CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP FORMATION

InSights

Adaptive Leadership: Paying Attention to What Matters Most

STEVE E. TITUS, J.D., PH.D.

INTRODUCTION:

Congratulations on weathering 2009, one of the most tumultuous and unpredictable periods the business sector has known. The past year was more than the cool breeze of the winds of change. This was different, transcending common clichés around the persistent pace of change. It was a time that called into question what we knew to be our best intellectual know-how for getting things done. It assaulted convention and threatened what we believed mattered most.

The past year challenged many of us to pay attention in new ways to what matters most for our companies. For many, the challenges were more difficult to clearly identify and thus required new learning and ways of doing things. Additionally, the answers to our problems seemed to stretch beyond the expertise and solutions we relied on in the past.

So what are you paying attention to in your company? How are you paying attention? What is the quality of leadership within you and your company when the plan falls apart? How has your company adapted to its challenges?

During my decade in senior and chief executive roles, I came to appreciate more deeply the wisdom in Dwight Eisenhower's famous quote: "In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." He knew the dangers of leadership, and he seemed to know that the capacity to improvise, to identify and respond to adaptive challenges was essential to success. Eisenhower knew leadership was dangerous work, and he seemed to know what to pay attention to in the harshness of it all.

Indeed, no plan can foresee the many obstacles and changing conditions that people will face in the time it takes to implement strategy, let alone when the strategy is out the window (Lowney, 2009). The past 18 months of a pressure packed external environment and shifting economic and political landscapes are clear testaments to this.

What once were technical problems, local or targeted economies, routine market corrections, responses to kinks or abnormalities in the supply chain, and the like, have quickly given way to adaptive challenges, interconnected and interdependent global economies, chaotic and improbable

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SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

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PENNY KOCH-PATTERSON

In my yoga practice, my instructor regularly talks about the concept of "drishti". The Sanskrit word literally means "vision" or "insight", and in yoga, drishti is the point of focus where the gaze rests during meditation. Focusing on a drishti aids concentration; it is easier to become distracted when the eyes are wandering all over the room. Each yoga pose has a specific drishti, which also aids in alignment.

Whether you have ever practiced yoga or not, you know what it is like to feel distracted when your eyes wander all over the room. And as leaders, we can not afford to be distracted.

The concept of drishti has permeated other areas of my life beyond the yoga studio. Spring has arrived, the natural light has brightened, and my gaze has changed. Professionally and personally, my "point of focus" has provided greater concentration, balance, strength and alignment. I am seeing with a different lens, and as I read the articles in this issue of *InSights*, the ideas represented resonate with my own leadership journey. I hope they resonate with your journey, too.

The articles in this issue of InSights bring focus to what leaders should be paying attention to now. Steve Titus returns as guest contributor to help us better understand the nuances of adaptive leadership challenges versus the technical problems that tend to absorb our time. Meenakshi Rishi, a faculty member in our Economics department analyzes the linkages between entrepreneurship and a country's economic growth. Longtime CLF faculty member Greg Magnan shares his findings of his review of over 100 leader interviews. In line with Pink's thinking, they point to the importance of relationships and the need for organizations to create a sense of greater meaning. In "Questions from the Balcony" Seattle University's president, Fr. Stephen Sundborg responds to the tough, yet crucial dilemma of how to sustain the funding of core organizational values, such as philanthropy, when overall organizational profits are down. Also, in our Alumna Spotlight article, Limei Fan ('09) from the Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Institute discusses how the Leadership Executive MBA program has benefitted her work as the Chief Administrative Officer in the Infectious Disease Science Program at the Institute. I hope you enjoy this issue of *InSights*. In addition to being informative, perhaps you will find that it helps you to look with new eyes at your organization and the world around you and that you feel greater concentration, balance, strength and alignment.

Namaste,

Penny Koch-Patterson
Associate Director, Center for Leadership Formation

100 Leader Interviews: A Synthesis


GREG MAGNAN, PH.D.

CEOs and presidents. Governors and mayors. Executive directors and founders. Senators and head coaches. SVPs and COOs. University presidents and civil servants. Archbishops and judges. For-profits, not-for-profits, NGOs, governments, hospitals, and churches. Since the inception of the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) in the Albers School, we've asked students to interview leaders in our community. After 11 years, the list of interviewees is very impressive, holding the range of positions and representing the organizations listed above. In total we've interviewed over 100 leaders, with several graciously accepting the invitation multiple times (Sally Jewell, CEO of REI, leads with three).

What a pleasure it is for me to participate in the process of learning the tenets of leadership and lessons of these leaders. ELP alumni may recall our efforts to summarize the results of the interviews—brainstorm what we heard and narrow the list of leadership characteristics and traits until we identified the vital few. What follows is my attempt to synthesize all of the interviews; I wish I would have had the vision 11 years ago to keep better notes! Thanks to all who took the time to schedule, meet, interview, organize and share the lessons so thoughtfully with this community of leaders. Here goes…

In the relatively short window of ELP and leader interviews, we've experienced the dot.com boom (and bust), the events and ramifications of September 11, the bubble of the 2000s, and now the economic effects of its bursting. While the economy and national psyche seem to be forever in cycles, the interviews reveal that the tenets of leadership are relatively constant. Certainly, the emphasis changes—recall the conversations after Enron and the focus on ethics and integrity. The phrase, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" comes to mind. As the economy and world change (ever faster it seems), the essence of leadership remains stable. For simplicity, I've arranged the findings into **four Ps: people, passion, priorities, and perspective.**

I haven't considered this before, but leaders need people. The obvious reason...so they can lead! The others are far more nuanced. Consistent across all leaders, the interviews reveal **people** to be, by far, the most common theme. The leaders share a *respect* for those around them and the many affected by their decisions, often appearing as a *willingness to listen* or a practice of *getting out and talking* with employees in their own spaces. For direct reports, leaders maintain a desire to enhance their *development* and provide room to grow. While some had mentors in their careers, almost all are actively serving as a *mentor* for someone else.

Addressing team composition and who should be "on the bus," not one of the 100 leaders express a desire to be surrounded by a cadre of "yes men"; leaders need those around them to be confident, challenging assumptions and generating ideas. It is widely acknowledged that leaders—and the organization—are best served by a strong team.

Resonantly, these leaders truly care about the many they lead. Caring, in its various forms, consistently appears in the leader presentations and I am struck by how many of the leaders demonstrate compassion for employees and involved stakeholders. In this regard, the leaders that were also founders feel most strongly a special duty to ensure that their people—and by extension their families—are employed and fulfilled.

Leadership is clearly a demanding, difficult, and humbling endeavor. Not surprisingly, our subjects observe the importance of **passion** in effective leadership. Given the broad responsibility of leadership positions, a passion for the task at hand is necessary. Serving multiple stakeholders and balancing their various demands requires a store of energy, renewed and restored by passion for the organization's mission. Challenges are many and days are long. Doing what you love provides the extra push needed to face the next crisis. Several leaders note that it can be lonely at the top—passion for a mission, for people or for personal values serves as the wellspring.

> THE LEADERS SHARE A RESPECT FOR THOSE AROUND THEM AND THE MANY AFFECTED BY THEIR DECISIONS.

Earlier I mentioned that the immediate post-Enron years saw a rise in the discussion of ethics and the importance of integrity to leadership. This is not to say, however, that pre-Enron and more recently that leaders are not concerned about ethical behavior. The **priorities** of the leaders interviewed actually haven't changed much, and continue to begin with *ethics* and end with *integrity*. In almost every year, at least one leader uses the term "zero tolerance" to describe their position regarding ethical violations. A very close second to ethics is the priority

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Adaptive Leadership CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

market behavior, the critical condition of behemoths such as GM and Chrysler, and the death of giants such as Washington Mutual and Lehman Brothers.

It has been over 30 years since James MacGregor Burns wrote his groundbreaking Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Leadership*. In it he observed that "one of the universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership" (Burns, 1978, p. 1). Despite the cravings and the hunger, despite hundreds of years of observation and decades of serious leadership scholarship, Burns observed also that leadership remained "one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (Burns, 1978, p. 2).

The study and scholarship of leadership in the 30 plus years since Burns seminal work has advanced exponentially. Yet, the art and practice of leadership is no less dangerous today than it was during Eisenhower's day, and Burns' observations are no less true today. So, what is a leader to do in these shifting times? Well, lead, but with renewed sensibilities and reexamined assumptions about what it means to lead in the present context of this new commons.

The contributions of Ron Heifetz and his colleagues in the area of adaptive leadership represent some of the most important leadership developments since Burns. It offers leaders and organizations a practical and applied approach to leadership for improbable times. The aim of the article is to highlight some of the basic elements and framework of adaptive leadership as business leaders continue to reflect on and respond to new realities.

IMPROVISE AND EXPERIMENT:

At its core, adaptive leadership is about paying attention to and creating what matters most. Sounds simple enough. However, paying attention to what matters most isn't as easy as it sounds. In fact, it is a bold and radical leadership act because it most often challenges conventional assumptions about leadership. Moreover, it is sure to expose vulnerabilities in the system and in those leading and influencing the system.

> ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP ASKS TWO DIFFERENT, YET FUNDAMENTAL, QUESTIONS: FIRST, "HOW WELL IS THE LEADER CREATING SPACE FOR LEADERSHIP TO OCCUR?" SECOND, "WHAT'S NEEDED NOW?"

Adaptive leadership holds the development and exercise of leadership as an art and practice. It is a systems view of leadership concerned with developing cultures of leadership within organizations. Adaptive leadership is grounded in the belief that exercising the leadership required to change (and thrive) means guiding people and organizations through adaptive challenges — the ones that question long held beliefs and that demand new ways of doing things. Widespread leadership capacity, not authority, is often the key to whether or not an organization can close the gap between where it is and where it aspires to be.

For example, Heifetz speaks of one large international retailer who realized that its hierarchical structure was blocking its growth. Its management culture inhibited teamwork, individual leadership and company growth. Orders came from the chief executive, and people followed. There was a dependence on authority and little autonomous decision making. Leaders behaved as though "this is *our* organization," and everyone else behaved as though "this is *their* organization," with most quick to blame others for problems (www.cambridge-leadership.com).

The adaptive issues centered on establishing and cultivating a culture of leadership. To do this necessarily required challenging long held beliefs about structure, decision making and authority, behaviors, rewards, conflict and so on. One goal of adaptive leadership is to orchestrate conflict rather than avoid or eliminate it or use it as a weapon to sabotage people or the organization. This framework mobilizes the adaptive work of the organization, allowing it to distinguish between adaptive issues and technical problems.

Technical problems are those that are clearly defined, and while potentially difficult to fix, the solutions, know-how and expertise exist within the current repertoire. Technical problems can be managed and usually fall to someone with the authority to address them. Adaptive challenges are often fuzzy and difficult to clearly identify. They involve changing hearts and minds and often are championed by someone who cares, but who may not have the authority to impose change. Adaptive challenges imply having to learn new ways and potentially choose between what appear to be contradictory values (Heifetz, Grashow, Linsky, 2009).

A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP:

The adaptive organization encourages improvisation and values smart risk-taking and experimentation. A common leadership question is "how well is the leader leading?" Adaptive leadership asks two different, yet fundamental, questions: First, "how well is the leader creating space for leadership to occur?" Second, "what's needed now?"

Many assert that leadership is fundamentally about achieving results. Yet the dynamic and unpredictable landscape facing business and other sectors today suggests that achieving

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results, particularly on a mere quarter-to-quarter basis, is no longer enough. Today, growing the capacity to thrive in any business cycle is the real work of leadership. Those who can see and respond to adaptive challenges will be the companies (and countries) that thrive in the future.

Adaptive Leadership operates on three core beliefs:

- Leadership can be learned. It is about understanding, behaviors and actions. It is not an inherent set of traits such as charisma.
- The adaptability of organizations depends on having widespread leadership that can come from anywhere within an organization, not just from those in top positions of authority.
- Because adaptive change generates resistance, exercising leadership can be both difficult and dangerous.

Change produces disequilibrium for people and organizations, so it is important in the adaptive leadership process to regulate a productive zone of disequilibrium through observation, interpretation and intervention. The focus should be on building ongoing capacity for change; developing a shared understanding of what exercising leadership entails, which beliefs and behaviors are essential and which must change or be jettisoned; support for smart risk-taking to build the capacity to adapt and create the desired future (choice v. circumstance); and recognizing what the organization and its people must give up in order to move forward. Resistance to change is most often about loss, no matter how promising the future seems. The productive zone of disequilibrium will be determined, in part, by the extent to which the loss is tolerable.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Mobilizing adaptive work to enhance the collective capacity to pay attention to and create what matters most is work of adaptive leadership. Leadership is an intimate human endeavor, which is what makes it dangerous, necessary and noble work.

The craving and hunger for the practice of courageous and creative leadership remains fierce. Adaptive leadership offers a more spacious approach to leadership that can embrace the complexity of systemic, adaptive work and enhance the practice of creating new realities (Parks, 2005). It is an offer worth considering, especially when one may be leading with no more than a question in hand (Heifetz, 1994).

KEY ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World (Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow, 2009)

Leadership Without Easy Answers (Ron Heifetz, 1994)

Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002)

Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World (Sharon Daloz Parks, 2005)

Real Leadership: Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges (Dean Williams, 2005)

Cambridge Leadership Associates – www.cambridge-leadership.com

Center for Public Leadership, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

STEVE TITUS is founder and president of Magis Leadership Group, an executive coaching and leadership formation practice committed to the success, support and sustainability of leaders in the demanding and dangerous work of executive leadership. He is a veteran higher education leader holding executive roles at Gustavus Adolphus College, Pacific Lutheran University and Midland Lutheran College, where he served as president and distinguished professor of leadership and change from 2002-2007. Prior to his executive roles, Steve served as a U.S. Army officer and as a tenured professor of leadership studies and organizational behavior in Minnesota, where he founded and directed the first leadership studies program within the state university system. Steve and his wife, Sara, live in Tacoma, Washington with their two daughters.

Upcoming Events

ALBERS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS EXECUTIVE SPEAKER SERIES

(Free and open to the public)

Time: 5:30 to 6:30 PM
Location: Pigott Auditorium

No RSVP Necessary

- **Thursday, March 4**
  Deanna Oppenheimer
  CEO, UK Retail Banking, Barclays Bank
- **Monday, May 3**
  Jeff Raikes
  CEO, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Monday, May 10**
  Robert Cremin
  Chairman, Esterline Technologies

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

June 13, 2010
Location: Key Arena

CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP FORMATION RELATED EVENTS

Leadership EMBA and Executive Leadership Program Information Sessions

Email EMBA@seattleu.edu to RSVP

- **Saturday, March 20**
  10 a.m. - 12 noon
- **Wednesday, April 21**
  4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday, May 11**
  5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

All sessions are held on SU's Campus
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Entrepreneurship, Economic Growth and Institutions


MEENAKSHI RISHI, Ph.D.

The association between entrepreneurship and economic growth is a relatively new topic of study within the entrepreneurship literature. Entrepreneurs are innovators, knowledge producers, and job creators. The Kauffman Foundation Association reports that firms that are less than five years old are responsible for almost all of the private sector job-growth in the US. This link between entrepreneurship and growth is even more important during the current global recession. Historically speaking companies such as FedEx, Apple, and Microsoft were created in economic downturns and became growth drivers of the economy.

Does the beneficial association between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth hold across a sample of countries, rich and poor? Surprisingly, only a few studies have focused on investigating the entrepreneurship-growth linkages across countries. This relatively sparse line of research has largely concluded that the impact of entrepreneurial activity on economic growth varies with the *stage of economic development* of a country. While entrepreneurial activity has a positive effect on the economic growth of rich (as defined by per capita income) countries, it has a negative effect in the case of poor countries. This implies that entrepreneurial activities create leakages in the system and are value-reducing activities for poor countries. Are entrepreneurs in lesser developed countries quite simply engaging in activities that have low growth potential? Is this counter-intuitive conclusion the outcome of ignoring the impact of institutions in an economy? These questions along with what can be done at a policy level to unleash the growth potential of entrepreneurship have largely been ignored by many scholars.

I recently examined this under-explored issue with my colleague Dr., N. Chipalkatti by studying the associations between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth for a sample of 37 countries that included high income as well as low income countries[1]. In contrast to existing studies, we anticipated that the institutional environment may play an important and significant role in mediating the association between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth. As such, the inverse relationship between growth and entrepreneurial activity in poor countries might reflect poor institutional quality and not the "wrong" kind of entrepreneurial activity, assuming all else is constant. We utilized two variables as indicators of institutional quality[1] the existence of public corruption in the country and the depth and quality of the banking sector

Our analysis of the data indicated that a well-developed financial sector does mediate the positive linkage between entrepreneurship and economic growth over the sample of 37 countries examined. This suggests that even for poor countries with an average level of financial development in the banking sector, entrepreneurial activities are growth producing. Therefore, the impact of entrepreneurial activity on economic growth varies with the *stage of financial sector development* of a country. Surprisingly, the existence of corruption does not impede the beneficial impact of entrepreneurial activity on growth within the sample of countries examined. The results have implications for the recent focus on improving governance in poor countries. If entrepreneurs have the potential to unleash economic growth, their activities should be complemented by sound macro policies and a healthy institutional environment specifically directed towards improvements in financial sector quality.

This raised a related research question — what factors encourage entrepreneurial activity in countries? Therefore, in a second paper, we examined the determinants of entrepreneurial activity across a sample of countries, distinguishing between formal and informal entrepreneurship. While formal entrepreneurship or business entry involves a new business venture that is formally registered and is a separate legal entity, informal entrepreneurs are typically early stage ventures or nascent entrepreneurs in the start-up phase. We observed that formal entrepreneurial activities are likely to be located in urban communities and spurred by sound infrastructure, the presence of an existing cluster of small and medium enterprises and the absence of bureaucratic red-tape.

Interestingly, our findings suggest that both formal and informal types of entrepreneurial activities are bolstered

ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES ARE BOLSTERED IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT EMPHASIZES SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND HAS A VIBRANT SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY, REGARDLESS *OF THE STAGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNTRY.*

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in an environment that emphasizes scientific research and has a vibrant scientific community, regardless *of the stage of economic development of a country*. The evidence points to a spill over of knowledge from the scientific community to the entrepreneurial sector. This result is an insight with important implications for entrepreneurship policy. Developing science and technology policies, or encouraging technology clusters around universities, can directly influence the level of entrepreneurial activity in an economy. These policies need to be complemented by an institutional focus on financial sector development in order to benefit economic growth.

1. Do Public Governance and the Depth of Financial Intermediation Impact the Entrepreneurship-Growth Relationship?" (with N. Chipalkatti), *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, Volume 2, No.1, 2010

MEENAKSHI RISHI is an associate professor in Economics at Seattle University. She has taught previously at the College of Business Administration, Ohio Northern University. Dr. Rishi is a member of the American Economic Association (AEA) and the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economic Profession (CSWEP). She teaches International Political economy, Asian Economic Development, and Macroeconomics. Her scholarly work focuses on capital flight, institutional approaches to development, International finance, and pedagogy. Her publications include articles in the *Journal of Development Studies*, *IMF Survey*, *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, and the *Journal of Education for Business*. Dr. Rishi has reviewed papers for the *Journal of Developing Areas* and *World Development* among others.

100 Leader Interviews: A Synthesis

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of *performance*—getting the job done, meeting the targets, fulfilling objectives, etc.; leaders are very much aware that the organizations they lead must meet expectations. This was true regardless of type of organization—the non-profit leaders are fully aware of their need to fulfill the mission, coaches are aware that they have to win (at least some of their games!), and government officials are aware that their constituencies are watching.

Priorities around *life and work* are less clearly defined and fellow ELP faculty member, Sharon Lobel's "happy workaholic" designation is well-represented. But so, too, is the recognition that leaders have lives outside of work. Some leave work by a certain hour to have time with family. Others do the same so their employees can "safely" leave to be with their family or community. Many express the desire to *give back*, either through work or using their gifts outside of work. Too many to count are the leaders who, incredibly, leverage their leadership ability to serve their communities beyond their (very full) day jobs. I suppose that is passion and priority together.

Finally, our interviewees stress the need for **perspective** in leadership. The lessons are wide-ranging. Failure is good, as long as they are new failures. Our leaders are not defined by their jobs, but by our values. Several make the point that if the organization doesn't feel right, move to another. Many leaders give permission to have fun, to make sure to enjoy the journey. Others remind that abilities should be directed toward the Commons and making the world a better place for all; literally we are encouraged to change the world.

Regarding motivation, some leaders naturally step in to lead, to fill the void. Others note an experience in their life or comment from a mentor convincing them of their gifts and leadership potential. While most of the leaders demonstrate humility, all of the interviewers can tell when the leader being interviewed is not being humble.

Having spent time with all of this information, the ultimate leadership lesson is that ***people*** matter most. Leaders lead in many ways, but they always lead people; we are watching our leaders, taking cues in tough times and good. Our best leaders are able to channel their passions, prioritize actions and distractions, and bring a healthy dose of perspective to bear on the challenges of leadership. Timeless lessons, indeed.

GREG MAGNAN, PH.D. Greg Magnan, an associate professor of operations management teaches courses in supply chain management, operations management, operations strategy, technology and integrated organizations. Greg received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University and has published in the Journal of Supply Chain Management and Production and Operations Management. Greg recently completed a major study for the Center for Advanced Purchasing Studies (CAPS) titled "Supply Chain Management: Benefits, Bridges and Barriers."

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Questions from the Balcony

Each edition of *InSights* includes a question from local business leaders and C-level Executives. Questions answered, provide viewpoints based on the research and work of two Albers School of Business & Economics Faculty.

Question: As a leader, how do you sustain the funding of core organizational values such as staff development, educational reimbursement and philanthropic giving when profits are down?

ANSWER: SHARON LOBEL, Ph.D.

Certainly frills should be cut when an organization faces a threat to its very survival. Rather than assume which investments are frills and announce they will be discontinued, leaders should always solicit employees' input on decisions that have the potential to affect morale and commitment. Numerous surveys have shown that what really matters to employees is a culture based on respect, much more than any bundle of programs. Taking away programs in a culture where people do not feel valued simply results in one more example of how "They" don't care about "Us". Obvious discrepancies between executive compensation and employee salaries will make it even more difficult for employees to accept the necessity of sacrifice because of declining profits. Difficult times are no reason to reduce investments in creating and sustaining a culture of respect, especially because many of these investments don't actually cost anything. Every leader should be a role model for how to show respect—saying "thank you," recognizing accomplishments, taking interest in people's lives, and inspiring others to deliver on their dreams.

Even when leaders do the right things, organizations can be negatively affected by environmental factors. Again, leaders need to solicit input on how to achieve greater organizational efficiency while maintaining a commitment to people as the most valuable assets. We have discovered that when leaders ask the right question, they are more likely to energize employees to offer innovative solutions. For example, there is a big difference between asking "How can we cut costs?" and "How can we save jobs?" Or between "Which programs should be cut?" and "How can we best demonstrate our support for you and your community?"

SHARON LOBEL is a Professor of Management at Seattle University. She earned her doctoral degree from Harvard University. She has taught at the University of Michigan and at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is a research fellow for the Center on Work and Family at Boston College. She was an Associate Editor of *Human Resource Management* (1993 -1998) and a member of the editorial board of *Academy of Management Journal* (1993 -1999). Sharon is a widely-published scholar and has often been quoted in the media.

ANSWER: FR. STEPHEN SUNDBORG

The core organizational values we strive to continue to fund at Seattle University when the economy impacts us negatively are somewhat different from other institutions. Our challenges would be investment in faculty and staff development, maintaining very significant benefits for employees including full tuition remission for themselves and their children, providing mission and ministry opportunities, making available additional financial aid to students, etc. We have found the faculty and staff to be so committed to the university's mission and its students that they are willing to make some sacrifices in their own compensation and to be more efficient in their work with reduced positions if they know how the savings are being used for which they are sacrificing. An important step we took, which did not cost us financially but which allowed the staff to be more involved in the mission, was to put in place a policy which allows staff to use work time for engagement in volunteer service along the lines of service we advocate for and make possible for our students. The successful capital campaign, concluding at the same time as the economic crisis, yielded us some opportunities for moving forward positively with projects which would not have otherwise been possible. This has helped sustain core values. When donors invest in education for foster students, for community nurses helping with homelessness, in community engagement with our own neighborhood, in global education, etc., the core values of the university are strengthened for all. It may have been easier to sustain the core organizational values in the shorter term when the economic crisis was more felt, because everyone was willing to pitch in with a need so evident, than it will be to sustain them in the longer term when the ongoing impacts of the economy are less evident though still real.

FATHER STEPHEN V. SUNDBORG, of the Society of Jesus, has served as president of Seattle University for the last 12 years. In addition to his responsibilities as Seattle University president, Father Sundborg serves on United Way of King County Board of Directors, is a trustee of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Board of Directors of the Independent Colleges of Washington, the YMCA of Greater Seattle Board of Directors; and is a trustee of Lakeside School.

President Sundborg was ordained in Seattle in 1974 and completed his doctoral studies in spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1982.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Interview with Limei Fan

LIMEI FAN, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, INFECTIOUS DISEASE SCIENCE PROGRAM, FRED HUTCHISON CANCER RESEARCH CENTER.

CLF: Let's begin by focusing on you. Would you share a bit about your personal background?

FAN: I was born and raised in China. Both my parents were academics so the intellectual expectations for me were very high. I majored in English at Heilongjiang University where I graduated first in my class. I was kept on the faculty as the youngest lecturer and taught English to incoming students. This was such a noble profession in Chinese culture, that some would think I had 'made it'.

But I was curious about America from colleagues, and saw some commonalities beneath the surface. Through a mentor, I came over in 1985 to further my English at Hartford College for Women. From the first day, I took off running — fascinated by the vastness of the world and its opportunity. To be born in China and see the other side of the world is not something one could take for granted.

I later went to Smith College for graduate work in American Studies, then onto Brandeis for a PhD program in the History of American Civilization. After two years, I decided it was not for me, and left for industry.

I joined Cornu Management in Boston. It ran the largest mixed income housing in the area with Harvard Real Estate. I did some accounting work, then later became Assistant Property Manager doing proposals and Board work. I had developed a strong network of mentors, friends and supporters there, and have maintained contact with them. I migrated to Seattle with my husband, Jay, when he was offered a job here.

CLF: When did you come to Fred Hutchinson, and what is your role here?

FAN: I came to Fred Hutchinson in 1996 — to the Infectious Disease Program which has a global health focus. We know that at least 20% of cancers are caused by infectious diseases so this area needs more research. I was brought in to integrate two worlds: University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson as the Virology Division and the Infectious Disease Program merged. We had some incredibly bright people, but synergizing science programs requires community work and fierce commitment. What I brought were a vision of working together, people skills, and value in excellence. I've always been curious and have learned how to put the right questions in front of people. This quality is enhanced by working with our scientists.

As Chief Administrative Officer of the Infectious Disease Sciences Program of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Institute, I value a long-term orientation, coupled with the ongoing focus on excellence. We have worked hard at getting the best people, but it is also important to see the possibilities.

CLF: What prompted you to go back for the L-EMBA degree, and why did you choose Seattle University?

FAN: I had always intended to go back for another graduate degree, and set a milestone to begin by about age 40. I heard about Seattle U's program on NPR and explored it along with UW. At the time, the peer audience at SU and the curriculum both seemed like the best fit for me.

Our peer group was fairly cohesive in age and most came from large companies. The issues, professional concerns, and values were common to most of us so it was easy to learn from each other. Despite the diversity of the group, initially, I felt out of place being one of only two students from the nonprofit sector. Over time, I saw that I had as much to contribute to them as they did to me.

We formed a community of wisdom and many of those relationships will endure for the long term. For example, we have an investment club of several women and we meet monthly. I also have a lot of individual connections and maintain contact with classmates one-on-one.

CLF: What are the top two things you gained from the program?

FAN: The first is the confidence I now have, coupled with the desire to lead. The program provided me with grounding — a way to attain tranquility in myself. I feel more centered, and have a much better sense of who I am and how much I can contribute. The second big thing I gained is the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom from a reputable program. This came from my classmates, as well as from the faculty.

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IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD, EVERYONE NEEDS THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMS LIKE OURS HAVE A PLACE FOR THIS LANGUAGE AS WELL.

CLF: Are there specific ways you are applying those things now?

FAN: The business school language is essential and so broadly valuable. In the professional world, everyone needs the common language of business. Scientific programs like ours have a place for this language as well. For me now, that knowledge base and academic training are truly coming together, and it applies to everything I do. It also furthers my opportunities. If, at some point, the time came to turn these reigns over to someone else, the EMBA degree has advanced my potential.

Apart from the business knowledge, my leadership capability has improved. I am more present with people, more direct, and more authentic. I am more focused on bringing people together for larger goals. I now have a voice in conversations I want to be engaged in.

CLF: Would you recommend the program for others?

FAN: Absolutely! I am just so glad I did it — I have run out of superlatives! The course work is very challenging, and it takes a lot of commitment. I was fortunate to have support at work and at home, and you need that. On the other hand, I think this program also 'selects in' people who already have a lot of commitment and discipline, then it builds more of that.

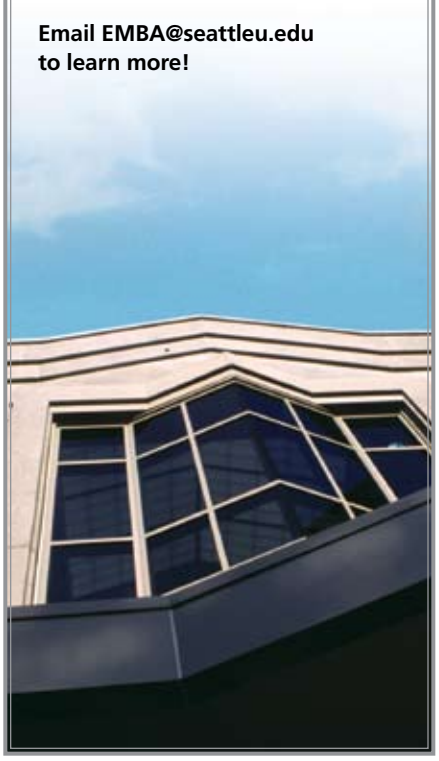
CLF: What do you see as the next steps on your leadership journey?

FAN: Immediately after graduation, I immersed myself in the China Health Initiative. I helped establish a business plan for it and felt that my effort has enhanced the discussions and enabled the project forward.

Yet I continue to ask myself important questions. What additional contribution I can make with this newfound wisdom and knowledge? How can I enhance my professional capacity? I have begun conversations with many people and am imagining all the expanding possibilities in the work for world health. My work is not done. There is a lot yet to be transformed.

LIMEI FAN is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Infectious Disease Science Program and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. The program is a unique, multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional organization within the Seattle medical community. The program combines research, clinical trials, training, laboratory services and vaccine development specifically in the domain of infectious diseases. The programs interact with various units across FHCRC, UW, Seattle Children's Hospital, Harborview Medical Center, and the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA). This linkage was created to centralize the specialized resources in these programs and to encourage collaborations.

Limei earned her BA in English from Heilongjiang University, Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China; an MA in American History from Brandeis University and most recently her EMBA from Seattle University's Albers School of Business and Economics.



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