

# **LEARNING FROM LEADERS:** **Advice from Presidents, Provosts, and Deans**

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# DEDICATION

Dedicated to future academic leaders and  
those who contributed their advice to this work.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. James C. Votruba is President Emeritus and Professor of Educational Leadership at Northern Kentucky University where he served as President from 1997-2012. He formerly was Vice Provost and Professor of Higher Education at Michigan State University, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at Binghamton University, and served in various academic and administrative positions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Drake University. In addition to his current faculty role, he is a Senior Associate with the AASCU Penson Center for Professional Development where he consults with university presidents and governing boards on topics related to strategic planning, organizational change, institutional effectiveness, presidential evaluation and coaching, team building, and maximizing the board/president partnership. While he served as its president, NKU experienced significant growth and development and its governing board was identified as one of the most effective in the nation. He remains active on a variety of boards and has received numerous recognitions for his academic and community leadership work. He co-authored "Becoming an Engaged University" (Jossey Bass, 2011).

Following a 22-year career as a psychology professor at Central Michigan University, Dr. Carole A. Beere became the university's Dean of Graduate Studies and Associate Vice President for Research. She held the position for 7 years before stepping into the profit-making world of higher education as a Vice President for Academic Affairs. Realizing that her heart was in public higher education, in 2001, she joined Northern Kentucky University as its first Associate Provost for Outreach and Dean of Graduate Studies. During her career, she served as chair of many boards including the Council of Graduate Schools; the Graduate Record Examination; and the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools. She was a member of the TOEFL Policy Council and the Higher Learning Commission. She authored three reference books; a jointly-authored book "Becoming an Engaged University" (Jossey-Bass, 2011); and most recently, a children's book, "The Penguin Had Cold Feet." She is enjoying retirement.

Dr. Gail W. Wells served as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Northern Kentucky University during a decade of rapid growth and organizational change. Prior to serving as Provost, she served NKU five years as the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, six years as Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and professor. Upon retirement from the provost position, she returned to the faculty fully committed to the teaching, research and service roles that first attracted her to academe. She was awarded AASCU's William Plater Award, an award granted each year to one provost in the country who has shown outstanding campus leadership in support of civic engagement; the Best in Kentucky Visionary Award in Technology; the YWCA Career Woman of Achievement Award; and she was inducted into the YMCA's Academy of Career Women of Achievement. In 2019 she was named to the Advisory Council of the Association of Chief Academic Officers (CAAO) associated with ACE. With two co-authors, she published, "Becoming an Engaged Campus" (Jossey Bass, 2011).

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

These are challenging times for higher education leaders at every level. Colleges and universities are being buffeted by such forces as deep financial cuts, growing regulatory oversight, shifting student demographics, skyrocketing student debt, more intense competition, new public/private partnerships, growing public skepticism over whether a college degree is worth the cost, employers who voice increasing concern about whether colleges and universities are preparing graduates with the knowledge and skills required for the modern workforce, and governing boards that are becoming more activist in their expectation for large scale institutional adaptation and change. On top of this, our fundamental integrity is increasingly being challenged as a result of our handling of egregious scandals in ways that makes us appear to be more expedient and self-serving than anchored in values fundamental to our profession.

There is an abundance of higher education leadership literature that offers significant insight into the challenges that colleges and university leaders confront. Our goal is to complement this literature by focusing on the voices of those currently in leadership positions. We surveyed university deans, provosts, and presidents, asking them: “What is the best advice you received, or wish you had received, about how to be a successful (president, provost, or dean)?” This monograph captures their advice in their own words.

A brief note about our data gathering and analysis. Our survey was directed at deans, provosts, and presidents from comprehensive public universities that are members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. AASCU includes nearly 400 public universities located throughout the country. Rather than ask them for advice on specific topics, we gave them the freedom to focus on those topics seen by them as most important. We are grateful to all who responded to our survey and provided the valuable advice that you will read in the chapters that follow. For each piece of advice, we have identified whether it came from a president, provost, or dean. Some of the advice could be described as “universal” while some may have special relevance for those who occupy a particular leadership position.

One consequence of our not asking respondents to focus on topics of our choosing is that we received no advice on some significant topics such as working with legislators, using social media or knowing when it’s time to leave. Accordingly, we address these topics from our own perspective.

We organized the remaining chapters around the advice categories that emerged from our respondents rather than around a set of preconceived categories. Some of the advice fit more than one category, and we listed each of those in the one category where it seemed to fit best. At the end of each chapter, we offer advice from the three of us.

Chapter 2 focuses on launching or advancing your leadership career. How do you decide whether to move into university administration? What’s most important to consider? How do

you assess the fit between a particular position and your interests and strengths? How do you go about getting to know the campus from a variety of angles? What needs to be considered when setting the tone for your administration?

Chapter 3 focuses on how leaders at all levels require a strong base of support in order to lead effectively. Which individuals and groups constitute your base? How do you go about building and maintaining your base? How do you regularly monitor the strength of your base? Recognizing that there will be times when elements of your base are in conflict or your decisions have weakened an element of your base, how do you reestablish your base of support so that your leadership can remain effective? When trying to accomplish significant institutional change, how do you ensure that the pace of change is calibrated to maintain your strong base of support?

Chapter 4 highlights the importance of building your leadership team. Effective leaders require team members who work in consort on behalf of agreed upon strategic priorities. How you select, develop, evaluate and empower your team is essential to leadership success. How do you get team members to focus on the whole and not just the parts? How do you get team members to balance self-interest with shared interests? What are your team's guiding principles and how do you hold team members accountable?

Chapter 5 considers the power of your voice in supporting your leadership and advancing key strategic priorities. Every leader has a voice. How you use your voice and for what purpose is an important influencer of leadership effectiveness. What considerations are most important in framing how to maximize your communication effectiveness?

Chapter 6 offers insights on how leaders can maximize their effectiveness related to strategic planning and execution, institutional and unit level alignment in order to produce the most important outcomes, and the importance of laser focus on the most important institutional priorities. What are the mistakes that leaders most often make in this area? How can they be avoided? All institutions have a strategic plan but you win with execution. How does a leader monitor strategy execution and hold others accountable?

Chapter 7 focuses on the importance of leading with integrity. University leaders at all levels confront a bewildering array of complex choices that can be difficult to resolve. In grappling with difficult choices, there are often pros and cons for the campus and for the various constituencies on which a leader depends for support. How do you sort through such choices? And how do you ensure that tough choices are anchored in a set of personal, professional, and institutional values that can withstand scrutiny?

Chapter 8 addresses the often overlooked element of caring for yourself and those whom you love while occupying positions of major leadership responsibility. How do you ensure that you continue to grow both personally and professionally? How do you develop and maintain the capacity to be self-reflective during periods when all of your energy seems to be directed at understanding others? What steps can you take to protect and nurture your personal

relationships while you strive to meet the demands of what often feels like a 24/7 set of obligations? How well do you deal with stress and what steps can you take to reduce the impact of stress on your life and job?

Chapter 9 offers some closing perspectives on leadership effectiveness from the three of us. Finally, the Postscript provides advice from us on transitioning out of a leadership position, a topic that becomes very important at some point in an administrative career.

As you review the advice that follows, we hope you will find rich new insights coupled with a reaffirmation of the importance of college and university leadership for the institution and all who are touched by it. Those who have contributed their voice to this endeavor share one thing in common: They believe deeply in the importance of the work and its potential to impact others in fundamental and sustainable ways.



## Chapter 2: Pursuing Your Leadership Career

The first order of business is to decide whether beginning or advancing your administrative trajectory is right for you. Making a decision requires you to be honest with yourself regarding a number of questions. Is the time right for such a move? Does it fit with your other obligations? Do you have the support of the people who are important in your life? Are you prepared for the level of leadership you're considering? And the biggest questions of all: Why do you want to do this? What do you hope to accomplish?

If you decide to proceed, a series of questions follow. What type of institution and position best fits who you are, your values and skills, and the impact you hope to achieve? What should be included in your due diligence? What information do you need? Who else can be helpful? If you get an offer, how do you assure yourself that it's a good fit? What constitutes success and are the conditions in place for you to succeed? Are there people from whom you can learn? If you accept the offer, what should be your top priorities as you prepare to transition?

Now consider the insights provided by our respondents as they address some of the key considerations in launching or advancing your administrative leadership career.

### Understanding the Role

#### Role Requirements

(From a president) When you get to the position of president, it makes no difference where you received your degree, how many publications you have, or whether you have ever been a faculty member. The skills of a president are about budgets, interpersonal relations, relations with trustees and city and state leaders, and understanding how to enact a change agenda in a very conservative and satisfied institution.

(From a president) You see the whole college and the whole university. Everyone else has an angle.

(From a president) You may be the only one with the leisure to think. All bureaucracies develop autonomy; you should have the leisure to challenge them occasionally.

(From a president) Understand the issue, controversy, and crisis continuum. Recognize an issue and address it before it becomes a controversy. If it becomes a controversy, deal with it promptly and firmly before it becomes a crisis. Sometimes a crisis is thrust upon you. That is when you need to trust your instincts.

(From a president) When I was the provost, I had thoughts of being 'almost' the president. As one would expect, I frequently served as the administrator in charge of the campus during the president's absences. Upon becoming president, I realized how wrong the notion of almost being president was. While I had strong mentoring and ultimately proved to be 'ready' for the position, I wish I had better understood two aspects of the role at a much deeper level. First,

the scope of the role is hard to envision until you've been in it. Even though provosts have broad responsibilities, presidents often face complex issues in far greater contexts. On the days I am most challenged and even fatigued, I note the origins of these feelings come more from the scope of the responsibilities rather than the difficulty of any single issue.

(From a provost) I think the most important advice I would have liked to have received before becoming dean and before becoming provost is that I would rapidly need to become accustomed to taking a "higher and higher" view of things. As a department chair and a person given to details and operational concerns, becoming dean was an adjustment due to the fact that I couldn't possibly know everything about everything in the College like I had in my department. Then, when I became provost the situation repeated itself. I know find myself at the 20,000-foot level in terms of leadership, and that is a huge change from being "on the ground, in the weeds" (or at least seemingly so), as dean and chair. What that means, I think, is that as one moves up the administrative ladder, the job becomes more finely one of leadership and less one of management.

(From a provost) The best advice I received was from the former provost. She asked me to be sure that I had the "stomach" for the job. In other words, would I be willing to make the difficult and often unpopular decisions in the best interests of the university.

(From a provost) The biggest adjustment that I had to make when I became a chief academic officer was simply keeping up with all the information that I was expected to know (or, at least, that I expected myself to know). Of course, most administrators who aspire to become provosts realize that they will be expected to know something about budgets, tenure, and other big-picture items, but they may not have had any exposure to the thousands of specific details that come with transfer agreements, compliance requirements, compensation guidelines, visa requirements, and more. Then there are all the program requirements, accreditation concerns, and disciplinary knowledge to be found in the individual academic units. The CAO cannot know all that a dean knows about, say, radiography, but he or she often needs to know some broad outlines and perhaps even some small details to make decisions about courses, staffing, and equipment. My advice is to schedule some meetings with deans, fellow vice chancellors, and others just to learn. Ask a lot of questions and take notes. I have a standing morning meeting with my Academic Affairs team, so I have lots of opportunities for dialogue with people who can inform my thinking.

(From a provost) I wish someone had given me concrete examples of how the job of a provost differs from being a dean of the largest college (delivering 75% total college FTE) at a university. People tell you the job is different and the most difficult job on campus, comparable in many ways to that of a department chair. However, what does that mean? For example, as provost you will have to solve more and the most difficult personnel issues, those not resolved at lower levels! You will have less autonomy than a dean has because the provost reports directly to the president and Board of Trustees. You will be held responsible for many things that occur several levels below you that mid-level managers likely have not told you about because they only

want to share good news. You will engage in more change management than you ever have before in your life!

(From a dean) I had been a department chair, general education chair, and faculty senate chair; being the dean required a whole new set of talents and presented a whole new set of challenges.

(From a dean) Talk with deans or other administrators, both at your institution and at others, about their experiences and advice before you start applying for a deanship. And when you become a dean, reach out to other deans when you feel stressed. You will be dealing with some individuals who can be prima donnas or just mean spirited. This can wear you down.

### **Role Limitations**

(From a president) The reality of how difficult change is and how tough you have to be to stay the course – and that no one is your friend. We talk about this in the theoretical framework. However, going into a new situation/place, no one helps you with the realities of the landmines and undermining that is done as part of change resistance. And, these challenges go beyond the institution into the community because everyone thinks they know how to run the institution. Most of us know the obvious land mines; however, only those who have lived the role can share the subtle traps. Real advice and guidance in these areas are needed.

(From a president) The uniqueness of the role causes the president to live in a context with no peers and at the center of the biggest decisions. At times, I find myself operating in settings where I feel a tremendous sense of responsibility but have a limited support structure to buoy my spirits and keep me going.

(From a provost) My greatest challenge in becoming a provost was learning not to be a problem solver. As a faculty member and an associate vice president my success was dependent on finding solutions and selling them to others. Carrying that approach with me as I became a provost made me a lightning rod for issues that required making difficult choices. Fortunately, my president had served as a provost for sixteen years and encouraged me to slow down and change my approach. He taught me to focus on identifying issues and framing the parameters for a solution and then step back and let others develop the strategies for addressing the problem. My role is to ask questions and keep the focus on the data informed solutions. For example, rather than proposing a faculty work load policy, I asked the deans to work with their chairs and faculty to develop a workload policy that is economically sustainable and does not increase the percentage of courses taught by part-time faculty. By having the colleges own the solution the policy is more likely to last beyond my tenure and less likely to generate resentment towards me and others in leadership.

### **Deciding Whether to Accept an Offer**

(From a president) Be sure you have the freedom to hire, evaluate, and replace the key staff who support you and your office. There should be no “untouchables.”

(From a president) You must be yourself during the interview process and when you take the position. Do not accept the position if you have had to stretch your ability to fit in and/or if you had to hide or moderate your genuine thoughts and sentiments. Pay attention to the culture and make sure you are comfortable in that environment and can navigate it effectively. Do not think that you can change cultural norms and be prepared to take on the non-cognitive social sensibility aspects of the position. These are gifts. Pay attention to them particularly when you have make tough decision.

(From a president) Be sure to pick an institution whose values and mission you share, so that the vision you articulate is a natural extension of the campus community's best hopes for itself and one that it can support and help bring about.

(From a dean) Consider the fit between you and the institution.

(From a dean) Find out what the expectations are for your spouse before you make a decision to accept a position as president or provost.

## **Getting Started On the Job**

### **Setting the Tone**

(From a president) When assuming a new leadership role, seek first to understand, then be understood.

(From a president) You live in a fishbowl; embrace the transparency. You are recognized everywhere you go, on campus and off. Walk with your head up, big smile on your face, and wave hello to everyone. It's amazing how much goodwill you will earn. You'll need it one day.

(From a president) Be modest in the car you drive. Dignified, but not too nice.

(From a provost) Always remember: people come first.

(From a provost) The best advice I received was to follow policy where policy exists. I always review institutional, system, state, federal and regional accreditation policies to ensure our institution is operating within established parameters.

(From a dean) I was asked by my predecessor to complete the college annual report as one of my first official acts. Two required sections asked for my concerns about the college and plans for the future. In an attempt to show my transparency from "day one," I shared the full draft report with chairs and directors in early September. Thus, the first official interaction that most chairs had with me was reading a report I had authored outlining my plans for the future developed without any input from them, and my concerns about the college with little actual experience in my new position. I'm sure I seemed like an arrogant and critical outsider.

## **Learning about Your Campus**

(From a president) Know how your university is similar to and different from other universities – so you know what to emulate and what doesn't apply.

(From a president) The presidency is not a sprint, it's a marathon. Take the long view, rather than a short one. In the initial months of your presidency there will be great interest in your thoughts and comments about the institution and its future. This is very flattering and can be quite seductive. Unless you were an internal candidate, there will be much for you to learn about the institution, its people, and the context in which you are working. Take time to listen and learn.

(From a dean) In addition to your chairs/heads, get to know your fellow deans, the registrar, admissions officer, director of plant operations, director of the foundation, etc. Cultivate a positive relationship with each.

(From a dean) A dean should think like an anthropologist: every department in the college has its own culture, and you need to understand those distinct cultures in order to work productively with them.

(From a dean) Since I work at an institution with several unions, I was advised to know the contracts inside and out. It was the best advice I was given.

(From a dean) Become a Black Belt in the faculty handbook. That's your key to what you can and can't do, and what the faculty can and can't do.

(From a dean) For me, the following questions, and their answers, have been critical: Is the budget centralized or decentralized, and if centralized, how are operational budget allocations determined, specifically? How is Academic Affairs represented on University-wide committees? By the provost only? Are deans present when university-wide decisions are made? Are deans' views vetted through the provost?

## **Engaging with Campus and Community**

(From a president) Engage with the campus and be visible. Visit all departments and offices, and all student organizations.

(From a president) Spend the first year listening on campus and in the community and reading as much as you can about the institution and its history. Being seen on campus, meeting with small groups of individuals, and holding listening sessions during the first year helped ground me in the culture and expectations of the campus. Meeting with alumni and community members helped provide the perspective of what makes the institution special.

(From a president) Walk around often and listen always. Once you have been named the president, you become the center of a happy whirlwind of activity. Everyone wants to meet you and you find yourself in demand by every university constituency, and they want to meet you

tomorrow. You have important relationships to build with trustees, elected officials, alumni groups, and speeches to give to community and civic clubs. These relationships are vitally important, but this is also the very best time for you to get to know your faculty, staff, and students. It is also the time to signal that you will always listen. More of the presidency than you might imagine is about being present and listening, so take time in the earliest days of your presidency—before you are captured by the routine of your schedule--to develop the habit of leaving your office and just dropping in on academic departments, sporting events, intramurals, university offices, and student events just to be there, to listen, and to really get to know your colleagues. The people you will meet and the stories you will hear will remind you just how important the work we do is to them. So walk around often, always introduce yourself, and give yourself the time to just listen.

(From a president) Before hardening your perspective or assessments, spend time listening, touring and exploring with all stakeholders, before making organizational decisions about “fit” and the future of the institution. Be open with the senior leadership about what you’re experiencing or hearing on your listening tours to ensure everyone has context or perspective.

(From a president) “Buy the frozen foods last” was the best piece of advice that I received from a more seasoned president after I was named to my current post. Grocery store trips provide an opportunity to learn about your campus and how it works in ways that you will never learn from a cabinet meeting or an advisory board if you are approachable and willing to listen. The same can be said for every trip onto campus or into the community. Don’t be surprised that every public errand will take a little longer than it did before you became president or chancellor. The wider variety of voices that you will hear, particularly from those who would not visit your office or write a letter, will pay dividends for your decision making.

(From a dean) Get to know your college. Visit departments for listening sessions and then communicate back what you heard. This gives valuable cultural insights and a sense of what the faculty think are the most important issues. After that, communicate as much as possible so people get to know you and your leadership style. This will help develop trust that you will be fair, that you will respect governance procedures, and that you will recognize and celebrate accomplishments.

### **Regarding Your Prior Institution**

(From a president) Never reference the institution from which you came. Implement good ideas, but what you did or what occurred somewhere else is of little interest.

(From a dean) Do not talk about how you (or your team there) did things at your former institution.

### **The President’s Residence and Office**

(From a president) Do any remodeling or updates on the president/chancellor residence the first few months, or preferably before arriving. If this is needed, get verbiage in the initial contract - preferably. Otherwise, if you do it later you run the risk of being criticized. Especially

if money is tight. Be conservative unless the house is in significant disrepair. Use Foundation dollars if possible.

(From a president) Do not do anything to the president's home that might be considered extravagant. Make improvements and repairs but pass on personal amenities.

(From a president) Make absolutely no renovations to the president's house. If they have been done beforehand – and not at your request – fine.

(From a president) Never remodel the president's office!

### **Other Advice**

(From a president) Nothing prepares you to be “ultimately responsible” so understand that everyone feels unnerved at first.

(From a president) Several professional organizations offer workshops for new presidents. I attended two of these “new president charm schools” and learned important lessons from both. I recommend them highly.

(From a president) Be cautious about bringing to your new institution any staff from your former one.

(From a president) Do not make any staffing changes till at least three months after your arrival.

(From a president) Suppress the desire to get some things done quickly. People want to see things being done but are willing to give a new president some time to learn about the institution rather than acting too quickly.

(From a dean) When you're new to a position, the first people who come to see you are not necessarily the ones whose advice you want to take.

(From a dean) Always be wary of the first faculty/chairs/ staff who provide the “history” and “context” they feel you must know and understand about the institution—they almost always have an agenda.

(From a dean) Be the dean you would want to have if you were a faculty member.

### **Additional Advice from Us**

In considering whether you want to be a president, make sure you want to *do* it, not just *be* it. Titles are nice but not if the work doesn't align with your strengths and what gives you satisfaction.

In thinking about your career, make sure that you're not advancing faster than you're ready. Be cautious not to accept a position for which you aren't yet prepared.

Recognize that on many campuses there is increasing tension between the business of the enterprise and the practice of the enterprise. Leaders need to navigate this tension and recognize that strength in both the business and the practice is what will move a campus forward.

Don't take the job if your gut is telling you not to do it.

The ideal is to take the time to listen and learn before making major decisions. However, this isn't always possible. If you must act quickly, be sure to engage your major constituencies to explain the urgency as well as describe what you intend to do and why as well as what it will mean for them. Be transparent and lay it out.

Before accepting the job, be sure that your values and priorities are consistent with the person to whom you report. For example, if you are a strong believer in the value of "general education" and your provost (if you are a dean) or president (if you are a provost) wants to do away with most general education requirements, you are unlikely to find the job very satisfying.

Understand what type of person they are seeking for the position and decide whether you fit the type. For example, if they seeking someone to make changes, would you be comfortable spearheading those changes?

Are the salary/benefits/living arrangements realistic and a fit with your expectations, and do you understand the cost of living where you would be going?



## Chapter 3: Building and Maintaining Your Base

Every higher education leader depends on a strong base of support for their success. A leader's base will include internal constituencies such as the governing board, faculty, staff, students and other administrators. It will also include certain external constituencies such as government, business, civic, and other educational leaders as well as alums and major donors. A fundamental challenge for any higher education leader is to build and maintain a strong base of support among these constituencies. How important is your base? You cannot lead without it!

A leader's base of support is never static. It ebbs and flows depending on specific issues or circumstances. A new leader must devote time to building their base and then maintaining it over the course of their tenure. Sometimes a leader chooses to make decisions they know may weaken a specific element of their base. When this occurs, the leader must immediately begin reestablishing their support with the base that's been weakened. Where leaders sometimes fail is when they get lazy about staying in touch with their various constituencies.

In this chapter, important principles and ideas for building and maintaining your base are provided by our respondents.

### General Observations

(From a president) Pay attention and build your base. There are many stakeholders that are part of your base, both internal and external. On a regular basis monitor the strengths of your base and conduct check-ins to see how things are going. Don't rely on a hierarchical structure to get feedback and a pulse of the institution.

(From a president) At times, vice presidents, deans, tenured faculty and board members must be nudged or prodded into a certain direction, and the president must have the fortitude to withstand criticism. By the same token, be wary of sycophants.

(From a president) Take care to cultivate and inform all your bases (stakeholders).

(From a president) Nip problems in the bud.

(From a president) Confront controversy head-on.

(From a president) Reach out to unhappy campers before they reach out to each other.

(From a president) Make nurturing "critical relationships" a continuing priority; always repair damaged relationships.

(From a president) "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer."

(From a president) Most important: Do not stay in your office and wait for people to come to you. Walk all over campus and into the surrounding community and ask people for their views on and hopes for your institution.

(From a dean) [Get] out of the office and, at least occasionally, into the classroom. [My college] is scattered across campus in half a dozen buildings. It really helps to turn up and say hello to people in order to be at least casually familiar. I try to teach in my discipline on a regular basis. Doing so keeps me in contact with students, whose views and needs can change every few years.

(From a provost) If everyone likes you, you aren't doing anything important.

### **Relating to the Board and the President**

(From a president) While [a president's] relationship to the Board should always be viewed as primary, you must also assume that Board members are receiving reports about you indirectly. Faculty members, employees, students, parents, alumni, legislators and/or members of the community may decide to engage in discussions about your performance (positively or negatively) with Board members. Even the friendliest of Board members will not be able to withstand a firestorm of criticism from a particularly vocal group that you may have offended.

(From a provost) Protect the president. S/he is in a lonely position with no peers. Freely give advice on how s/he is being perceived. Suggest actions that s/he might take to avoid and/or deal with trouble. Ask frequently, "What can I do to help you meet your goals?" Know his/her goals for the university, what's on his/her bucket list to accomplish.

(From a provost) Build a relationship with your president. Your role is to give input to and carry out the president's vision. Make sure he or she knows you can be entrusted with that.

### **Connecting with the Vice-Presidents**

(From a provost) Build relationships with your cabinet colleagues. Stresses and strains between divisions are normal, but you need these people, and building relationships with them will prevent fractures.

(From a provost) Understand that academics may be the primary focus, but always respect the roles of the other divisions. You can't teach the students without them.

(From a provost) Establish a strong, trusting relationship with the chief financial officer. S/he needs to be able to work with you to keep academics as the primary focus while other divisions are supportive of that mission.

## Connecting with the Faculty

(From a president) Make shared governance your friend and the best tool in your tool box.

(From a provost) Creating a positive relationship with the faculty is crucial to the success of a provost. Toward that end faculty value communication and lots of it. They wish to be kept informed, not only about academics, but any issue that affects the life of the campus. They do not like to learn about major campus decisions in the local newspaper. They also like communication of a personal nature—they want their good work acknowledged. Our office does a newsletter of faculty activities, an update after each dean's council meeting, and an update after any actions of significance taken by the Executive Council that isn't confidential. I also write a personal note of thanks to any faculty member who achieves a personal milestone such as promotion, tenure, retirement, significant professional honors or awards, or who provides leadership for a major project on behalf of the campus. Although frequent and substantive communication with faculty cannot guarantee a positive relationship with faculty, the absence of such will almost assuredly compromise that relationship and spill over into other areas of provost leadership.

(From a provost) Build relationships with your faculty. Attend faculty gatherings, and ask individuals a lot of questions about their disciplines and their work. Faculty appreciate knowing that you're interested.

(From a president) When I became a provost, the retiring provost of more than 20 years told me to focus on the top third of the faculty who were the cheerleaders. These are the faculty who like change, like ideas, and like to carry the institution forward. They would be the champions for my ideas with middle third who are always trying to figure out what to do and look to the champions. The remaining third of the faculty will never like an idea and to not expend energy there. It took only a short amount of time to figure out who the champions were. I visited with them regularly.

(From a dean) Up until now your career advancement and success has been based on your accomplishments: your publications, your grants, your students. Moving forward, your success will be based on the accomplishments of your faculty: their publications, their grants, their students. Your job is to identify and give them the resources they need to succeed.

(From a dean) Deans have a "trust account" with faculty that must be assiduously accumulated and continuously replenished. I came in as the first outside dean in over 20 years. We have a very strong faculty union, and there is considerable suspicion of any "top down" initiatives from administration. I came in eager to suggest new curricular initiatives. These were not enthusiastically received, but if this is to happen eventually, the initiatives must be perceived as "bottom up," instead of my agenda. I've learned that I need to cultivate faculty with these predilections and support their efforts.

(From a dean) Faculty are busy and have little (or more precisely, inconsistent) time to devote to long-range thinking and implementation. A successful dean keeps the door open for ideas, but leadership is exercised by espousing plans for development and using persuasion to acquire involvement. Empower faculty to mold and shape the concepts being proposed, but do not cede leadership. Implementation quickly loses steam without supervision.

(From a dean) The Dean's Office has a customer service function. Think about how to make life for your faculty and chairs easier whenever possible.

(From a dean) The best advice I received is that as a dean, you will not be able to please everyone. Getting to the dean position means that you have been able to help or assist many people. However, at some point, it is going to be impossible to please everyone. No matter what decision you make, there will be some unhappy people. If you expect to make everyone happy, you will fail and feel miserable. Likewise, you will encounter faculty members who will behave very differently than you ever did as a faculty member. They will come in and ask questions that you would never have asked of your dean. I found that once I became dean, I had a new appreciation for how good a faculty member I was! Nevertheless, the job of the dean is to advocate for all faculty members, and that is good advice, although it is easier said than done.

(From a dean) Be as transparent as you can, as often as you can. Most faculty will respect your decisions if they understand the logic upon which they were based. Also, if you are transparent on most issues, faculty are more understanding about the times when transparency is impossible.

(From a dean) Don't take faculty comments/complaints personally. (I'm still working on that one).

### **Connecting with the External World**

(From a president) Engage enthusiastically with external constituencies and audiences, especially alumni, foundation/fundraising activities, community, media, and governmental entities.

(From a president) Make every effort to meet and to know all the different outside constituencies you serve: system heads, governance boards, non-governing university boards of visitors, foundation boards, acknowledged and unacknowledged leaders in the community and state, elected officials from local to state and national if possible, local and state Chambers of Commerce, business leaders, public school officials, leaders from other public and private institutions, local church connections of various kinds, leadership in minority and underserved communities. The goal should be to build as quickly as possible the deep contextuality necessary to understand connections and power bases among all the groups. And keep in mind no matter how long you are at an institution this constant upgrading and/or maintaining of relationships can never end.

## **Relating to Legislators**

Although our respondents did not offer advice relating to legislators, it is an important topic, so we are addressing it here.

Stay in touch with key legislators when you aren't asking them for something. Build the relationship.

Be cautious in aligning with one party or the other. Don't go to one political fundraiser unless you're prepared to go to every fundraiser.

Rather than asking legislators to embrace your agenda, show them how what you need supports what's important for them and their district.

Let legislators know how many faculty, staff, and students reside in their district.

Remember that legislators often have key constituents and donors who have voices that are far more persuasive than yours. Enlist their support.

When a legislator delivers for you, make sure you give them credit, particularly with their constituents.

Keep legislators apprised of the exciting things going on at your institution.

When legislators attend university events, acknowledge them. They have busy schedules, and you want them to know that you appreciate their presence.

When communicating with legislators, keep it brief. You're one of many. Get to the point. Tell them what you need and why it's important....to them as well as you.

Don't compromise who you are or what you believe for the sake of a vote. At the end of the day, you've got to live with yourself.

Be careful with "off the record" conversations involving elected officials. They are never off the record!

## **Additional Advice from Us**

Never surprise your boss...and make clear that you don't enjoy being surprised either.

Do not contribute to a "shoot the messenger" culture. People will not bring bad news to your attention if they perceive risk in doing so. Leadership can be isolating and a "shoot the messenger" climate will make it more so.

Never risk your board or superior finding out something significant about the institution through the media, particularly if it's bad news. A good rule of thumb is no surprises in either direction.

You need to fill the board's time with your agenda or they'll fill your time with their agenda.

Embrace shared governance. However, be very intentional in making it "shared" governance – not faculty governance.

Develop a reservoir of goodwill and trust with the faculty and staff as there may be times when a situation is time sensitive and doesn't allow you to follow the typical shared governance process.

When leading large scale institutional change, don't ever underestimate the power of the student voice to support or inhibit progress.

Be sure that you treat students as an important element of your base. Their voices can be compelling.

Don't miss an opportunity to highlight the primary focus on "student success." Mention student success in all planned remarks. When your schedule permits, attend student events (especially student government meetings), praise student work, talk to students, thank faculty and staff who have contributed to student success, and share stories of how your listening to students has impacted decisions.

Spend time in the places where students spend time (e.g., sporting events; student union; dorm dinners).

Your institution is embedded within a community. Understanding that community, knowing its leaders, and recognizing the interdependence is fundamental to your leadership effectiveness.

## Chapter 4: Building Your Team

All college and university leaders at whatever level depend on a team of individuals who work together on behalf of advancing institutional progress. Team members generally report directly to the leader but may also have other important leadership responsibilities. Lencioni (2002) writes that effective leadership teams are characterized by strong levels of trust, the capacity to deal constructively with conflict, an “all in” commitment to the team and its work, a willingness to be accountable to each other as well as to the leader, and a laser focus on results. Team effectiveness is also enhanced when members are systems thinkers able to see the entire institution and not just the parts. Sometimes “teams” are nothing more than a collection of individuals. The challenge for a new leader is to first define what constitutes “the team” and then assess the strength of the team as a team, and make clear their expectations regarding how the team interacts with the leader and with each other. Team members must be held accountable for advancing their collective agenda.

What follows are insights on how to create your team, establishing team expectations and standards, the importance of empowering your team, giving credit, and supporting your team when the going sometimes get tough.

### Create Your Team

(From a president) Develop a strong leadership team, especially the executive committee, and double down on finding a top-notch Chief of Staff, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Academic Officer.

(From a president) The best advice I received was to do a thorough analysis of my leadership team to make sure I had a functional, professional, healthy, productive team. If the analysis showed a problem with the team, it would be necessary to make personnel changes to correct.

(From a president) It took me a few years to learn, but in selecting my leadership team, I never used a campus-based committee which I did not control or oversee. I learned that the provost, the deans, and senior staff would either make or break the presidency and my agenda. I still believe that you have to select your own team. You can use a committee for assistance but the decision on the hire must be that of the president.

(From a president) New presidents need to hire at least one of their own people at the top who can help you navigate the terrain as they transition in and be the “tough guy/gal.” Those with experience need to help the new president know how to negotiate and navigate that process through scenarios and discussion. This is especially true for a woman because there is an inherent skepticism about their ability to fulfill that role regardless of their experience.

(From a president) The organizational ripple effect created by the president is wide and deep. Ensure that your inner circle such as the president’s advisory group is as useful as practical,

seek their advice. Do not hold on to individuals that will not serve you well. When making organizational changes that are not due to impropriety, be thoughtful during the transition to allow those impacted to adjust, because everyone is watching how you implement decisions.

(From a dean) Have an administrative assistant who you trust and who has your back.

### **Set Standards**

(From a president) Over the course of twenty years as a president, I have learned that having an explicit set of governing principles to guide my senior team is a key to success. These include such things as observing essential ethical standards, promoting consultative decision-making, ensuring transparent communications, backing words with specific actions, and assessing different courses of action based upon the best long-term interest of the University.

(From a president) Internal relationships: Keep your expectations clear and achievable. Here are my four basic rules for people who work for me. (1) Don't lie to me; (2) Don't end run me; (3) Keep me informed; and (4) Don't surprise me. Corollaries include (a) I can save your job but you cannot save mine, (b) nothing happens without calculated risk, (c) as a faculty member friend told me one time, "You are a Ph.D. doctor, not a spin doctor." Tell the truth straightforwardly.

(From a president) Have high expectations for your direct reports and let them do their jobs. Remember they know more about the details of their areas than you will.

(From a president) Do not assume that the senior leadership team has been informed or trained to "onboard" the president. When practical strive to create an atmosphere of clarity, ensure that the senior leaders have an opportunity to learn your expectations and preferences.

### **Empower Team Members**

(From a president) Avoid micromanaging. Delegate to your leadership team, set out expectations, hold them accountable, and build two-way trust.

(From a president) Hire great people and empower them to do their jobs. Take the time to tell them publicly when they're doing a great job, and give them guidance privately when they can do better. Don't micromanage; you'll drive yourself crazy.

(From a provost) Empower staff and direct reports. Build a team. Treat those who work closest with you with great respect. Ask the team to "think ahead" of you. Be open to their ideas, suggestions, and questions.

(From a provost) Empower the academic deans. They are the chief executive officers of their colleges. Yet, often in the bureaucratic environment of the university, they can lose their voice at the university level. When I became a new provost, my first priority was to support each dean and then build a team among the deans. I found when I empowered the deans and



ensured they had a voice (individually and collectively), the deans, in return, empowered me. When the provost and deans agree on any given issue, they provide Academics with a powerful voice.

(From a dean) The previous dean was extremely affirming in stating: "This is the best team of leaders in the College in all of the years I have been here. They will continue to excel!" I took that to mean I should trust them, collaborate with them, and allow them to do what they are good at doing.

### **Give Credit to Others**

(From a president) Always take less credit and more blame than you deserve.

(From a president) Celebrate victories.

(From a provost) Take no credit. The main satisfaction in this job is seeing other people succeed. Paradoxically, the more you lavish credit on others, the more you get thanked for your support.

(From a provost) The success of those who report to you comes first; you are second.

### **Support Your Team Members**

(From a president) Take care of the people!

(From a provost) Love people and organize based upon their strengths.

(From a dean) Listen more than you talk and surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are.

### **Additional Advice from Us**

You cannot succeed alone.

Make clear to your team the values that you bring to your work and the values you expect them to reflect in their own work.

Arguably, the most important thing you will do is hire good people who are well suited for the position/institution and make good reappointment, promotion and tenure decisions. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK!** Take these decisions very seriously.

Support those who report to you when appropriate. Make sure they are willing to be brutally honest with you. Be brutally honest with them.

Never underestimate the power of positive feedback. People at all levels and of all ages like positive feedback and appreciation for their work.

You may be totally justified in disciplining or even firing someone on your team, and you may have heard nothing but negatives about the person, but once people sense your intentions, you may find that the target suddenly has loads of support.

Never undercut “your people” in public.

While your team needs to be “all in” in terms of shared goals and strategies, they must also be aware of those who may oppose them and be willing to share that perspective with the team. One way to do this is to make sure team meetings are a “safe place” to voice reservations or describe opposition.

## Chapter 5: Using the Power of Your Voice

As a leader, your voice matters. This chapter emphasizes the importance of communication, but our respondents emphasize that what you communicate is at least as important as the need to communicate. Our respondents highlight the need for authenticity and accuracy as critical for building trust, and the tone you communicate impacts the views both on and off the campus. Topics such as visibility, listening, communicating broadly, and giving credit to others are included in this chapter as well as others, because they are vitally important concepts that bear repeating. What's clear, particularly in times of turbulence, is that your frequency of communication as well as your tone, honesty, and authenticity can be a powerful leadership tool. However, if the power of your voice is compromised in these and other ways, it can damage both the institution and your capacity to lead.

### Be Visible

(From a president) Woody Allen said, "Eighty percent of success is showing up." This is especially true for leaders, because your presence is an expression of support for the people who work for your organization. People notice when you show up and when you don't, and they draw their own conclusions. Also, stay for the whole event if you possibly can. No president ever successfully sneaks out of an event without being noticed.

(From a president) Master all forms of campus communication and outreach: open meeting time for faculty; forums with student, faculty, and staff; periodic communiques via list serves; frequent produced video programs with guests; select meetings with key stakeholders; "open door policy" with limits.

(From a dean) Showing up is important – if it is not possible for you to be at an important event, write a statement of support and have someone represent you at the event.

### Be a Good Listener

(From a president) I still think of my role in this way, "It is far more important you know I understand, rather than you understand that I know."

(From a president) Be a good listener and remember that there are always at least two sides (sometimes more) to any issue.

(From a provost) Ask, don't assume.

(From a dean) I wish someone had told me how important listening is over doing something. Half of my time is spent listening for understanding, not listening for response or immediate action. All individuals have a need to be valued and through listening for understanding, faculty and staff perceive acceptance, sincerity, and an appreciation of their value. Once both "sides"

feel like they are communicating through an understanding lens, compromise, collaboration, and consideration are easier to navigate and achieve.

(From a dean) You learn more when you listen than when you talk.

(From a dean) “Seek first to understand, then to be understood,” is valuable advice from Stephen Covey.

### **Communicate Broadly and Frequently**

(From a president) The world moves very fast and the institutional stakeholders are expecting to hear from you, more swiftly than we may like, about your strategic vision for the future.

(From a provost) Communicate until it hurts. Make sure that everyone who should know about a decision, process, event, or activity is provided with information in a timely fashion. Provide opportunities for input when practical and expect the same from others. Many communications will be ignored but it is difficult or impossible to explain to colleagues why they were not given information after the fact.

### **Take Care in What You Say**

#### **Your Words Matter**

(From a president) You are—and you have to be seen to be—your school’s main spokesman. Don’t wing it.

(From a president) Perhaps the best advice I wished I had received when I became president was to understand how important everything you say becomes to your campus. I was fortunate to discover it in a rather silly and positive way. On my second day in the job, I was at a breakfast reception and they had coffee and cookies. Without thinking much about it I mentioned that they didn’t have my favorites, oatmeal and raisins. For the next 12 years in my presidency, every time we had cookies they made sure we had oatmeal and raisins. This silly event opened my eyes to the weight people put in my words.

(From a president) When we were facing budgetary issues, I wanted to reassure departments that I would uphold academic decisions, so at the Faculty Senate meeting, I said that if a department made a negative tenure decision based on academic quality, “as long as I am here, your department will get back that tenure line.” Soon after the rumor on campus was that I was leaving. “As long as I am here” was interpreted in that way. Of course, I meant that it was not a policy decision but one that every president should make on her or his own, depending on circumstances.

(From a provost) Ensure effective communication. The single most important skill/ability for a provost is the ability to communicate effectively with all stakeholders—especially faculty. The

tone, timeliness, correctness, and appropriateness of the message can either enhance or undermine the provost's leadership and his/her ultimate ability to do the job.

### **Importance of Accuracy**

(From a provost) Insist on accuracy—from your office and yourself. Praise staff who find your mistakes before others see the errors.

(From a provost) Seek input. Always ask a trusted colleague to proofread a document prior to sending it. This step is particularly important if the issue is negative or political. Most everything in the provost's office has the potential to be political.

### **Set a Positive Tone**

(From a president) Show your school spirit. It is contagious.

(From a president) It is okay, even useful to outline challenges and problems, but regardless of how daunting the situation you must communicate confidence and optimism, that the university will ultimately win.

## **Recognize the Accomplishments of Others**

(From a president) Give credit for successes to other constituents.

(From a provost) Never underestimate the power of personalization. Thank people. Write notes of congratulations to people. Care about the students, staff, and faculty.

(From a dean) It's amazing how much you can get done if you don't care about who gets the credit.

## **Social Media**

Although our respondents did not include issues related to social media in their advice, we believe we would be remiss not to address this issue.

Social media can provide a powerful vehicle for your voice. It allows you to share compelling stories about student, faculty and university successes; support the advancement of your goals; assist you in branding the university; permit you to address appropriate issues in a timely fashion; and help you develop a sense of community.

Social media works best when you establish concrete goals, develop a plan to reach your goals, determine assessment criteria and continue to fine tune your use of social media.

When responding to issues using social media you are advised to think carefully about when and whether to respond. There are times a leader needs to take control of a situation with their

voice, rather than risking control being assumed by someone else. A leader's lack of response can be deafening.

Use caution and make a measured response to a real or perceived crisis and refrain from inciting controversy.

Any message on social media should be reviewed by responsible staff before being posted.

Don't post anything you would be uncomfortable with if it became the lead story on the front page of the newspaper the next day – or perhaps even spread worldwide within minutes.

### **Additional Advice from Us**

Don't underestimate the power of the governing board to strengthen the impact of your voice.

Communicate, communicate, communicate! Identify opinion leaders and communicate with them often.

Communication is important with every audience: board, executive team, faculty, students, community, etc. Be as open as appropriate and communicate frequently.

Do not communicate in anger. Take a breath. Think first.

Be cautious about thinking out loud. The bigger your leadership platform, the more closely those around you and throughout the institution will listen carefully to every word.

Leaders need people with whom they can think out loud but be cautious.

Your voice should be used on behalf of important institutional issues, challenges, and perspectives. If you weigh in on all matter of things, the power of your voice will be diminished. Be intentional about how, when, where and about what you will use your voice.

Be sure to take the time to think deeply about the repercussions of something you send out under your name at the request of someone else. Don't "loan" your name without carefully considering the content and potential consequences of the message.

Communicate carefully – both good news and difficult news.

Not speaking out can be problematic. It allows others to draw possibly erroneous conclusions about your beliefs. You lose the opportunity to frame an issue, and you may be losing the chance to nip a problem in the bud.

Be aware that everything you say is repeated and dissected – by those who want to please you and those who do not embrace your message.

Careless language, possibly meant as a joke, may be interpreted seriously and lead to big problems for the speaker.

Be sure to get at least a second opinion – and maybe a third and fourth – on any written statement or document that leaves your office.

Be as optimistic and reassuring as appropriate especially in difficult times.

What you put in writing can come back to haunt you . . . and what is put online never goes away.

Never miss an opportunity to celebrate important work. Celebrations create models that others often emulate. Find a way to acknowledge all good ideas.

Find ways to implement the important new ideas or at least some components of the ideas. Encourage folks to think creatively, dream big and share ideas.

Be humble, share praise and spread the credit for good work as broadly as possible.

Presidents, provosts, and deans are always going to have complex and formidable challenges. It goes with the job. However, do not indulge in public hand wringing. Everyone has challenges. What those whom you're leading want to hear from you is hopefulness, optimism, a sense of vision and direction, and, most importantly, your belief in the campus and those who comprise it that they are collectively capable of dealing with any challenge the institution confronts.

## Chapter 6: Planning and Execution

As pointed out in Chapter 1, institutions of higher learning are confronting enormous challenges, many in areas that have only recently been impacting our institutions in significant ways. To deal with these and to remain healthy, vibrant institutions, we must continually change with the times. It is the responsibility of the academic leaders, working with leaders across the institution, to spearhead the change, to ensure the institution's future and deal with the institution's challenges. Academic leaders inevitably have responsibility for planning and goal setting, whether it is at the institutional, divisional, or college level. Planning might begin with the development of a strategic plan or, if there is an extant strategic plan, it will likely begin with setting specific goals. Our respondents remind us that, in developing a plan and/or goals, one must build on the past to create the future. They also caution that the plan and the goals are only as good as their execution, and execution requires focus, discipline, alignment and follow through.

### Setting Goals

(From a president) Be bold in your thoughts and with your vision for your institution. No one is inspired with small aspirations.

(From a president) Take time to think and formulate ideas. Don't just regurgitate other people's ideas; formulate your own ideas, strategies, and goals.

(From a president) Foster campus collaboration, and break down silos.

(From a president) Put students first in all discussions, decisions, and plans.

### Balance the Past and the Future

(From a president) The best advice I received came from Harvard's Ron Heifetz at an International Leadership Association meeting in 1998. Heifetz said that based on his research, the difference between "successful" presidents and not-so-successful presidents was their ability to balance vision with stewardship. All new presidents have a vision, some "future desired end state." This is where they see themselves leading the institution on to bigger and better things. However, successful presidents realize that they must also serve as stewards of the institution's past. They must appreciate that the university has a history that existed before their presidency began and they must be careful to respect certain traditions, values, and legacies.

(From a dean) Demonstrate the respect you have for the institution and community. Embrace the success of the past and build on the foundation that has been established.



## Execution

(From a president) Do not be overly consumed with vision and strategy – they are trumped by tactics and execution. Note that strategic plans often change very little from decade to decade for a given institution and that what really separates a successful administration from an unsuccessful one is which one was able to execute. Execution requires accountability – assigning individuals to head given initiatives and providing progress reports, establishing specific metrics for goals, actually terminating people who deserve to be terminated, and reporting on and communicating about that progress or lack thereof – clearly and frequently.

(From a president) Ensure you focus on “how” you address strategic thinking and strategic changes. Focus on culture and understand this is about relationships. Balance being focused and systematic with being agile and responsive. Build in and be diligent about protecting time to sharpen your saw. Above all, enhance the institution by addressing its best interests through an ethical course of decision-making.

(From a president) We often do not control all of the factors that can affect our institutional trajectory. We do control how well we implement initiatives – small and large. Excellence in execution matters whether judging the content and form of communications, the quality of a reception for an honored guest, the effectiveness of a major reorganization, or the introduction of a new academic program.

(From a president) Experience has convinced me that one principle rises above all others: "Details Matter!" A president can be criticized, of course, when s/he ventures too far “down in the weeds,” but important details that can affect your institution’s reputation for excellence often lurk in those weeds.

(From a president) Inculcating an institutional culture in which “details matter” is time well spent. Well-regarded institutions of higher education plan thoroughly, commit intentionally, and execute the details with reliable excellence.

(From a president) Stay on top of the 2 Rs for successful enrollment numbers: recruitment and retention.

(From a president) Culture eats strategy for breakfast. [Note: This observation is often attributed to Peter Drucker.]

(From a president) Be “patiently persistent” in pursuing goals for the university.

(From a dean) Always know three things: (1) your data (budget, #students, majors, FTE's etc.); (2) what the data means (trends, limitations, and challenges); and (3) what you need in order to get where your unit needs to go (new funds, new programs, new innovations).

## **Budget-Related**

(From a president) Early on, pay special attention to ensuring a sound budget and financial platform, with no surprises.

(From a president) The natural movement of a university is toward more overhead. Fight it.

(From a dean) If they want you to implement new initiatives, be sure they are providing the resources to succeed.

(From a dean) Having minimal college budget is not a deal breaker. Having a model where the money you raise does not back to your college is a deal breaker.

(From a dean) Always negotiate the salary savings of positions vacated in your college.

## **Additional Advice from Us**

Every new president wants to form a new strategic plan. Resist this impulse unless absolutely necessary. If necessary, don't allow the plan to contain so many priorities that it collapses under its own weight.

Everything is important but everything isn't equally important. Prioritize and delegate.

Bring everything back to mission. Weave important initiatives into the very fabric of the institution in order to maintain the momentum when leadership changes. Try to avoid "person dependent" initiatives – rather embed initiatives into the mission of the university.

It takes only a few minutes to articulate a goal, but it may take years to achieve it. Don't burden the campus with so many goals that people feel overwhelmed.

It is not realistic to expect everyone to agree with you. At some point, you need to cut off discussion and move forward with a decision. The challenge is to determine the "sweet spot" between too little deliberation and too much deliberation.

Know who the thought leaders are on your campus and work to secure their buy-in for new ideas/programs.

Honor the past without being a prisoner of it.

Here's a bit of blunt insight. Every campus has a strategic plan. You don't win with plans, you win with execution. Focus, focus, focus....execute, execute, execute!

High performing institutions are laser focused on those few strategic priorities that will impact their future in significant ways....and every element of the institution is aligned to support progress in those priorities.

Presidents can't own everything. Decide what you'll own personally and what you'll delegate. Don't personally own more than two or three priorities. If you own too much, you own nothing.

Never say, "We have no money." You do have money. The question is whether everything you are now invested in is more important than where you want to invest. Be honest with yourself and your campus.

Human and financial resources must align with institutional priorities.

If you want something to happen or change, you must ensure there are adequate financial, human, and physical resources.

## Chapter 7: Leading With Integrity

A common thread among all of our respondents can be summarized by the phrase, lead with integrity. They speak of establishing and maintaining high standards. Walking the talk. Being willing to take ultimate responsibility. Being open, a good listener, and willing to learn based on new information and insights. They highlight over and over again the importance of trust, integrity, authenticity, and courage when confronting the complex decisions that leaders must address.

What follows are a variety of perspectives on decision-making and leadership, all with an emphasis on leading with integrity.

### Maintain High Standards

(From a president) You are in matters of social justice the abiding conscience of your house.

(From a president) Remember that your most important responsibility is to model being the ethical and moral compass of your institution.

(From a president) Integrity and ethics are essential – there are always people watching.

(From a president) Make ethical decisions and have Moral Courage (Rushworth Kidder model).

(From a president) Do what you know is right: While campus and state politics will always be in play, one should do the right thing. If it turns sour – even if that means leaving the institution – you will know that what you did or tried to do was correct.

(From a president) “You are a Ph.D. doctor, not a spin doctor.” Tell the truth straightforwardly.

(From a president) Never, never lie. Duck, weasel, distract, shut up, carry a pocketful of red herrings but never do the one thing that can destroy you, which is to lie.

(From a president) Choose your battles carefully. Be sure the victory is worth the fight. If you find that the victory is not worth the fight, admit it and live to fight another day.

(From a president) Know what hills you are prepared to die on; never need the job too much.

(From a president) Follow the Golden Rule.

(From a president) Live and breathe servant leadership.

(From a dean) As a new dean, my provost provided the best advice: “Your principles are your North Star – always let them be your guide.”

## **Your Responsibility**

(From a president) Whereas everyone else (faculty, alumni, members of the executive team, others) all have an angle or special interest, the president alone sees the entire university, and ultimately must call the shots and take responsibility.

(From a president) One of the most important pieces of advice I can give is in the perspective that a university president needs to take. It's not about you. It's about the institution, the students, the faculty, the staff, the community in which you are located and your family. It's about serving and helping all of these groups grow, learn, mature, trust and become better. When you lose sight of service to these groups, you have lost your focus and neither you nor the institution are likely to be very successful. Servant leadership is perhaps more important in the setting of a university than any other organization.

(From a president) The presidency is not a popularity contest. To move an institution forward, or even to maintain its current level of success, difficult decisions often must be made, and risks taken. Institutions of higher education, and faculty in particular, are frequently adverse to change. All of us look for approval and support, but the old adage, "it's lonely at the top," is accurate.

(From a president) Do not try to be universally loved, and do not default to decisions that anger the fewest people. Being universally loved is perhaps the clearest sign that you are not doing the job well. Moving the university forward will require tough decisions that are sure to anger a minority, a plurality, or, on occasion, even the majority of the campus.

(From a provost) A leader must demonstrate fairness, impartiality, integrity, and consistency as he/she renders decisions and administers policies, procedures, and budgets.

(From a provost) Stay focused on the institutional mission and support those who deliver its heart. You will rarely go wrong if you understand that the success of students lies in the continued personal and professional development of faculty.

(From a provost) A provost, while having tenure in a specific department/college, cannot allude to "my chair" or "my dean." The provost can "have" neither a dean nor chair. All deans/chairs and units must be treated impartially.

(From a dean) This is a people business. Your point-of-view must be to serve your people which I define as my students and faculty. That must be your North Star. All your efforts must be on behalf of people.

(From a dean) Your job is to support and build an environment in which students, faculty, and staff can thrive. It's not about you, it's about those you serve and you should approach each day thinking about how you can make things better for those with whom you work.

(From a dean) Don't be frustrated by the slow process of changing culture and adopting policy and protocol. On my young campus these practices were still in formation. As dean, the symbolic power of the role is sticky and thick and does not easily shed to old perceptions of peer collegiality. Simply own the role, the responsibility, and the authority with the clearest of intentions and honest communication.

(From a dean) Keep off-campus records and logs of significant events. I've had to testify in legal proceedings and keep a private record of significant issues that occur.

## **Decision Making**

### **General Principles**

(From a president) Trust your instincts. If a fleeting thought says "maybe not," then don't.

(From a provost) Allow student success to be at the center of the difficult decisions that you must deliver.

(From a provost) Decisions don't stay made, they must be affirmed.

(From a dean) In chaos, there is profit, or to be more exact, in chaos, there is profit for the well prepared. Higher education is going through very tough times right now in terms of budgets, oversight, and public perception. There is a lot of trepidation out there by administrators about what the next day will bring. I have found that it is best to use that fear and trepidation to our advantage to get changes made that will help students, faculty, and staff. These may be changes that previously took years, but can now be done in months. It takes a lot of preparation, having data about what is going on at your fingertips, and being able to connect the change you need to a solution to the crisis at hand. There is an old saying "A drowning man will grab even the point of a sword"; think of how much more enthusiastically a drowning man will grab a life preserver with a line attached even if they do not know where that line is attached.

(From a dean) Best advice I've ever received came from my very non-academic immigrant grandmother who often settled arguments between family members by insisting that "you're both right!" In fluid situations, no matter the level of the stakes, the two (or more) sides are always arguing from the point of view that they are correct. And there is always an aspect of truth to that. The goal is to find the best resolution or path to move a program or institution forward, to consider appropriate blends of solutions or directions, but to always put core goals, focus on students, values, and strategic planning at the forefront.

### **Engage Others**

(From a president) Deal with competing issues/perspectives with key players in the room all at once.

(From a provost) The process is more important than the end decision. Do not assume you know the right answer before consulting with a committee or others. In the group discussion a better answer will evolve, those at the table will have buy in, and they will be empowered to take responsibility for the decision.

(From a dean) In addition to saying that you are collaborative and transparent, build structures that foster shared decision-making. For instance, consider meeting once a month with the department chairs, and encourage them to meet once a month without any dean's office members present in order to discuss best practices.

### **Responding to Requests**

(From a president) Rhetorical questions and hypothetical situations are almost always neither.

(From a president) If you can't say yes, don't say no. Rather, take some time to think about how you can say "no, but..." There is nothing more frustrating than being handed a rejection without a clue as to what to do next. Consider: "Your promotion is denied" vs. "I can't support your promotion at this time, but I will provide summer funds for you to work on your research." Even if you don't want to work on your research, I have tried to be helpful. You may not like the options, but I have not closed the door on you. I learned this by watching budget officers tell people that they could not use a particular fund for some purpose, without telling them how they could use some other fund or how they could change their request to conform to the fund's requirements. In most situations it is possible to both conform to policies, principles and realities, and to find ways to get things done. Sometimes it takes a little extra thought.

(From a provost) Use caution with email. Don't get embroiled in email exchanges. Call for a meeting if your voice is needed. Treat the sender of a harsh email better than he/she deserves. Avoid demonstrating negative emotion, criticism, or frustration in an email. Limit "provost office" emails. Avoid being the voice of everyone's announcements and advertisements.

(From a provost) Learn to say "no" constructively. You will have to say "no" a lot. Unless it's a tenure decision, you want the person(s) to try again and do better, not be demoralized. It's not necessary to argue that your decision was correct; just you focus on what is needed to succeed in the future.

(From a provost) Remember to always get both sides of any issue—or story. Acting before getting the "big picture" can lead to unfortunate results. This may require you to ask questions you think are elementary. I've often found that I should have asked even the most elementary question before formulating a response to an issue or a story. Where a provost must look at both the big picture and the details, often those who provide information on an issue or story are looking only from their limited lens or focus.

(From a dean) One of two phrases a dean should know: "I'll get back to you on that." "What action are you asking of me?"

(From a dean) Give yourself time to make decisions. Don't respond in the moment. Tell your petitioner that you will think over the issue and get back to him/her.

### **Additional Advice from Us**

Every leader should have a line that they will not cross. Leaders need to be clear what conditions would cause them to resign their position.

A leader who loses the trust of her/his base will lose the capacity to lead. Leaders at all levels need a North Star...a set of core values that they use when difficult choices must be made. New leaders should have a good sense of their own North Star before assuming their positions.

Do not compromise your integrity. Do not allow those who support you to compromise their integrity in a well-intended attempt to help you.

Do not create a committee unless you are prepared to listen to their recommendations. That does not mean you have to adopt the recommendations, but you must address them.

In large decentralized organizations, it is inevitable that bad things will occasionally happen. It can't be avoided. What's most important is how the institution and its leaders respond. Gather the facts, consult as appropriate, and then act decisively. Do not allow the institution's legal and human resource departments to dictate your response. Listen carefully to their views including their assessment of risk related to various responses but, in the end, it's your decision, not theirs. When considering major decisions, start with what's the right thing; not the politically expedient thing, not the thing least likely to offend major internal and external stakeholders. Start with the right thing as you determine it.

Leaders at all levels should approach difficult decisions by first asking themselves and others, what's the right choice. Not the easiest choice. Not the least costly choice. Not the choice least likely to offend important constituencies. No, begin with the right choice. Let that be your starting point. By doing so, you'll protect your integrity and that of your institution.

When deciding on a course of action, project out five or six steps and make sure it's taking the institution in the direction you want to go. Leaders and their institutions often find themselves in a place they don't want to be, not because of one big decision but a thousand small ones. When making major decisions, consider whether there are longer term unintended consequences.

When confronting difficult choices, particularly if they involve the need to respond quickly, think carefully about which mistake is easier to live with.

Make evidence based decisions when possible and share the evidence broadly (as appropriate).



Before making a decision, determine how you would know if an initiative is successful – what would success look like?

Remember Mark Twain's advice: "Do the right thing. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest."

If you don't want a decision to appear on the front page of the Chronicle or a newspaper, it probably means it's the wrong decision.

Don't delegate your decision-making authority to the lawyers. They should provide you with legal advice, but you must consider all factors in reaching a decision.

Decisions should be based on a thorough understanding of the benefits and risks associated with the various options.

Rarely are things as good or as bad as they first appear. Take a breath before responding.

Be sure you read an entire email before responding. I have a habit of reading only the beginning, and it is a very bad habit.

## Chapter 8: You and Your Family

Many of the responsibilities of high-level administrators are very demanding. There is considerable advice offered here about focusing on you, who you are and what you need. The advice falls into several categories: your personal characteristics, which include knowing and being yourself, being humble, treating others well, and keeping a sense of humor; taking care of yourself and your family; maintaining your focus; and the need to keep learning and growing.

### Personal Characteristics

#### Know Yourself

(From a president) Make a frank assessment of the skills that you bring to the job. Address any glaring deficiencies so that you have a basic level of competency in all of the required areas, but then focus your energy on your strengths, because that is how you will be judged by others.

(From a president) Remember who helped you get to the top but at the same time recognize your strengths that got you there and use them for success.

(From a provost) Conventional wisdom on defining leadership in higher education tends to emphasize the importance of personal traits like character, integrity, or authenticity and experientially developed skills like oral and written communication skills, strategic vision or fiscal management. Documentation for this observation is readily found in almost any presidential profile used in the search for an institutional leader. I'm convinced, however, that none of these attributes is as essential as self-awareness. We've all heard the admonition throughout our lives: "know thyself."

(From a provost) Know your values. What do you care about and believe in most strongly? Be clear about that with yourself, and express your values every time you have a chance.

(From a provost) One thing that I have found to be true is that those in senior academic leadership roles need to remember that very little of the controversy or political maneuvering by faculty is personal; little of the criticism that senior leaders receive is actually about us. Certainly faculty make unfair and unflattering remarks about us, but I have come to see that those remarks are more about the faculty than they are about me. When there is a consistent pattern of complaints—perhaps a theme of lack of communication emerges, for instance—that's something to pay attention to. But characterological comments ("aggressive," "moody," "plays favorites") are not comments I pay much attention to. It's far too easy to take those kinds of things personally, but we are well served by growing thick skins.

#### Be Yourself

(From a president) Be yourself: You can't fake it anyway. Few dispute that being a university president is a high-pressure, high-stress position. The pace of the job, the requirements for imperfect and quick decision-making, the diversity of stakeholder interest all take a toll.

Unfortunately, too many presidents (new and old) believe there is a simple formula, or they decide to model their presidency on others, or worse, they change much of who they are and how they engage with others. Too often we put on a false front. This is a mistake. The stresses of the job will reveal our true identity, maybe not immediately but eventually. You just can't fake it. Presidents come in all shapes, sizes, values, beliefs, quirks and flaws. Embrace them all and let folks know who you really are and what you really believe. They will find out anyway.

(From a president) Be yourself. The advice is that playing a role 24/7 is simply too exhausting.

(From a president) The best advice I ever received for leadership is to be authentic—to be yourself and to use your own strengths and experiences to develop your own approach to the job. It's a simple but liberating message, because it means that you have all of the tools you need to succeed within you. Great leaders come in all sizes, shapes, and personality types. You can learn from others you admire, but you need to trust and develop your own distinct voice. Early in my career I thought that I needed to have a certain personality type or speaking style to meet people's expectations of a successful leader. I learned quickly that it is exhausting to try to emulate others or to pretend to be something you're not, and it ultimately doesn't work. People can tell pretty quickly if you are genuine, and they respond positively to someone who seems real. An institution of higher education has a lot of different constituencies, and all of them like to feel as though they know the institution's leader. They appreciate knowing that you are a real person who has a particular set of gifts, passions, and experiences that have shaped you.

(From a provost) I have an important mentor who has guided me to understand that authenticity is one of the most important attributes a leader can have. To be authentic means to understand one's purpose and inner calling, to understand how that purpose and calling meets the world's needs, and to make certain that you do everything through that inner purpose. From this falls all sorts of other elements. To know what your purpose is and then to lead from that purpose means that you must have clear values, a well-differentiated self, and the ability to lead from those values and that self with a sense of confidence balanced with real humility. A provost who is an authentic servant leader recognizes that everything he or she does is about student engagement and student success and that faculty are the key to advancing curricular and co-curricular learning and staff are instrumental in advancing supplemental and extra-curricular learning. To develop success in the whole person requires the entire campus coming together with a shared vision and sense of purpose. The advice I received is to be my authentic self as I worked to elicit and elevate a communal vision about whole-student development and success.

### **Be Humble**

(From a president) The best advice I can offer any new president: it is a job, not a crown. Be humble as you serve your campus, not the other way around.

(From a provost) Practicing thoughtful reflection and developing a sense of humility represents the most important leadership advice I ever received. I wish I had received it sooner in my

career, but it has always helped me better understand how other people see me and served as a quick check when my ego tried to get the best of me.

(From a dean) Be humble. Don't throw your weight around. Let your faculty see you helping with the grunt work. Admit mistakes and remediate them. Say thank you, publicly. Give credit to others as appropriate and don't claim it for yourself, even when deserved. (People will know what you've done).

### **Treat Others Well**

(From a president) Forgive easily and completely.

(From a provost) Be kind. While I believe I have always been a kind and caring person, it was helpful to know that as a provost being considerate, caring and kind is a very important part of the role.

(From a provost) Learn how to accept responsibility and how to apologize for mistakes.

(From a dean) Don't gossip.

### **Keep a Sense of Humor**

(From a president) Keep a good sense of humor always.

(From a president) Have fun. Smile. Laugh.

(From a president) You are engaged in a serious enterprise, but don't take yourself too seriously.

(From a provost) The fuel of higher education is humor.

(From a dean) Have fun every day. You will give 8, 10, 12 hours each day to this job. You will give weekends. You will face challenges. If you can't smile at least once in your day, go do something else; find a job that makes you smile. Find joy in your job and make others happy to be working with you. (Advice given by Robert Earley in his Commencement Address to the College of Business at UT Arlington)

### **Take Care of Yourself and Your Family**

(From a president) The presidency can be one of the most rewarding positions in higher education; take time to enjoy the experience.

(From a president) Enjoy the work of the presidency more than being "the president."

(From a president) You are the only one who will take care of yourself. Everyone else wants to spend you. Be careful.

(From a president) Take good care of yourself. Set aside time for rest, relaxation and recreation.

(From a president) Learn how to turn it off when you have the opportunity. 24/7/365 will burn you out.

(From a president) Find ways for personal renewal, (i.e., yourself and the ones that love you).

(From a president) It is alright to say no and set limits for yourself.

(From a president) Having a strong support system of family members and old friends is immensely helpful.

(From a president) Don't neglect your family. Routines are important and you want your family around you once you are retired. I keep Sunday nights sacrosanct: we cook, listen to the blues and chill together. It is a good way to set up the rest of the week.

(From a president) There is life after the Presidency!! Prepare for it.

(From a provost) Make sure to take vacation.

### **Maintain Your Focus**

(From a president) Learn to live with ambiguity

(From a president) The best advice I received is to learn to differentiate between what takes time and what should take your time. The 'second shift' is the part of the job that you are aware of mentally when you get your first presidency, but perhaps not physically. You need to look at the whole week before your commit to an evening engagement, and you need to remember, if you go to an event two years running, you're going for life. So pick and choose, but be present and attentive throughout the event. A lot of presidents dip in and out of events, and sometimes that is necessary. But your community will appreciate your full attention for the duration. Get there on time (and early if possible) and plan your meals well! You don't want to be eating 'heavy hors d'oeuvres' every night.

(From a dean) I have two pieces of advice. At a CCAS conference, a dean of fifteen years provided his ten lessons learned. The one that stuck with me was dealing with the perpetual malcontents. Rather than devote eighty percent of a dean's time attempting to convince the twenty percent of complainers, focus eighty percent of one's time on the eighty percent who are cooperative. Some people will remain forever negative. Work with the compliant in order to move forward.

## **Keep Learning and Growing**

(From a president) Carefully study how and why other presidents failed. Often, this is simply because there is a gap between the perceptions and expectations of others. Work hard to stay out of these traps.

(From a president) Broaden what you read so that you can truly represent all the disciplines for which you are responsible and be more empathetic with their different needs. Stretch your mind to be a more effective decision maker.

(From a dean) I think the most inspirational thing I have heard was espoused by a former dean, then provost, now president of an institution, who spoke briefly at a conference I attended. His brief comments underscored how important it is to be a mentor, and how critical it is to be mentored in professional growth by a trusted person. Having a mentor who expresses confidence in you is a life-changer!

(From a dean) If you have the opportunity read the monthly journal for university trustees. It is filled with information on a national scale that trustees deal with. The journal has helped me understand and collaborate with our university trustees and better understand their views and concerns. It highlights big issues in higher education but a perspective you might not have.

(From a dean) Don't stop learning about being a dean. Keep up with news in The Chronicle, subscribe to a higher ed journal and/or newsletter, read books on academic leadership, attend leadership workshops. This newly acquired knowledge has helped me to avoid some problems and solve others. Some of my successes were due to ideas or background information that I acquired while a dean.

## **Additional Advice from Us**

It's not all about you – don't take things personally.

Protect your physical health as well as your mental health.

You have stewardship responsibilities for your campus...and also for yourself and those whom you love. Don't sacrifice the latter for the former. It will not have a good ending.

Learn what it is that you do not know (e.g., fund-raising skills) and then learn what you should or need to know about the subject (e.g., read, attend workshops, network with those who are successful).

Make time to keep up in your reading in your administrative area. It is easy to get so bogged down by the workload that you don't learn what is changing in the world outside your office.

Attend conferences and meetings of your administrative peers. It will help keep you current, show you what others are doing, give you ideas, and provide a sounding board for your frustrations and your ideas.

## Chapter 9: Some Final Thoughts on Leadership Effectiveness

This monograph has drawn on the insights of experienced deans, provosts, and presidents who offer advice to those new or aspiring to these roles. We now close with qualities we associate with effective higher education leaders, particularly in times of uncertainty and change, along with what may be the most important underlying theme throughout this work: character matters.

### Qualities of Effective Leaders

Over the course of each of our careers, we have had the opportunity to observe hundreds of senior higher education leaders in action, often under very challenging circumstances. In the process, we've been able to observe qualities that seem to contribute to their long term success. Here's our list offered in hopes that it may provide further insight into the type of leader you are or hope to be.

Our most effective leaders....

Honor the past without being a prisoner of it. To criticize the past is to criticize those who contributed to all that has transpired prior to your arrival. Stay focused on the future and the excitement that it offers for those who are sharing the journey.

Are opportunity focused, not problem focused. Effective leaders are not hand-wringers. They understand the challenges but their focus is on the opportunities that are before them.

Believe in themselves and those they are leading....and never pass up an opportunity to express their belief in the institution itself and all who comprise it to accomplish great things no matter what the obstacles.

Are artists who are able to paint bold and inspiring pictures of the future in which all can find themselves. In the process, they are comfortable in speaking to the hearts of those they leading as well as their intellects.

Are systems thinkers who see the whole and not just the parts and who know how to connect the dots on behalf of a shared vision and what it will take to achieve it.

Have the capacity to trust and be trusted.

Are able to mobilize both internal and external stakeholders on behalf of a unifying vision and strategy by connecting that vision to the worlds in which stakeholders live.

Focus on both the immediate and longer term in a way that helps them anticipate what's around the next corner. This means taking time to think and read as well as act.



Exhibit a sense of humility and an openness to listen, learn, and adjust based on new knowledge and insights.

Understand the concept of pace and base as it relates to institutional change. That is, the pace of institutional change is dependent on the ability of leaders to gain support from those stakeholders on whom the change depends for success. One can't be an effective drum major if the band isn't right behind you.

Are passionate about their work and communicate that passion regularly and personally as a reminder to all that, while the journey often involves difficult and challenging circumstances, at the end of the day we are collectively about the work of transforming lives and what could be more important!

### **The Most Important Underlying Theme: Character Matters**

In his book, *The Road to Character* (Random House, 2015), David Brooks contrasts résumé virtues with eulogy virtues. The former focuses on the positions one has held and the awards and honors and recognitions one has received. Higher education leaders generally rank high on résumé virtues. Their careers reflect advancement, visibility, and accolades. By contrast, eulogy virtues are often less visible. They reflect a person's honesty, compassion, caring, integrity, courage, humility, and commitment to something beyond personal happiness; something bigger than themselves. What we see over and over again across all of our respondents is an emphasis on the importance of higher education leaders having, above all else, strong eulogy virtues. In short, character matters.

We see this expressed in a wide variety of ways. One respondent advises leaders to stay focused on doing the right thing. Not the politically expedient thing. Not the thing least likely to offend powerful stakeholders, donors, or alums or negatively impact the institution's brand. Start with one fundamental question: What's the right thing? Many of our respondents spoke of the importance of transparency, trust, authenticity, giving credit to others, celebrating progress and those who contribute to it, honest and open communication, caring for others, including yourself and those whom you love. We believe that all of these qualities can be understood as elements of a leader's character.

In large decentralized institutions, bad things will occasionally happen, even during the tenure of highly effective leaders. Leaders will inevitably be judged, not simply based on the bad things that occur during their watch, but on how they respond. Are they decisive, unequivocal, and courageous? Do they anchor their decisions in the core values of the institution? Most important, do they reflect in both their words and actions the qualities of character that both Brooks and our respondents describe? Today's higher education environment is full of challenges, turbulence, and uncertainty, all of which can, in the heat of the moment, test a leader's character. We join our respondents in stressing that strong character may be a leader's most important quality.

We hope you have found within these pages rich new insights concerning higher education leadership and your current or future role. There's no doubt that the challenges confronting today's leaders can be daunting. This work is not for the timid or faint of heart. It will test you in ways that you may have never anticipated. However, it also offers the opportunity for you to grow in ways you never thought possible. Yes, this work can be exhausting and frustrating but it can also be joyful and rewarding, particularly if one never loses sight of the ultimate goal which is to advance human progress at both the individual and societal level. We can't imagine more important work to be done...and we wish you the very best as you chart your own leadership journey!

## Postscript

Our goal in undertaking this project was to ask presidents, provosts, and deans to share their best advice with those who are new or aspiring to these positions in hopes that it would contribute to their success. Our respondents offered deep insights into how one should approach a leadership career as well as key considerations in preparing to assume a new role. While this project has focused on the front end of the leadership journey, how a leader transitions out can have a profound impact on their leadership effectiveness as well as their legacy.

Leaders leave their positions for a variety of personal and institutional reasons. Some step away in order to pursue new challenges and opportunities. Others find that their strengths no longer align with what the campus or unit needs. Occasionally, leaders are asked to depart because they are no longer effective. Some get into their roles and find that administrative leadership is not for them. Still others find that they no longer have the energy or desire. And many reach a point where they feel they've accomplished what they set out to do and believe it's time to step away. The list goes on but no matter what the reason, leaders should think deeply about when and how they depart.

Effective leaders have strong self-awareness and pay close attention to monitoring their own enthusiasm for the work as well as their effectiveness. Above all, they are honest with themselves. Am I still as excited about this job as I once was? Is my base of support still sufficiently strong to allow me to be effective? Is the fit between my strengths and what the institution needs as strong as it once was? Is my health and stamina such that I can continue to handle the stress and demands? Are there other things in my life that require my attention in a way that distracts me from my work? Am I asking too much from those with whom I share my life? Is the new position that I'm considering likely to offer me new challenges and satisfactions?

Knowing *when* to leave is important but so is *how* you leave. Allow the institution to celebrate your contributions. Give credit. Don't use your departure as an opportunity to "settle scores." Think carefully about what you can do to prepare the path for your successor. Are there decisions that should *not* be left to your successor? Are there decisions that *should* be left to your successor? If you'll remain on campus, make a commitment to yourself and to your successor that you will stay out of their business. Resist editorializing about how your successor is doing.

Here are a few closing thoughts on transitioning out:

Resist defining yourself in terms of the position.

Realize that you had to live with the mistakes of your predecessor....and your successor will do the same. Be humble.

Remember that others will be impacted by your departure. Be sensitive to them.

And, as one of our respondents so eloquently expressed, “Remember it’s a job, not a crown!”

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