**November 5, 2015, Way Up Conference**

**Topic: LEARNING FROM OTHERS**

“Ever wonder what it takes to become a successful leader in higher education? You have the opportunity to learn from four successful female administrators from higher education. This experienced panel will share many valuable experiences they have had in their vibrant roles as higher education leaders. Participants will be encouraged to ask questions to help broaden their understanding of successful leadership.

**Pam Elliott Cain, Iowa State University**

**TALKING POINTS**

1. **Know yourself (longest, most important)**
2. **Understand your environment**
3. **Turn obstacles into opportunities**
4. **KNOW YOURSELF**

Know yourself – really know yourself and all of your warts. Don’t be too concerned about perfection: **absolutely no one is perfect**

Who were your role models? And why?

Leadership skills are more art than science. And leadership can be exhibited at all employment levels.

**Know yourself**

DO YOU KNOW:

* Your own values? Can you articulate them to someone else?
* What drives you? What inspires you?
* What satisfies you?
* How to describe your work ethic?
* Your strengths? Do you keep trying to enhance them?
* Your weaknesses? Do you work to improve them?
* What frustrates you? How you act when you are frustrated/angry?
* When to relax?
* When to back off?

ARE YOU:

* A good role model?
* Eager to absorb information?
* A continual learner?
* Innovative? Creative?
* Confident about your abilities? Are you overconfident?
* Concept oriented or detail/task driven? Can you do one without the other?
* An original thinker? Can you morph ideas quickly? Can you generate options quickly?
* Flexible in your thought processes?
* Strategic in your activities/decisions?
* Always up for a new challenge? Do you follow through with those challenges? Are you able to deliver?
* Willing to take the fall if things do not go as planned? Accountable?
* A master puzzle solver?
* Concerned with titles?
* Aware that your body language may send different messages than your mouth sends?

DO YOU:

* Think in the positive? About what might be possible?
* Embrace change? Does it motivate you?
* Set your sights high enough?
* Believe in your own judgment?
* Stretch yourself to do more?
* Learn from your all of your experiences?
* Gather the facts before you leap?
* Actively think about balancing your work life with your home life? Are they different?
* Always have to be the center of attention?
* Always have to win? Or to have the right answer?
* Wait for orders or do create your own path?
* Take action to direct your own future?
* Have an internal desire to be better? “Be all that you can be?”
* Push yourself more than others push you?
* Enjoy managing lots of variables?
* Know your limits?
* Think about what gossip does to your work environment? To you?
* Search for the better way?
* Take the paths of least resistance? Or do you go down the right road for the right reasons?
* Treat others well? Take the high road?
* Keep your job meaningful?

CAN YOU:

* Handle dynamic and maybe volatile situations?
* Envision what you want to accomplish in the future? Days, weeks, months, years?
* Paint your future in your mind? On paper? Do you have life goals?
* Adjust your own “Attitude”?
* See the end game for all of your projects?
* Let yourself evolve to be a better person, a better leader?

**Know how you interact with others**

DO YOU:

* Play well with others?
* Embrace diversity in the people around you?
* Engage others?
* Listen to others?
* Inspire others? Do you provide hope?
* Help them help themselves to become better?
* Understand how your words/actions/attitude impact others around you?
* Show excitement for the accomplishments of others? Do you tell them they did a good job?
* Provide guidance? Information?
* Realize individual talents or just make the individuals fit your mold?
* Encourage teamwork?
* Make it easy for others to see who you are?

ARE YOU:

* Supportive? A mentor? Willing to share your personal experiences? Both good and bad?
* Able to delegate effectively?
* Able to sense when someone is uncomfortable with you? Can you engage them when you think they are uncomfortable?
1. **UNDERSTAND YOUR ENVIRONMENT**

Observe your surroundings both physical, hierarchical, political and emotional. Scrutinize how people interact around you. Not everyone reacts the same as you or anyone else.

Be very aware of everything going on around you.

Understand how your job fits into your immediate world and learn how it fits within the bigger picture. Need broad based understanding of the levels of your organization and understand how those other “worlds” interact/intersect with your world.

So how do you do all of this??

Listen to everything (with both ears). You need the whole picture. Listen to what is said, listen for what is not said, and read between those lines.

Talk with people, all people. Learn from others.

Offer up your assistance and your knowledge (knowledge is power – share it). Assist others to solve problems, help others solve their own problems.

Be open to controversy. But--

Pick your battles. Not every disagreement/issue needs to be fought. Know when to “let it go”

Knowing yourself and your surroundings, you can DISCOVER your special niche AND TAKE ACTION.

1. **TURN YOUR OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

What do you consider obstacles to your success?

* Other people?
* The system?
* A difficult boss?
* An impossible project?
* Unattainable goals?
* Discrimination?
* Inefficiencies - Decisions by committee?

Do you:

* Evaluate each of those obstacles individually or
* Lump them all together as an insurmountable obstacle?

Offer you some suggestions:

* ATTITUDE. Be as positive as possible.
* Outline the issues to find a way to eliminate or change the obstacle. Provide a starting point.
* Start small. One step at a time. Have patience. Gather input and information. Accomplish small progressive wins. Not everything will come at the same time. Change is often a gradual process.
* Challenge the process.
* Consult with others. Ask questions, lots of them. Most people like providing input, but all input is not the same. Learn to tell the difference. Again, “Listen with both ears.” Make sure you understand the input.
* Create an open and friendly environment for discussion. Build trust. Be frank and honest. Be as objective as possible. Be thoughtful.
* If you take on the lead, embrace it with all the gusto you can muster. Do the best possible job you can. Be open to criticism.
* Avoid pointing fingers -- Avoid directives/mandates -
* Make things easy to understand. Explain issues in a way a 12 year old would understand. Sometimes complicated matters need to be broken down into smaller components so that everyone is on the same page. Take out the jargon.

Be good to yourself. Get to know yourself, your environment, and your unique contributions, and then create your opportunities. Reach for the stars.