

MIAMI UNIVERSITY EDL FELLOWSHIP
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It is a particular pleasure to stand before you today, for I feel I have come full circle to the moment when, as a 32 year old doctoral candidate, I believed with all the commitment that a young grad student can muster, that Miami was the best graduate program for what I valued most in education.

I want to talk about something that I think is very important for today's doctoral students and faculty to keep in mind. It's about what we do. The task of building bridges for others and for education. There is a poem from the 19th century that my grandfather, who was also a school superintendent, shared with me when I started teaching. In 1897 my grandfather began teaching at 16 years old in the one room schoolhouses of Gallia County. After four years he went to Ohio Wesleyan University where he completed his high school and college classes in five-years. At the end of his senior year he told me he had to make a decision, "Do I go to Divinity School and save souls or become an educator and save minds." He chose education and said he never, ever regretted it.

My grandfather was 94 when he took me into his study one day and told me that he was very pleased that I had become a teacher. He said the poem he would read to me explained why being an educator was so important. It describes an older man who had a journey to make on foot. It took him through a river in a deep canyon. After crossing it, he stayed and built a bridge across the stream.

Old man, said a pilgrim,
You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide
Why build you a bridge at the eventide?

The builder lifted his old gray head.
Good friend, in the path I have come, he said,
There followeth after me today

A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.

- Will Allen Dromgoole, *The Bridge Builder*

Bridge building is a task in which EDL and its faculty has been engaged in for as long as I've known the department. The School of Education

and its staff have worked to build a bridge for future leaders and scholars to both their

professional and personal lives. I know that they have succeeded and that we graduates not only have crossed that bridge but now have built some of our own for others to cross. This is a department built on pride in knowledge and skills and a commitment to shared values.

One of those bridge builders is a man to whom I owe much, Dr. Al Ketterwell is and was an educator and leader who I hold in the highest esteem, and one who recognized the critical importance of preparing future leaders. Late in the afternoon when others had left McGuffey he would share his experiences and insight into the realities and politics of leadership and how to "move" an organization. He buoyed my self confidence to help me believe in myself as an educator. And in the months and years that have followed, he continues to be a support and mentor to me and my family. One of the "wisdoms" that Al shared with me was to always view a board of education as family. He said, "You know at times you may dislike your brother or sister but in the end you always love them -- that's the way it has to be with your board of education." The advice I most remember was when I had just graduated and was interviewing for my first superintendent's position. Al counseled, "When you go in there they aren't going to care about how much you know or how smart you are, the bottom line will be - do they like you as a person and are you someone they feel they can work with."

I have spent the better part of my life leading educational organizations, and throughout that time have used what I gained at Miami and in EDL and what I learned during my dissertation research:

Over the years I have interacted with scholars and researchers who may have written leadership analysis without taking part in actual leadership, and I have worked with leaders who have concerned themselves with producing events without thinking about them. I have observed that the first group are frequently inclined to find "rational" causes, whereas the second living in the midst of disconnected daily facts are prone to imagine that everything is attributable to particular incidents and that whatever decisions they make are simply the best choice for them at that moment. I have always presumed that both groups are equally deceived.

I have always believed "the essence of decision" remains almost impenetrable to the observer and often to the deciders themselves. There are dark and tangled stretches of leadership and the decision making process that are mysterious even to those who may be the most intimately involved.

It has been my experience that most individuals explain or predict the behavior of individuals and organizations in terms of some sort of rational model. Those that have clung to that model very often can't explain what has happened or is happening if events spin out of control. On the other hand those scholars and transformational leaders that also look at organizational behavior and political behavior as additional lenses for analysis have gained insight that allows them to both deeply understand and predict and ultimately to live to lead another day.

My strong feeling is that without the opportunity to be a part of a doctoral program with time for research, reflection and, as I recall, "walking under the oaks" with professors I respected I would never have gained the insight necessary for dealing with the reality of leadership. There are faster ways of gaining knowledge than a university based graduate program but in choosing speed over reflection there is most certainly a loss. I've often shared with graduate classes that you have to go slow to go fast, to reflect and build your base before moving forward. If EDL completes its role in imparting knowledge, skills and wisdom, the phrase "intellectual administrator" will not be an oxymoron but rather a true descriptor.

In closing I would leave alumni, faculty and students with the hope that, as you make your own choices over time, you will choose in such a

way that allows your drive for achievement to be balanced by an equal commitment to love, to play, to family, to friends, and to the university community. It was that essence of equal and balanced commitment that I learned while my family and I imbedded ourselves in Oxford. When I had my final interview before being accepted into the EDL program, the panel of professors shared with me that often the year of residency is a year of hardship and strain on the family. We found it to be one of the singular, best years of our life and will remember it as a time of growth, laughter, new friends and a warm heart. Oxford was truly "Mother Miami" to our family.

I trust that when all here are "old and gray and full of sleep" as the poet William Butler Yeats once wrote, that we can say our goal in life was not just the perfection of our profession but the perfection of our life.

I wish the Department and Miami University continued success in supporting the leaders and scholars of tomorrow and creating an educational vision for those we serve.