

CELEBRATE PURDUE WOMEN

CHRIS LADISCH



WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN TO YOU?

A lesson learned very early is that people need to rely on you if you have a leadership position....consistency and openness in leadership I deeply believe leads to a trust. If you were to ask me to talk about the one element that means so much to me as a part of leadership, it is, "Can people trust you?"

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

I think it's normal to start reflecting on our accomplishments, but I'm not sure anybody would want to hear about it. There are a lot of things that I've done at Purdue that I'm very proud of and I hope that I've done things that have made a difference for others, not so much for me. I'm very grateful to a lot of people for helping me reach the level of success that I feel.

WHAT DOES MENTORSHIP MEAN TO YOU?

I look back and realize there were mentors all along the way, people who saw talent and who opened doors for me. One of the biggest leadership rewards is knowing that I could open a door for somebody.

HOW WOULD YOU ADVISE OTHERS ABOUT LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?

My first question is always, "Why do you want to do it?" and if their answer is all about them, I try to find a way to say, 'You might be disappointed in the outcome because it's not going to be a job of 'me, me, me.' It is going to be a job of service to other people. I was very fortunate when I figured out the real joy was using my leadership influence to allow others to succeed. There's nothing like it.

WHAT ROLE HAS CONNECTION WITH OTHERS PLAYED IN YOUR ACADEMIC JOURNEY?

When you believe in an assignment, it gives you an energy. People see that belief in you and the excitement can become infectious and motivate teams to do their very best work. I think it's a great fallacy that as a leader you can do it all yourself - you can't. The job is too big.

WHAT ROLE HAS COMMUNITY PLAYED IN YOUR SUCCESS?

You have to begin to rely on other people. It can't just be here and there - it has to be formally recognized groups of people. I think of them as communities of people. What I had to do was mobilize and empower communities and give them my trust that they can get the job done. The importance of a community mobilizing to get a task done is powerful and I'm lucky to have witnessed it.

Chris Ladisch, a member of the faculty in Purdue's new Department of Public Health, has held numerous administrative positions, including Department Head, Associate Dean, Associate Provost, and Vice Provost of Academic Affairs. She served as the Inaugural Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences from 2010-2018. Professor Ladisch is a member of the Teaching Academy, listed in the Book of Great Teachers, and is recipient of departmental, college, and university teaching awards. Currently, she teaches a core undergraduate course and serves as the Director of the MS/PhD program in her department.

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