

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING FEMALE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Lon Moeller, Associate Provost and Dean of University  
College, the University of Iowa



## THE LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- The need to articulate the value of a college/university education.
- Changing student expectations.
- Students entering college/university with varying degrees of academic preparation.
- The challenge of providing an accessible and affordable college education.
- The tension between freedom of expression, academic freedom, and maintaining a welcoming/respectful campus environment.
- Changing funding models (Responsibility Centered Management, performance-based funding, flat state appropriations, etc.)



# SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

- There is a difference between “management” (present) and “leadership” (future).
- “Leadership” does not always correlate with position or “rank.”
- Good leaders understand what it means to be a good “follower.”
- There are multiple ways to build/expand leadership skills – the value of “competency.”
- Good leaders learn from their mistakes and accept advice and coaching from others (we all need mentors and role models).
- It’s OK to delegate – you can’t “fight every fire.”
- There is value in “leading by example” – Being “Iowa Nice” and keeping a sense of humor.
- Identify the values that are important to you and be yourself.



# HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP – ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

- “Be thankful for anyone in your life who’s a problem” – you can learn from “problem people.”
  - “...Most of the successes experienced by administrators are group successes.”
  - “Truly effective administrators learn to pick their battles.”
  - “...[A]dministrators achieve their greatest successes through the achievements of others.”
  - “Good administrators lead by example.”
  - “Good administrators are usually ‘sequential taskers’ rather than multitaskers” – giving other people the time they need, “not simply the time that is available.”
- ✓ Buller, “Zen and the Art of Higher Ed Administration” *Academic Leader* (September 2008) ([http://www2.acenet.edu/resources/chairs/docs/Buller\\_Zen.pdf](http://www2.acenet.edu/resources/chairs/docs/Buller_Zen.pdf))



# MY EXPERIENCE WITH FEMALE BOSSES

- Three university presidents, and six immediate supervisors.
- **Workplace/leadership lessons:**
  - ✓ The value of working as a team (collaborative leadership) and understanding individual differences.
  - ✓ The willingness to seek out and consider constructive feedback.
  - ✓ The importance of understanding an organization's mission, and working for a purpose.
  - ✓ The significance of adaptation and professional development.
  - ✓ The importance of building "thoughtful consensus" when making decisions.
  - ✓ The benefits of recognizing and praising good work.
  - ✓ The importance of "facilitating the accomplishments of others."
  - ✓ The value of prioritizing competing demands between work and family.
  - ✓ The importance of building a professional network of mentors and colleagues.



# SUPPORTING WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- A leader needs to know how she makes a difference in her work.
- A leader's work must be both challenging and rewarding (identifying new and interesting opportunities).
- A leader's work should be recognized and appreciated.
- A leader must understand that she can (and must) take time out of the work day to think about "the big picture" – again, it is OK to delegate.
- A leader must be encouraged to further develop her management/leadership "tool kit."
- A leader must continually build her professional network and find different types of mentors at various points in her career.



## “CHAMPIONING” DIRECT REPORTS

- Regular face-to-face meetings.
- Honest discussions about career aspirations.
- Identify leadership development programs.
- Advocate for and direct career opportunities.
- Reserve work time to think “strategically.”
- Identify additional mentors.
- Provide access to professional networks.



## UNIVERSITY OF IOWA INITIATIVES

- Central Midwest Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) ([www.centralmidwestherc.org](http://www.centralmidwestherc.org)).
- Annual UI Health Sciences and Engineering Women Faculty Development Conference: <https://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/WIMSConference/>.
- Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Program: <https://wrac.uiowa.edu/programs-and-services/initatives/>.
- Gender bias included in unconscious bias training for search committees.
- UI’s “Build a Career | Build a Life” initiatives: [http://provost.uiowa.edu/files/provost.uiowa.edu/files/wysiwyg\\_uploads/Build%20a%20Career%20Build%20a%20Life%20Document\\_9-30-16\\_0.pdf](http://provost.uiowa.edu/files/provost.uiowa.edu/files/wysiwyg_uploads/Build%20a%20Career%20Build%20a%20Life%20Document_9-30-16_0.pdf).
- Kathleen Dore – Henry B. Tippie Women’s MBA Leadership program (<https://tippie.uiowa.edu/future-graduate-students/mba-programs/full-time-mba/beyond-classroom/womens-leadership-program>).
- New department chair training.
- Administrative fellowships.
- Big Ten Academic Alliance Academic Leadership Program.
- Be Better@Iowa (student initiative using Gallup’s Strengths) (<http://bebetter.uiowa.edu/>)

