stories when they step out of their domain—attempt to become 'direct leaders.'" Many who have tried to do so have failed because they cannot tell a simple story. A case that Gardner cites is that of Oppenheimer. He was quite successful guiding the development of the atomic bomb, but when he tried to enter the political arena as an agency head, he was not especially successful.

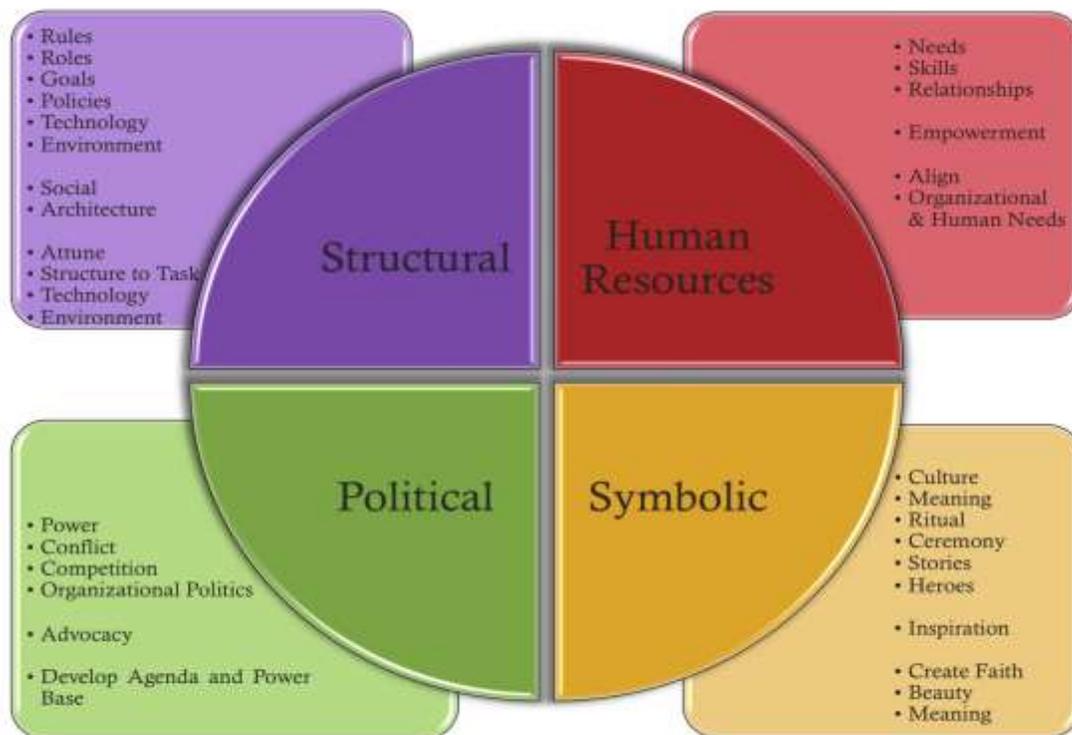
After attending Gardner's workshop, I simplified my public messages considerably—and tried to focus on only one or two points—repeatedly.

Bolman and Deal's Organizational Framework: Another resource that I have found useful is the work of Bolman and Deal. They present a framework for thinking about leadership in the context of how organizations operate. This is a much more day-to-day approach to leadership—how one makes good things happen.

They suggest that leadership in organizations exists in four frames:

- **Structural Frame**, which deals with the rules, policies, goals,
- **Human Resource Frame**: deals with the needs of the people, empowerment and aligning organizational and human needs.
- **Political Frame**: Power base, advocacy, personal attributes of the leader
- **Symbolic frame**: Culture, ritual, ceremony, inspirational events that give meaning.

Bolman and Deal's framework is shown schematically below.



Leader’s Roles and Responsibilities:

Let me now shift gears and talk specifically about a couple more topics that Carol suggested I should address. Over the years I have tried to distill what I think are the primary responsibilities of leaders—at the CEO level. I think these are the following:

- Articulate Vision and Goals. This is uniquely the responsibility of the leader—at all levels. Individual unit leaders need to assure that their vision and goals align with those up the chain of command.
- Empower Good People. Focus on outcomes, not process.
- Mentor Others and Model Desired Behavior. When I was dean, I often told my department heads that, when thinking about something they were about to do, if they did not want to read about it in the Sunday paper, then they probably should not do it! I still think, especially in today’s twitter sphere, that this is good advice. Administrators live in very public settings.

- **Manage the Operation.** The trains need to run on time. This can be a somewhat boring aspect of leadership, but quite important. Procrastinating on getting simple things done can lead to great frustration on part of faculty and staff. Also, many administrative processes have grown more complicated and complex over time—often needlessly so. Many times, these processes can be short-circuited by delegating approval authorities down the chain.
- **Acquire Resources.** Securing funding for programs is one of the most important responsibilities of the leader. Success is often tied to being able to tell a good story.
- **Be an Effective Advocate.** Effective advocacy can be a complicated process. It involves recognizing that your unit is part of a larger organization and that sometimes the best interest of the organization may not appear to be the best interest of your unit.

Leader Values/Attributes: In the process of discharging these responsibility, I think it is quite important that leaders embody certain values—values that others can clearly recognize. In this vein, I would include the following:

- **Honesty.** This is largely self explanatory.
- **Integrity—do what you say you will do.** Be true to your word. Don't give your word if you can't deliver. As provost I inherited a very difficult confrontational situation between a faculty member and dean. I tried to mediate and reach an acceptable and amicable outcome. In the process, I relearned a lesson from years earlier. Dr. J.B. Peterson was my very wise and experience department head during my early years on the staff in the Agronomy Department. Doc Pete told me one time that, over the years, he had concluded that when two people could not get along, the only solution was to get rid of both. If you got rid of only one, the problem kept coming back. That “learning” was reinforced by my experience with this dean and faculty member. Finally, after several months of meetings (and lack of progress), I simply imposed what I had originally told the faculty member I could do. He was not happy with that resolution—but did accept the outcome. Months later we crossed paths at a social event. This faculty member sought me out and told me that while he was not happy about the outcome that when he looked back, I did exactly what I had told him I would do. And, for that he thanked me. I suspect the fact that I met personally with him several times over the course of the semester made it easier for him to accept the decision than if I had simply made the call without consulting with him.
- **Sense of humor—don't take yourself too seriously**
Need to be able to see the humor in some situations and laugh at yourself from time to time. There is a great story about Abe Lincoln, one of my all-time favorite leaders. In

Lincoln's day, there was not Civil Service system and patronage appointments were the coin of the realm. Lincoln had apparently promised an appointment in the War Department to someone—but had apparently not informed Secretary of War Stanton. The person expecting the appointment approached Stanton who became quite hostile to the idea. Never an ardent admirer of Lincoln, at least not until late in the war, and not happy about the president's meddling, Stanton said some very unbecoming things including, allegedly, that the president was a damn fool. The prospective appointee reported to Lincoln and told him what the Secretary had said. Lincoln was somewhat surprised and asked if he was really sure that that is what the Secretary had said. He said "yes sir, he said it twice." At which point—and after a pause, Lincoln said, "well then it must be true because the Secretary is nearly always right." (This is a lesson that some of our current political leaders might be well-served to learn).

- **People sensitive**

Sensitive on a number of levels. My experience is that people most often do their best and strive to be successful. Again, there are numerous stories of Lincoln being incredibly frustrated by lack of action on part of his generals. But, he nearly always sent them a positive message, praising their successes and urging them to keep moving forward. He knew that if his generals doubted his faith in them, he could not possibly expect them to be more aggressive and to do what he needed them to do.

Another favorite leader of mine is Dwight Eisenhower. I had the good fortune to know personally two colleagues who worked in the Eisenhower administration. There is a philosophy attributed to Eisenhower that I have always tried to emulate. His approach—both as a military leader and as President was guided by two key principles:

1. ***Never impugn the motives or integrity of your adversaries, you will only strengthen their resolve,***
2. ***Never cut off their opportunity to retreat or withdraw with honor unless you intend to destroy them and have the power and the will to do so.***

- **Driven by what is "right" not "ego"**

Excessively ego driven people are rarely successful academic leaders. Need to be able to feel fulfilled when you see your colleagues succeed. You need to be able to own your mistakes—and sometimes those of others as well. Always stay focused on the desired outcomes in contentious situations. Never let criticisms or confrontations become personal.

- **Self awareness—know your strengths and weaknesses**

Need to know what you can do and what you can't . Don't be afraid to seek help. Also, leadership skills can be learned. Look for self-improvement opportunities. I did several over the years. Some were quite helpful. None were a waste of time.

Lessons Learned:

Over the years I have developed a list of Lessons Learned. My list keeps growing. Some of the items on my list are high level, others more down in the weeds. Rather than talk about each item, I will talk very briefly about several that I think are the most important—and high level

- Develop a Vision—that is simple and easy to describe. This is often easier to talk about than it is to do.
- Surround yourself with good people—people who can do your job.
- Empower others.
- Create incentives that reward the outcomes and behaviors you want to see.
- Treat people with respect.
- Leadership is a 24/7 endeavor—for both you and your spouse.
- Create opportunities for social interactions—people work better with people they know. I read a short account once of a highly successful serial entrepreneur. He was asked if there was a secret to his success. He quickly responded that, yes, there was. The secret was that he only did business with people he knew. Both as Dean and as Vice Provost for Engagement, Grayce and I tried to find as many opportunities as possible to get people together socially. We did many receptions, dinners, and other gatherings at our home, easily 1000 to 1200 people over a year's time. We always tried to bring together people who we thought should know each other but who might not, in the course of their normal business, have crossed paths.
- Communicate frequently and effectively—many ramifications

Examples of Difficult Decisions:

Carol also asked me to share some thoughts about examples of difficult decisions. In thinking about this question, I am not sure that I have found any particular sort of decision necessarily more difficult than others. However, I do think decisions might be put into different buckets in terms of the impact they have on the organization.

In this vein, I would list the buckets as follows:

Decisions that affect the long term future of the organization: What will be the impact 10 plus years down the road.

Early in my time as Dean, there were a number of colleges across the country that were reorganizing and changing their names. Most were trying to put some distance between their academic programs and production agriculture. We had folks within Purdue Agriculture who

thought we should have a different name. Unlike some places however, we did not have a lot of pressure from within the university administration, nor did we have a lot of faculty who thought we should restructure departments—at that time. While we likely had a majority of faculty who thought we should probably change our name, there was absolutely no consensus as to what we should change it to.

We dealt with this issue for better part of a year. I was swayed, ultimately, by two viewpoints. One from a colleague dean who was wrestling with the same issue internally and who ultimately restructured and renamed the college. His advice to me was “don’t do it.” He said that if he had had the structure we had at Purdue (10 relatively large departments), he would not have gone down that path. He had nearly 20 departments in a college roughly the same size in terms of students and faculty—and had a lot of administrative pressure from within the university to streamline.

The second perspective came from a non-academic who I invited to brainstorm with us. He was a Purdue alum and highly successful with his own marketing and public relations firm. He listened to the description of our situation. We talked about the difficulty in developing a new brand identity vs. changing the image that people associate with the existing brand.

This crux of the issue, in his mind was one of branding and brand identity. Faculty who thought we should change felt that way because they felt they wanted a different identity than “Agriculture.” This consultant suggested we adopt the 3M branding strategy. This strategy was one in which 3M primarily branded and promoted products, rather than the company. His analogy to Purdue Agriculture was that we had Biochemistry graduates, environmental science graduates, physiologists etc. Let them fly their own flag, so to speak, and fly the Purdue Agriculture flag as the sub banner.

As an example he said that if you asked the “man in the street” what 3M company made, most did not know. However, if you asked who made “post-it” notes, most knew immediately that that was a 3M product. So think, “Biochemistry, a Purdue Agriculture major” or “Food Science, another high demand major of Purdue Agriculture.”

He further advised that if we changed the name, we would undoubtedly become an acronym. So give careful thought to the letters that would become the acronym. For the most part, our alums did not support a change—and really did not understand the issue.

We decided to stay with Purdue Agriculture as our brand label. We never raised the issue again and I worked hard to infiltrate Purdue administration at every level with people from Agriculture.

Other decisions I would put in this bucket include:

- 1) Changing to an annual faculty hiring decision process in which all faculty positions were allocated at budget time and were competed for by departments
- 2) Decision to allocate significant portion of open positions to molecular sciences
- 3) Launching of first (at least at Purdue) cluster hire approach
- 4) Launching of joint hires with other colleges—especially Engineering

Hiring decisions: These decisions are critical. I always met every candidate for a faculty position who visited campus. For several reasons. I felt it sent an important message that these were very important decisions (remember the symbolic frame).

Secondly, this was a good way for me to track on the best science going on in the various departments—hopefully the departments were interviewing people on the cutting edge.

And, third, it gave me an opportunity to ask some pointed questions aimed at determining whether I felt this was a candidate who understood what LGU were about and someone who could communicate effectively with our various clientele. Most of the time, we were on the same page with department heads and search committees. Not always.

Leadership positions were especially critical. I tried to chair all searches for senior leadership positions personally. I wanted to have a full understanding of all the thinking behind why candidates were in the pool, why they were on campus, if they were, and who the search committee might feel positively or negatively about.

In searches for leadership roles I was guided to some degree by a conversation with a member of my Dean's Advisory Committee, Tom Wright, VP for Human Resources at what is now Dow Agrosciences. I commented to Tom that I was impressed by the caliber of leaders in his organization, especially at the second and third tier levels. Tom told me how their CEO always insisted that their search committees—for positions at all levels—have at least one member whose primary job was to assess candidates to become the CEO. Tom said if you are always looking at that possibility down the road, you tend to use a somewhat different screen in selecting people. I used that story several times—and in several searches it changed the outcome.

Management/personnel bucket: These decisions cross the gamut from minor personnel disputes to significant reorganizations of the support systems. In my view, the most important factor in making these decisions, is to constantly remember that the purpose of having the people and systems is to serve the faculty and students. People with a command and control

disposition generally lead to challenges down the road. If one is reasonably careful and considerate in making these decisions, you can realign people into other roles within the university, or into retirement, without people losing jobs.

Misconduct bucket: Decisions in this bucket are probably the easiest decisions for me. If someone uses their position—a position of public trust—to, in any way, enhance their personal wealth or stature, that is grounds for termination, assuming the evidence is clear. I have no tolerance for such behavior. The same is true of sexual misconduct or harassment. Often, situations are not clear cut, however, and legal considerations can complicate and delay actions. Most important in these situations is to keep focus on the desired outcome. Do not let anything get personal. And, SHUT OFF EMAILS.

Future of Land Grant Institutions:

Land Grant institutions were created to provide high quality education for sons and daughters of the working class—especially in agricultural and engineering endeavors. Even more importantly, it was very clear that the charge for these institutions was to provide ‘practical’ education that would address the needs of society.

The sector targets were people who were perceived as being left out of the higher education system of the day—the industrial classes and rural populations.

Much of the criticism of higher education today mirrors criticisms of the mid 1800s, criticisms that lead to the LGU system:

1. education not relevant to needs of people,
2. many are being bypassed by the economy and did not have access,
3. degrees did not provide skills needed to succeed in the emerging economy.

These same criticisms are equally valid today. There is a large sector being sidelined and bypassed. It does not happen to be agricultural, but might be rural, and not necessarily industrial. Disadvantaged sectors today are more likely urban and ethnic populations.

Personally, I feel quite strongly that LGUs are as needed today as in the 1860s. But, they need to:

1. Be relevant to needs of society. That means people need to get jobs.
2. Need to be financially within reach.
3. Need to be driven by a reasonable metrics. Some of the today’s metrics, especially those used by public media rates are quite perverse. For example, why should it be meritorious to spend more money per student? Would it not make more sense to give credit for “turning out” students with degrees than giving credit for the number “turned away.”

Why does spending more money per student result in higher ranking?

Wrap up

Let me again thank all of you for allowing me to share some thoughts. Grayce and I are very grateful for this opportunity. I also want to again congratulate all of you on your participation in this Institute. Effective leadership of our organizations is absolutely critical. The contributions of LGU to the betterment of the world throughout the 20th century will be a hallmark of the history of education for centuries to come. With your able leadership, the 21st century will be even more significant.

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