

CELEBRATE PURDUE WOMEN

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HOW HAS YOUR DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP EVOLVED OVER TIME?

My definition of leadership has evolved significantly over my professional career. And as it has, three ideas about leadership have emerged as critically important: Good leaders listen more than they talk, they put others' needs before their own, and they empower others to do the right things for the right reasons.

Early in my career, I confused leadership with someone that stands at a podium or at the head of a conference room table and talks at everyone with authority. Many times, these are great leaders, but not always. I learned it was more important to listen than to talk, and to seek the opinions of the individuals actually doing the work. In every situation, I have gotten to a better solution when I created an environment where everyone felt comfortable providing input. The best solution typically includes opinions from multiple individuals, and I will never get to this solution if I do most of the talking. You may have heard the saying, "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel." Consider how you want individuals to feel when you leave the room.

Encouraged, motivated, empowered? Deflated, stressed, anxious? A servant leader prioritizes the greater good. In practicing servant leadership, my goal is to prioritize the team and the organization's needs first. Employees in this kind of environment know they are valued, and their voices are heard. In this climate, employees tend to be more innovative, work harder, and stay with the organization longer (improving productivity and employee retention).

As a leader, I work hard to empower others to do the right things for the right reasons. By doing so, everyone can choose to be a leader - because leadership is not always defined by your employment category or your title. Leadership happens at all levels of the organization, and all levels of life. You can be an excellent leader without ever supervising a person. I watched a colleague, with no official supervising responsibilities, train over 100 managers (all in higher-level positions of the university). She taught them policies, professionalism, and procedures all with a calm and friendly disposition. This set the tone for every new employee that started in the unit. What great leadership she provided simply by choice.

Your ideas of leadership may evolve throughout your career as mine have. To help you form your own leadership style, I recommend that you model the behavior of a leader you admire. Reflect on what they say and how others react. Reflect on what they do and how that influences others' behavior. At Purdue, we are surrounded by extraordinarily talented faculty and staff - your best leadership mentor may be just down the hall.

Cherise Hall is the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management overseeing functions such as admissions, financial aid, registrar, student communications, and student data.

She is a graduate of Purdue's Department of Agricultural Economics, and Purdue Global and has worked in finance at Purdue for 25 years. She has held multiple finance positions in the College of Agriculture including the director of financial affairs. In this role, she served as the chief financial officer for the college's diverse budget and worked closely with the dean on all business matters. She also served as the Vice Provost for Finance and Strategic Initiatives in the Office of the Provost and led multiple university projects such as Transformative Education 2.0, the Classroom Master Plan, and the implementation of Elements.