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Statement of Leadership Philosophy

My previous leadership experiences have led me to hold the overarching principle in my leadership philosophy that all people deserve to be treated with dignity. All other principles flow from it. These experiences have involved many conversations with students, faculty, administrators, coaches, parents, alumni, board members, and donors. I am proud to say I have built and developed relationships with many, in large part because of my ability to communicate and facilitate conversations across difference. Perspective-seeking is crucial here, as well as extending some grace to others, and most importantly, keeping the big picture in mind: shared institutional goals. I ask myself: “What’s best for the institution?” “What’s in the best interests of the students?” “How is the person speaking to me interpreting these same priorities?” and I let those big-picture questions guide what I do.

I am a creative thinker and innovator by nature, and I embrace the relationship building that true collaborative leadership demands. This necessitates open-mindedness and receptivity to external ideas and critical feedback. I welcome and encourage open and honest communication, even when it’s hard. I encourage mutual respect among all with whom I interact. Especially as a philosopher, I know well the value in having productive, meaningful discourse. Intensive self-examination is crucial for this to occur, and I model this openly as a leader to encourage it in others.

I prefer to lead by example, and to see myself as a servant leader. My preference is to work collaboratively with others and draw out the best that others have to offer. Doing so requires my getting to know them and what they have to offer and encouraging them to grow outside of their comfort zones. An effective leader does their best to understand the perspective of others before making any judgments, especially if such a judgment may be critical in nature. We only know a fraction of our co-workers’ lives in our experiences of them in the workplace. People want to be known and valued.

I think leaders should harness their top strengths as much as possible. One of my top CliftonStrengths is “Woo,” or “winning others over.” I’m also a natural extrovert. I tap into this strength set by using genuine charm, wit, and kindness to foster comfortable social interactions. This has been effective at setting a good tone in my classes and student meetings, as well as faculty meetings. This strength set enables me to make good first impressions, which I believe are quite important for effective leadership. Another top CliftonStrength of mine is “Inclusion,” meaning that I tend to make a great effort to be as inclusive as possible in all that I do. I lean into this as a leader, not only when considering everyone’s contributions, but also when considering my team’s needs.

I’m strategic, but not rigid. That is, I greatly value well-laid plans, but understand that the unexpected will arise in higher education and I am able to accommodate necessary and beneficial changes. The judgment of experience helps a great deal I believe, and I’ve been a higher education professional for over 20 years with experience in academic affairs, student life, and alumni affairs. I look forward to bringing my related skills to my next institution.