Dr. Walter Bumphus

The CEO of American Association of Community Colleges comes to campus, a home of his own, to present a wonderful speech about the ten lessons of leadership.

“Are leaders born, or made? What do you believe your legacy to believe? You are old enough to have a legacy.”

Leadership in the 21st Century

To be a leader, some characteristics you should have are to understand missions, effective advocacy, administrative skills, personal, and interpersonal connections. Good to Great by Jim Collins has led him to care more so about “we” and “us” rather than “me” and “my.” Management is doing things right, but leadership is doing the right thing.

Leadership Lesson #1: You have to know who you are as a leader and as a person.

As a Dean of Students at the age of 24 years old, “hopefully I look a little professional to you, but I wasn’t always like that.” Captain of basketball team, president of his fraternity, he learned how to be a leader. In the 60’s he spoke of the need to have black professors, black staff, and a black cheerleaders. “Well, I think cheerleaders were more important,” he jokes. On the request to establish black leaders at a college, he and his wife were actually invited to be a leader for the College.
“I did not choose higher education, it chose me.”

Speaking of a challenge, Dr. Bumphus accidentally assigned 2 African students on the same assignment, whose countries were actually at war at the time. Later he was told to that there would be a streaker that night, and questioned why that was important to him,

“Well, you’re probably the only professor to run and catch him.”

Dr. Bumphus’s reply, “Well what do I do when I catch him?”

Once inspiring others as a leader, people will lean towards one as an experienced leader to take initiative and solve problems. Working at UT was an opportunity for Dr. Bumphus to make a difference in others as a first generation college student.

“Leaders have to be humble. You have to think more of the organization than yourself.”

Lesson #2: Hire great people and support professional development.

Surround yourself with greatness. In Louisiana, he worked with over 5,000 employees, and he is most proud of the 26 who continued to become College Presidents, and Professors.

“It’s hard to hire folks who will surpass you. Who are more attractive than you. - Marry someone who is smarter than you, guys.”

Dr. Bumphus, a Starbucks lover, follows Howard Schultz’s ideal and believes that “people want to be a part of a culture.”

Leadership Lesson #3: Develop your system of Communications

Be transparent. The legacy is important, but references are more important.

“You want to be able to communicate in that people want to hire you.”

Working for President Obama, he was part of a work force initiation in training and learned the importance of communication, along with the power of education.

Leadership Lesson #4: Inspect What you Expect

You never want to micromanage, but be on top of what is going on. Send an email, or text message to keep people aware.

Questions:

You talked about switching careers, How did you get that transitional skill?

Most of the jobs I got, were having the opportunity to move up.

Sheryl Sandburg describe the industry as a jungle jim, how do you describe your greatest challenge?

At 45, he had an opportunity to become CEO of a private health company, and I had to think, “How would I be as a corporate CEO?” I took it as a challenge. The more successful I became, the more I traveled, I am over 4 million miles! The culture is different. I had to fire 47 people. I never had that experience, it was a shock. The outcomes are different, and the accountabilities are different.

How do you feel about removing the instate tuition for undocumented students?

I like what the president has proposed, and I think we need to do more for immigration. We must have others who have the courage to just do the right things for people.
Leadership Lesson #5: Continually Tweak and Refine your vision coupled with precise execution.

Check in, and make sure you are doing things right. Internships are always valuable, paid or not.

“Volunteer, and get that experience.”

Leadership Lesson #6: Minimize your enemies, Develop Nurture, and Respect relationships

“Our friends will come and go, but your enemies will accumulate.”

Try to create a win-win opportunity. This relationship makes for a higher value employee.

Leadership Lesson #7: Never let them see you sweat and have an unrelenting work ethic — Getting the position is just the beginning.

“No one wants to be around people with a sour disposition, but positive people, a team player.”

If you are working hard, people will notice. These performers will figure it out, they will.

Leadership Lesson #8: Develop a passion for what you do.

One of Dr. Walter’s favorites. When you are passionate you gain confidence of what you are doing. “Confidence means the world.” You can’t tell someone with confidence what they cannot do.

Leadership Lesson #9: What makes your talent and skills unique?

Why should you stand out? Why should you be appointed to something?

“Having a reputation for being cute, won’t get it. At one point I had a six pack, now I have a full case.”

Can you perform? People will talk about you. Make sure you don’t blow that opportunity.

Leadership Lesson #10: Keep a balanced life, have fun, and don’t stay too long!

Besides the University of Texas, do not stay too long anywhere, keep growing and move forward.

“Make sure you take your vacations. Sometimes things work better without you. Focus on your health, and being the best person you can be.”