

**Senior Last Lecture**  
**Miami University**  
**2005**  
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Good evening. It is truly an extraordinary honor and privilege to be asked to speak to you today at your senior last lecture.

I would like to thank Denny Roberts, Ray Mock and the student leaders who were kind enough to extend this invitation.

Actually, I feel humbled to be asked to present to you my thoughts on leadership and values from an alumnus perspective, especially after you have just heard from Dr. Garland and Dr. Shriver who have the greatest perspective on Miami and how it has shaped the lives of tens of thousands of alumni that have graduated from this wonderful institution.

As you sit here today, I want to assure you of two things. The first is that while this may be your senior last lecture, it will not be your last lecture in life.

Secondly, I promise that even though I am twice your age and old enough to be your father - Which is truly frightening to me – this lecture will not have anything to do with keeping your rooms clean, respecting your elders, doing your homework and all of those other lectures your parents gave you while you were growing up.

A few weeks ago, Ray Mock called me and asked if I could take some time to present a lecture to the departing seniors of the class of 2005 and bestow upon them some guidance on my undergraduate experience and how it prepared me for life after I left Miami in 1984. He indicated that the overarching theme of the senior last lecture would be “leadership and values.”

When I asked him how long he would like me to speak, he indicated that 15 to 20 minutes would be appropriate to which I responded, “Ray, after 21 years of working with you at the alumni association, you should know that I am more to the point than that and much more accustomed to the one minute manager philosophy.” Despite Ray’s request, I will do my best to keep this lecture short and not bore you with old fictitious college stories like those your parents told you.

As I started to reminisce on my days at Miami, I tried to define one or two items that I could pass along to you that would be of benefit in your future. I found the process somewhat difficult because every one of you will move into a different career path when you leave here. While it would be easy to describe successes that occurred for me in a business perspective, it would not necessarily benefit education, communication or political science majors.

After further thought and keeping in mind the precondition that whatever I discussed would have to be harmonious and universal for the entire audience, a common theme came to me.

But before I define what that theme was, I would ask that you let me digress, and indulge me as I share some experiences that occurred to me while I was at Miami and shortly after I left.

In the fall of 1980, I packed my bags and left Cincinnati to come to Oxford. I remember my first days here as if they were yesterday. And in fact, one of my experiences on campus was to meet a tremendously energetic president who welcomed me to Miami – that person was Dr. Phillip Shriver. Unfortunately, in less than one year from the time that I met him, Dr. Shriver made the decision to retire from his administrative role.

During my freshman year, my sister-in-law encouraged me to become involved in an organization known as MUSF – which all of you know is the Miami University Student Foundation – and it turned out to be one of the best pieces of advice that I received while I was at Miami.

In fact, during my second year here, I was enthralled to be the first sophomore ever placed on the MUSF steering committee and was provided with the challenge of running the 20/20 Bike Race. In 1982, the bike race was different than today because back then, the event was held at the old Miami Football Stadium (which is where the Pearson Biological Sciences Building now stands) and the riders would ride on the cinder track, which circled the football field. For those of you who don't know what cinder is, it was a very coarse material resembling ground up lava and when you fell on it, it left a burn that was as ugly to look at as it was to experience. Unfortunately, prior to the race, a decision was made to raze the stadium because there was a need for larger seating capacity at football games in order to comply with new Division I-A regulations and the 1982 20/20 Bike Race was the last one held at Old Miami Field. While this was the advent of Yeager Stadium, it was also the end of the 20/20 Bike Race as we knew it. Fortunately, through the incredible efforts of many people and with tremendous support from the administration, MUSF was able to overcome this obstacle and presented a new format for the 20/20 Bike Race. The event was moved to Cook Field in 1983 and in order to keep non-paying patrons out, there were Greyhound buses lined nose-to-rear all the way around the parking lot of Cook Field so you couldn't view the race without purchasing a ticket.

If this wasn't bad enough, in 1983, I was elected Chairman of MUSF and the organization had a magnificent year. While the year was filled with accomplishments, I was once again faced with a difficult task. You see, in 1983-1984, the MUSF offices were housed in the basement of the Tallawanda Apartments at the corner of Tallawanda and High Street in a shop known as Tuffy's – there is now a parking lot where the building once stood. For you historian's, Tuffy's was the original home of the toasted roll. So, one of my responsibilities as Chairman was to find a new home for MUSF because at the end of the 1984 school year, the building that housed the Foundation was

torn down. Ultimately, after long searches for a new home, the offices were moved to East End.

Let me now fast-forward to 1985 when I was given my first promotion with Procter and Gamble. This was an incredibly exciting time for me, because I was asked to transfer from Cincinnati to oversee P&G's Chicago manufacturing operations. I moved in July, started in my new position and six months later got a call from my boss in Cincinnati. His directive to me was that my assignment had changed and now, instead of overseeing this operation of 500 people, I was asked to develop a plan to close the facility so Procter and Gamble could consolidate their global operations. So I spent 1986 shutting down the Chicago plant, not being well-liked by 500 people who would soon be out of jobs, and working with real estate developers on the best use for the property. By the way, that piece of property is now a Home Depot at North Avenue by the Chicago River.

So what is the common theme with these stories? That is correct, whatever I touch or become affiliated with ends up retiring, getting torn down or being destroyed.

Actually, that is one common theme, but the other – and more important one – is that in every instance I was asked to take on a project that was in the process of a transition or a change.

Why is this important to you?

It is important because in every one of your lives, you will have to face change on a continuous basis and the true mark of leadership is how an individual reacts to change and how they maintain their values during that period.

I want you to think about the last four years of your lives. There was a significant change in your life when you left high school and came to Miami. During your time in Oxford, you have had to make several changes and have had to adapt to each new situation. And in a few short weeks, you will make another transition in your life.

Whoever said that death and taxes are the only two things guaranteed in life did not consider that change is guaranteed and a constant in all of our lives. Change is inevitable, you cannot escape it and you cannot run from it. It may come voluntarily in something you make a choice to pursue – Such as marriage, the decision to have children, a job change or the decision to attend post-graduate school.

Or it may come involuntarily, such as the decision made by the school administration to raze a stadium for the betterment of the University or by a company that has decided to consolidate operations and eliminates your position.

The point is that you will be challenged throughout your lives to define what you will do when a change occurs and how you will transition into the next chapter of your life.

True leaders will think critically, weigh the options before them, develop a game plan on how to proceed and move quickly and deliberately on the decision they made.

On the other hand, someone who has not developed leadership skills within themselves may look at the situation, feel helpless and become a victim to the change that confronts them.

There is no doubt that during a time of transition, it is imperative to have someone at the helm that will understand the impact of the change, define his or her values or those of the institution and move aggressively and decisively forward.

In order to define leadership, it is imperative to understand the values of a leader. A leader is someone who possesses traits and qualities such as:

- Integrity,
- Honesty,
- Perseverance,
- Work effectively with others,
- Respect the dignity of others and appreciate diversity,
- Not have a separate agenda and be a team player,
- A person of action and accomplishment,
- A critical thinker who takes time to reflect on his or her decisions,
- Leads by example and takes responsibility for his or her actions,
- A person with confidence who believes in his or her decision making ability and most importantly,
- A person with solid values who encourages others to live by those values.

When I think of leadership, I am reminded of two events that have taken place during Dr. Garland's tenure that prompted significant change within this university – ironically, one was a voluntary change while the other one was involuntary.

The voluntary item was the decision to change the name of Miami's athletic teams from the Redskins to the Redhawks. This was very controversial and not a popular decision by many alumni who felt so strongly about the Redskins name that they threatened to cut off their financial support to the University.

Dr. Garland defined one of the core values that this institution stands on and made the point that the term "Redskin" could be construed as derogatory to the Native Americans and the University would not do anything to slander an ethnic group.

The second decision was one involuntarily placed before the institution when Title IX was imposed on Miami's athletic programs. For those of you who do not remember this or were not here at the time, Title IX was a government regulation which, without getting too complex, defined that there needed to be equality among male and female sports programs at the intercollegiate level.

Again, Dr. Garland made the difficult and unpopular decision to cut several male athletic programs in order to conform to the Title IX provisions.

In both cases, The President was forced to make difficult and unpopular decisions and was threatened by many alumni that they would cease providing financial assistance to the University because of his actions.

Dr. Garland however, weighed the values of the institution, made a logical and thoughtful decision and communicated directly and honestly with everyone affected by these changes. This is truly the mark of a leader during a time of transition.

On a side note, I would be remiss if I did not point out what has transpired from an alumni-giving standpoint since the threats were made to suspend financial contributions. As many of you know, Miami has embarked upon a \$350 million capital campaign and to date, we have already had a commitment of over \$160 million towards that campaign. Clearly, the alumni of this great school believe in their leader and the values that have been set forth by this college.

I use these two examples of excellent leadership because the decisions not only affected thousands of people, but it also impacted the way these individuals perceived Dr. Garland.

In the end, the President moved forward not because of pressure that was placed on him by many alumni; rather the decisions he made were done so with deep consideration and appreciation to the values that he believed would best represent this University in the community.

These may be interesting stories, but you may be asking yourself, what does continual change in my life have to do with leadership and values?

It impacts you because a true leader is someone who knows how to manage change in his or her life while not losing focus on the values that have been instilled over time.

As your lives change and you move through transitional periods, you need to focus on your values in order to effectively lead a group, or lead yourself, through whatever is brought before you.

I go back to Ray's original request. Can you talk to this group of departing seniors and bestow upon them some guidance on your undergraduate experiences and how it prepared you for life after you left Miami.

I cannot tell you what to do, how to do it, where to go and I cannot give you a magical formula for success and financial independence. All that I can do is provide guidance through my experiences, my mistakes, my faults, my failures and my accomplishments.

What did I really learn after I left Miami? I learned to embrace change and not compromise my values no matter what occurs.

I have defined throughout this lecture that your life will move through continual transition and you will have to adjust as these changes occur. There is an irony to what I have told you however....that irony is that the only items that cannot change in your life is your past, the way you handled yourself during your past and the values and leadership you have displayed in the decisions you have made.

I now would like to place a challenge before you. As leaders of Miami, you understand the significance and importance of what Miami has offered you over the past four years. I am sure your experiences here will be memorable and will be ingrained in your minds forever.

As you are about to become alumni of this great university, I would encourage you to define your leadership and values by giving back to the institution that has given so much to you.

I have been very fortunate to be involved with the Miami University Alumni Association for the past 21 years since I graduated and I have been honored to know the past four Presidents. When you consider there have only been 20 Presidents in the life of the institution, knowing 20% of them is actually pretty astounding.

I will leave you with two quotes; the first one was delivered by Dr. Garland at his inaugural address in 1997. He said:

“Miami’s founders believed that the purpose of education was the refinement of the mind and spirit. The early citizens of Ohio wanted their children and their leaders to be persons of reason and culture, who worked hard, treated others with respect, and who felt an obligation to their communities.

Today, we call these traits of intellect and character middle-western values. These are also the core values of Miami University...My goal as President, therefore, is to keep these values at the forefront of our mission.”

In looking at the group before me, I would say that Dr. Garland has done an extraordinary job at maintaining those values for the University.

The second quote is from Harry Truman who said that “Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.”

The Miami University faculty and administration have prepared you as best as they can to be the courageous, skillful leaders of tomorrow who will seize the opportunity to change things for the better. The rest is up to you.

Congratulations and good luck in your future endeavors whatever they may be.