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WHAT MAKES FOR A CAREER IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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Like many people, I have occasionally been asked if I would do it all over again in relation to my career choices and indeed, life in general. In my younger days, I would say, "Sure, I'd do things just the same." As I've moved through my career, I can tell you that today I would say to my younger self, "Not so fast." I've been graciously invited to reflect a bit on my career.

A CLINICAL INTRODUCTION

Seeking a career path is punctuated with dreams and realities. In my youth, the possibilities of a noble Dr. Thomas Dooley were juxtaposed with the sensational football talent of a Gale Sayers. Those dreams were punctuated by the influence of family and other role models. Career paths meander, and mine certainly wandered until I finally found the path to so-called higher education. The higher education start was in Kearney State College (now the University of Nebraska at Kearney, UNK) in 1974 and the degree, BSc in biology with a teaching endorsement. This provided the opportunity to teach biology and physical science in the Omaha Westside School District. Teaching biology opened another path for me. I left a wonderful teaching job for further academic study at the University of British Columbia. Upon receipt of the M.S. in biology in 1978, the path opened for the rigors of a Ph.D. in rangeland ecology from Colorado State University in 1982. On the cusp of an academic path, I spent time as a research assistant for Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals from 1982-83 in the herbicide research division. The following year, I defined my academic path with a position as an assistant professor in biology at California State University, Bakersfield, from 1983- 1992. It was clear that the Tom Dooley and Gale Sayers scenarios were supplanted with a life in the academy. However, even after such direction and commitment, the path was still one that meandered. The challenge is to take what is learned from each path's journey.

A near decade at California State University, Bakersfield, provided the opportunity for tenure, promotion to full professor, and department chair. Yet, the path once again took a turn back to the University of Nebraska at Kearney. I was hired as a tenured associate professor in 1992 and was promoted to professor in 1993. I served as the chair of the Department of Biology from 1997-2004. I spent one year teaching full time in the department and then once again, left in 2005. I served as Dean of the School of Natural Sciences at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, from 2005 until spring 2009. I again returned to UNK and have been in the position as Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic & Student Affairs, the provost, for twelve years. You will notice a theme. Either I'm a slow learner or UNK is a very good place to be (could be both) because I've come and gone from Kearney two or three times, depending on how you count. I like to think that there are indeed several paths to take in this academic journey.

So there you have it; my career path in a nutshell and a one minute read. Is it an interesting minute? Perhaps it is to me since I've lived it and also because one's career naturally begs personal reflection. I would like to think there may be some interesting and indeed, even informative insights if I were to unpack this one-minute read and try to articulate my motivations, inspirations, opportunities, and just plain lucky turns along the way.

THE EARLY YEARS: 1970-1984

My father taught biology at Kearney State College and was the Graduate Dean for nine years. Perhaps this explains a lot. However, I have four siblings. Two are teachers, but neither is in the sciences. That said, our mother and father had a significant influence on me and my brothers and sisters. We all went to college, and we all have advanced degrees. As an undergraduate student, I did not stand out for my academic prowess. I did alright, but was the sort, along with others, who would cringe when we saw that all-star student walk into our class on opening day. That said, I really enjoyed research, and the more done outdoors, the better. I fondly remember doing research on the Big and Little Blue River system in southeast Nebraska in the summers of 1972 and 1973. Cadres of undergraduate biology students were deployed in groups of two to four at several locations along the rivers both upstream and downstream from the communities through which they flowed. At several locations, we measured percent nitrate-nitrogen, pH, turbidity, flocculants, and other pollutant indicators at two-hour intervals over twenty-four hour periods. Visualize three young men arguing at 3:00AM along the banks of the Little Blue River near Beatrice, Nebraska. The argument, of course, would be about who should have known better when it came to leaving the car lights on to see to make nighttime measurements, and then to have to contend with a dead battery in the vehicle. I learned much about scientific methods, people, and indeed, about sustainable lighting strategies when you must work in the field at night.

Upon graduation, I student taught freshman biology, biology, and anatomy and physiology at Westside High School in Omaha, Nebraska. I then taught physical science and general biology in Arbor Heights Junior High School in Omaha's Westside district. This was a pivotal time both personally and professionally for me. I really enjoyed teaching. I loved the students, and they seemed to tolerate me. At the same time, I was still enamored of the possibility of doing research and pursuing a graduate degree. I applied to several graduate programs during the 1974-75 school year. I knew I was interested in life sciences, but I was not wedded to any particular system: cellular, organismal, or ecological. I also was not constrained by thinking in terms of either plants or animals. Not much happened for several months. I got up each morning and headed to the classroom with the exuberance of a brand new teacher. I had to sign a renewal contract with the Westside School District in early April of 1975. I did so. And wouldn't you know, I received letters about a week later offering me graduate assistantships at both DePaul University in Chicago and the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. I chose the latter. I also had to meet with the director of human resources for the Westside School District to seek a release from my teaching contract for the upcoming school year. I was nervous and he was, at first, severe with this young first year teacher. He ultimately offered me the opportunity to pursue an MSc degree at

the University of Nebraska at Omaha with tuition costs covered. I knew I wasn't alone in receiving such an offer, but I also knew it to be a good deal. In the end, I stuck to my plan to go to Vancouver. After all, I had just signed and returned a letter of acceptance there, as well! In the end, the director of human resources readily assented to a release from my junior high school science teaching contract. In doing so, he made the comment that it reflected well on the district to have a teacher move on to graduate school. I must say that experience taught me much about the importance of both one's word and written contracts. As an aside, I received a letter near the end of September that year from the University of Missouri asking why I hadn't shown up in Columbia earlier in the month to claim "my" assistantship and matriculate in a master's program in biology. I never got the earlier acceptance letter. This is the sort of happenstance that causes one to wonder what might have been if I had made another choice or known about other options. At any rate, a very personal and life-changing event occurred on August 2, 1975. My wife Marilyn and I were married that day. Three days later, we left Nebraska in my 1968 Ford Mustang, pulling a refurbished 1938 Ford pickup bed as a trailer. It contained our now combined worldly possessions.

I learned much as a graduate student in Vancouver. Who doesn't? Some of what one learns is actually about the content and processes associated with an academic discipline. But one also learns much about people; major professors, faculty in general, fellow graduate students, technicians, and certainly, about oneself. I will readily admit that I had my confidence rocked in my first year as a master's student. The Department of Plant Science at UBC was, and still is, a high caliber academic environment. The graduate students come from around the world. I recall that I was one of two U.S. students among a group of perhaps twenty who came from all over the world. Added to my academic challenge was the reality that while Vancouver was a beautiful cosmopolitan city, it was also very expensive, and, at that time, housing was very tight. An added frustration was the fact that my wife, while a medical technologist— an area of high need and demand—was not allowed to work in Vancouver.

At that time, there was a point system designed to enumerate or score eligibility to work. My wife wasn't able to score enough points to work as a medical technologist. It was probably not helpful that as her spouse, I was in Canada with temporary student status rather than as a landed immigrant; I had no permanent status nor green card. Marilyn opted to utilize her laboratory skills by working in the United States. We lived for a time in an efficiency apartment in Vancouver and subsequently, an apartment in Bellingham, Washington, about fifty miles from the UBC campus. We took turns commuting, a drive that included daily passage across the U.S./Canada border. I had the opportunity to do a significant amount of teaching at UBC as a graduate assistant. I thoroughly enjoyed it. My research was largely confined to the laboratory, growth chambers, and the greenhouse instead of the field work I'd come to appreciate as an undergraduate.

Near the completion of my MSc in April of 1978, my major professor supported an opportunity for me to fly to Minneapolis to present a paper on my research. The work, supported by Agriculture Canada, focused on the effects of the gaseous pollutant ozone on fruit and vegetable production. The presentation caught the attention of a researcher in the Natural Resource Ecology

Laboratory (NREL) at Colorado State University (CSU). By this time, I was within weeks of completing my MSc thesis, and I had an invitation to continue in a PhD program at UBC. I appreciated the attention from both UBC and CSU. However, before I made a decision, I wanted to visit with my father's PhD mentor at the University of Minnesota since, as a young boy, I'd known him in Minneapolis. He invited me to dinner with him and his wife and, as it turned out, he was retiring after the next year, but offered to take me on as a PhD student with a transition plan to another major professor as his retirement approached. I was also offered an assistantship at CSU. So, I left Minneapolis with choices, which are always good to have in life. I accepted the CSU offer, but still wonder what might have been had I taken another path. Once again, the path meandered.

The NREL experience was just as challenging for me as that in plant science at UBC. I had co-major professors, so I was "surrounded" when it came to providing regular updates and responding to advice or assignments from the pair. The NREL, while affiliated with what is now the Warner College of Natural Resources, operated largely on soft money, i.e. grants. As such, I learned a great deal about external grant acquisition and the connection to both sustainable research and one's livelihood. I didn't teach during my time at CSU. However, my research was largely field-oriented and there was laboratory work associated with the analyses of field samples. But I spent much of my summer research time in eastern Montana on the beautiful northern mixed grass prairie of the Great Plains. In addition to learning much about the structure and function of this grassland ecosystem, I also learned about compromise in life. In Vancouver, I enjoyed the teaching, but spent most of my research time indoors. In Fort Collins, I spent more of my time outdoors, but did not teach.

I completed my PhD in the spring of 1982 and promptly began applying for university teaching positions. The U.S. was in a genuine recession in the early 1980s. My fifty-some painstakingly prepared applications drew little or no response. Either institutions were not hiring or had very limited openings. One of my major professors, aware of and sympathetic to my situation, called to my attention a temporary field position. I was hired as a research assistant in the herbicide research division of Eli Lilly Company Pharmaceuticals, and that's how I found myself traveling with the lead permanent researcher across the Great Plains. We set up field test plots to assess the dose response of invasive plant species to experimental and environmentally friendly systemic pelleted herbicides. We were familiar with many a small motel in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas. It was interesting work. Again, while I learned much about invasive plant species, herbicide dose response chemistry, and cattle production, I learned at least as much about people. We did most of our field work on private land. In the Great Plains and intermountain west, this meant working with ranchers, a remarkably independent population of professionals. My experience was akin to a postdoctoral position. But also like a postdoc, it was temporary. Frankly, I thought I was under-employed or, at least, under-paid. Such a feeling is a helpful marker as empathy is an essential chapter. That said, had there been a permanent position available with Eli Lilly, I would have seriously considered it; I liked the work. There was no such

position, so I continued the pursuit of an academic position. Late in May 1983, I was traveling alone and my work with Eli Lilly had taken me to south central Colorado to establish some field test plots for our herbicide research. I believe I might have been in a motel in Leadville when I received a call from the chair of the Department of Biology at California State University, Bakersfield. Months prior, I had applied for a tenure track position there. He asked me what I knew about the Cal State campus. I was honest. I said, "Not much." Regardless, they wanted to interview me. I interviewed within a week and accepted a job within another week. So, my wife, three-month old son, and I prepared to move to the Central Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, of California. As we drove over the Rocky Mountains, through the Great Intermountain Basin, and across the Mojave Desert, I began to worry. Could I do this job? I knew I was a teacher at heart. I'd learned much about research and had contributed to the peer reviewed literature. But they'd asked in the interview process if I could lead an agricultural biology program. The Cal State System campuses, perhaps other than Fresno State, are not land grant or agricultural institutions, but many of them have a commitment to a genuine and defined service region. The Cal State Bakersfield service region happens to include some of the most diverse and likely, highest producing agricultural counties in the nation. I had some familiarity with corn, soybeans, cattle, and wheat production, along with the expansive rangelands of the Great Plains. But what did I know about table grapes, citrus, cotton, almonds, pistachios, and the other forty plus crops grown in Kern County alone? So many paths. I had to learn.

The first full summer that we lived in Bakersfield, I hired on as a table grape inspector for Kern County. This meant I spent my days driving from vineyard to vineyard measuring the ripeness or sugar content of the grapes via a basic chemical titration and conducting a general assessment of the packing of the grapes in a twenty-three-pound lug. I learned much about table grapes and other commodities that summer. I discovered that agricultural systems are much more similar than different. I also was reminded that people are far more similar than different. I spent much of my time interacting with both migrant work crews engaged in the harvest as well as landowners, some family farms, and many corporate farms. That experience has served me well and extends beyond table grapes, just as my earlier experiences taught me a variety of things. I have a theme that seems to inform my view of life: the importance of relationships and seeking commonality.

THE MIDDLE YEARS: 1984-2005

I was extraordinarily fortunate to have landed in Bakersfield. Not only did I secure a tenure track position in late May, but I also entered a Department of Biology with faculty committed to an inquiry-based approach to teaching. This consensus commitment may have been possible because the campus was new in 1970 and so many founding faculty sought to identify a special curricular approach. I arrived in 1983 when the campus was only thirteen years old. There were few classes that were dominated by lectures. Of course, some content had to be delivered in this fashion, but the goal was to engage students in learning from one another and interacting with the course materials on a regular basis. True inquiry has the teacher learning alongside the students.

This resonated with me and recalled my experience in teaching seventh grade physical science. One does not lecture seventh graders! A hands-on approach underscores the Confucian adage, “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Or as Ben Franklin remarked, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

A certain rhythm developed in my nine years at Cal State Bakersfield. I progressed through the academic ranks and attained tenure. I learned from the transition of California State College to university status in the mid-1980s. I was intrigued by the formula devised for conferring university status: number of degree programs offered, student credit hours produced, number of terminally degreed faculty, graduate programs offered, financial health, and a variety of other metrics. Ultimately, I was asked in 1991 by my departmental colleagues if I would serve as chair. I did not campaign for the position nor overtly seek it, but once asked, I thought I could do it.

I said yes in a year that happened to coincide with an academic program review. I don't recall if I knew this going in. Regardless, it made for an interesting opportunity to guide the department's future developments. I was in a rather giddy mental place in the spring of 1991 as I contemplated my influence in honing the department's vision and directing future changes. It was easier said than done. We held a retreat that summer at the University of California White Mountain Research Center near Bishop. This is a peaceful location in the Owens Valley between the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west and the White Mountains to the east. However, the discussions were not always peaceful. Aside from perhaps a common commitment to a mode of teaching delivery, as in inquiry-based instruction, there were any number of different and passionately expressed models as to how that should be done. Suffice to say, that retreat was a reality check for me. I think more than anything, I learned the value of the combination of persistence and patience as an administrator. Timing can be everything. And yes, while still a faculty member, as chair the year of 1991-92 was my first systematic experience in administration in higher education. We had a strong assessment in the fall of 1991 with an external reviewer from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. Humboldt is known for its natural resources and field sciences programs. So, I guess I did exercise some bias and perhaps even a little influence in that person's selection and our program's future.

By 1990, I had been in touch with colleagues at what was then still Kearney State College in Nebraska. Indeed, I taught a course in plant ecology in the summer of 1990 for a colleague at Kearney and was reacquainted with the mixed grass prairie landscape of central Nebraska. The next year in 1991 saw Kearney State College become the University of Nebraska at Kearney. I applied in the fall of 1991 for an open tenure track position for a plant biologist at UNK. I accepted a position that was to begin in August of 1992. I was concerned about leaving my colleagues in Bakersfield. I had served as chair for only a year, and I knew that several senior colleagues expected me to stay in the position for several years. We also were coming off a strong academic program review and despite the contentious nature of the summer retreat, it was clearly an important and productive exercise. Regardless, my colleagues threw a fine farewell party, and I was on to Kearney. Somehow, the department not only survived, but thrived after I left. This was

humbling and led me to understand that no one is indispensable. To this day, I am unmoved by someone who attempts to leverage a job offer at another institution for more pay or resources at their current university. After all, there are many paths.

The academic rhythm in Bakersfield continued for me in Kearney. I had negotiated for tenure but dropped from the rank of professor to associate. I subsequently applied for and returned to the professor rank in 1993. By 1997, I was once again tabbed to be chair. During my seven-year run as chair, I like to think we collectively accomplished much that has staying power for the department and the greater UNK community: longstanding NIH grant support in collaboration with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, online graduate education, heightened commitment to undergraduate research, and the beginnings of expansion of the Bruner Hall of Science facilities. By 2004, I was ready to return full time to the classroom. There was really no epiphany that caused me to step aside as chair; seven years simply seemed long enough.

I spent the next year teaching and contemplating my future as well as that of the department. It was a fruitful year, and I was beginning to settle into my place as a full-time teacher within the Department of Biology. I had long been engaged in campus-wide initiatives and expected to continue to play a role in administrative searches, university-wide task forces, standing and ad hoc committees, and similar responsibilities that ought to fill the portfolio for a senior faculty member.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE YEARS

While still department chair, I had been offered and turned down deanships in both 2001 and 2003. I had not sought out those positions. Rather, they had been brought to my attention by colleagues outside UNK. I took the opportunities very seriously and only interviewed once I resolved that I could conceivably see myself in either position; that is, to move from the hypothetical to the reality of contemplating a genuine offer. My interview in each instance had been informative, and I came away feeling that either position would be a good fit for me. In the end, as I evaluated both the circumstances and the timing, neither was a good fit.

Therefore, I was a little surprised when a search consultant contacted me about a dean's position at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. After all, the administrative paths in higher education are relatively small, and I suspected I may have been getting a reputation as one who routinely declined offers. Why bother with this sort of candidate? The search consultant was especially persuasive, and I would be lying if I didn't say it was rather flattering to be sought out for a position. A key attraction for me in the deanship at St. Ed's had less to do with the title "dean" and more to do with the opportunity to work at a private university. Up to that point, all my experiences in higher education had been in public universities. I interviewed, was subsequently offered the position as Dean of the School of Natural Sciences, and started work in Austin on July 5, 2005.

The circumstances and timing seemed right. I learned much at St. Ed's. Since my wife and I had not been able to sell our house in Kearney before the start of the fall semester in 2005, I had the opportunity to live with the Holy Cross Brothers on campus. I spent about three months living in St. Joseph Hall about a hundred yards from the science building. There was no better inculcation on the history and values of St. Ed's than my daily conversations with the Brothers, many of whom had been students and even faculty on campus. A key responsibility for me was to guide the completion of a new science building. The funding was in place, the plans were complete, and early construction was under way. My role was ensuring the proper outfitting of classrooms and laboratories along with guiding the distribution of faculty throughout the building. The faculty were interested in an integrated approach to office occupancy. I appreciated this greatly and to this day, faculty from across all departments are interspersed rather than isolated by department. One finds computer science faculty next to chemists, biologists next to mathematicians, and so forth. St. Ed's is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). As such, the remarkable diversity of this private urban university enriched campus life and indeed, contributed to the vibrancy of Austin.

I cannot say that I had in mind to develop a legacy as dean when I arrived in Austin. I can say that I felt it important to make a difference based on the existent mission and vision for the university as informed by opportunities that might arise. To that end, I was fortunate to have served as the president of the Texas Hispanic Serving Institutions consortium for a year. I also helped with the development of the Medical Laboratory Science degree program in collaboration with a major medical facility, now the Austin State Hospital. And in a nod to my field biology roots, St. Ed's was able to collaborate with the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve in the operation of the Wild Basin Creative Research Center which was designed to facilitate research, public awareness, and preservation of the Hill Country and the plants and animals that occupy this natural landscape. I immensely enjoyed my daily routines and career pathway at St. Ed's. But then, I was contacted in the fall of 2008 by colleagues at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and made aware of the soon-to-be-open provost's position at UNK. Once again, I was not seeking a change nor other administrative positions.

I believe I mentioned early on, tongue in cheek, that perhaps I am a slow learner for having left Kearney and then returning, or I am simply open to the meandering path. Here now was another opportunity to go back to Kearney. I was happy in Austin. My wife enjoyed her work in the newly opened Dell Children's Hospital. St. Edward's was a top tier regional university, as anointed by *U.S. News & World Report* among others. While life was good, I was intrigued, if not a bit intimidated, by the possibilities in returning to UNK as the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. I wasn't even sure what the title meant. I must also make clear how committed my wife Marilyn had been, and continues to be, to my career even as she distinguished herself as a microbiologist in several clinical settings. Each of our moves has required her to suspend or even terminate one facet of her career and to take on another. As a consequence, she and I have had to manage new professional starts several times. While professionally satisfying, such changes require significant physical as well as psychic energy. As we all know, any

separations we might contrive between our personal and professional lives are artificial. The two are inextricably intertwined.

My work at St. Edward's University and life in Austin were professionally and personally satisfying. Nevertheless, I accepted the position at UNK and began work in early March of 2009. I'll admit that my motivation for returning to UNK was two-fold. Personally, it was a return home. Professionally, it was an opportunity to influence academics and to make a difference across campus. My wife's return brought an opportunity for her, as well. She was hired by Good Samaritan Hospital and served over six years as the laboratory manager.

The last twelve years have seen significant change at UNK. I'd like to think I had a hand in some of that change, at least the positive things. We've solidified partnership with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, integrated two former colleges to form a College of Arts & Sciences, implemented a systematic reassigned time policy for faculty, approved multiple online graduate programs, and opened a novel STEM building with occupants in the traditional physical science areas and the technical areas from the college of business and technology, including programs like cyber and aviation systems. This paper isn't intended as an inventory of my accomplishments, so I'll stop there.

In fact, consider how very little is accomplished individually or on one's own, and how much is accomplished in working together. Further, these are simply examples of the sorts of things an academic administrator ought to be doing. And so, my work and the path both continue.

THE FUTURE

I've come to appreciate my career in education over the last many years in ways that surprise me. As I reflect on my career, three things stand out. First, despite that early and aggressive search for the first tenure track faculty position, I don't recall ever thinking that I always wanted to be a college professor. Second, I also didn't actively seek administrative positions. I never thought of a faculty position as the pathway to that of chair, or chair to dean, or dean to provost. Relatedly, I do not pine for a presidency or chancellor's position. I can't tell you exactly why that it is. Maybe it is a character flaw. While I try to be strategic, I have been opportunistic in the choices I've made. Can one be "strategically opportunistic?" Third, I have been a true beneficiary when it comes to viewing academic life from each of the positions I've held. Like so many newly minted PhDs, I saw my doctoral area of focus as extremely important: plant ecology, physiology, and rangeland management. After some time in a department and then serving as chair, that sense of importance extended to all of biology. As a dean of natural sciences, it extended to all of the sciences. Finally, as a provost, I have the privilege of understanding the grandeur of education across academic disciplines and the entire university. This for me is a genuinely uplifting view and one that is complemented by the knowledge that I have faculty colleagues across campus who have dedication, passion, and genuine enthusiasm for what they teach and the scholarly activity they undertake.

I have no recipe to offer with regard to the pathway toward one's administrative goals, if indeed, one has them. I recall perhaps twenty-five years ago asking an outgoing provost at UNK how is it one gets such a position. I do not recall his answer. However, he returned to the UNK campus a few years ago for a commencement and remembered my question. So he asked me, "How did you end up this position?" My sheepish, but mostly accurate answer, was, "I'm not sure." There is much in life about which I am not sure. I know I'm not alone in this. In fact, I imagine uncertainty characterizes the human condition. Simply note our necessarily changing safety protocols regarding the Coronavirus over the past year.

I don't pretend to offer a definitive pathway or formula that lands a person in a leadership or administrative position. Each path is probably as special as the individual pathfinder. Some people are reluctant leaders. Others aspire early on and aggressively for administrative positions. Some take traditional pathways through the faculty ranks. Others come from student affairs, campus business offices, and even from the private sector. The last is a more regular option now than occurred early in my career. I have watched as captains, and even lieutenants, of industry have been hired for key leadership positions in higher education. Some such appointments have been glowing successes while others have been abject failures. But couldn't we say the same about appointments from the traditional academic pathways?

All that said, there are some common themes that characterize the colleagues that I view as the best of administrators. There are ten themes or perhaps even skill sets that come to mind. There is nothing magical nor limiting about the list. Further, I would say that several people at several levels within the academy have lent the wisdom that has become integral to my administrative style. The sources range from fellow graduate students to faculty colleagues to department chairs to deans and campus presidents.

First, work hard. When you are tired and ready to quit for the day, do a little more. Second, keep your eyes and ears open. Listen to and learn from others. Don't be anxious to speak. One's time to do so invariably arises in a conversation or meeting. Speak when the moment is right. Third, be friendly. This is less about being liked by all, and all the time, but more about being approachable. It is important to be approachable so as to understand and be responsive to the current events on one's campus.

Fourth, ensure that you have or have had some work experience outside the academy; that is, in the corporate sector, with a non-profit organization or some other non-academic entity. Fifth, get involved. Don't intrude on the rightful domain of others but engage as appropriate. For example, as a provost, I must respect the authority and responsibility that rests with a dean and certainly, that of a department chair. In fact, it is at the department level in which the true "action" of the university occurs, the maintenance of currency and relevance in the discipline and the scholarly productivity. Sixth, be fearless, but not foolishly so. As an administrator, I know I must periodically make difficult decisions that cause rancor among some members of the campus

community, and sometimes even the majority of the community. This is a difficult, but necessary thing. In making difficult decisions, however, one should be discerning and judicious.

The idiom, “not a hill to die on,” is apropos since not all “high ground” is worth the fight. A related perspective is often attributed to Henry Kissinger: “Academic politics are so vicious precisely because the stakes are so small.” Determine the stakes in the wise use of your time and campus capital. Seventh, build community. Spend time across campus with many different constituencies. Build social capital, but more importantly, invest in a foundation and infrastructure of trust and respect. Pay attention to others so that you have not devised “a house of cards” that is susceptible to collapse with only the slightest of stressors. Eighth, be confident. A person can be both humble and honestly confident in the ability to lead in an academic institution or in most any walk of professional life for that matter. Yet another idiom comes to mind: “Never let ‘em see you sweat.” Ninth, think creatively. While the daily tasks, the tactical work, may appear to consume the agenda, always keep an eye on the horizon. Take time to think about your institution as it could or should be in one, five, or even ten years. Combine the tactical execution with strategic vision. Tenth, pay attention to your own physical and mental health. You can only help others if you take care of yourself. At the risk of overplaying idioms, here’s one more: “Take care of the boat, and it’ll take care of you.”

CONCLUSION

To be in a position of leadership on a university campus is a privilege, not a right. In a related sense, I try not to think in terms of clinging to my position but rather, regularly evaluating whether I should stay. But I appreciate the words of Barak Obama: “If you are walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.” I am still walking down the path. To be sure, others will readily and regularly evaluate my performance, but I believe I have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that I serve the best interests of our students, faculty, and staff day in and day out. The time to say good night is before that effort regularly falters. Take the high road and leave while you’re still wanted.