

APPENDIX C

Chapter-by-Chapter Questions, Reflections, and Discussion Items

Note: From this point on, questions, reflections and discussion items follow the printed book.

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Prologue: Reflections During the Pandemic

Question: I opened the book with a set of reflections about the influence on me as a young man during college and then, in my first years of college teaching, of one hugely influential figure: Martin Luther King. As you look at your own development starting in college and continuing now in your career post college, can you cite any seminal thinker, writer, leader, even “s/hero,” who has had a comparable influence on shaping your development?

Discuss: How can we create comparable experiences and introduce individuals who will shape the development of our students?

Introduction

Here I introduce my “story.” Mine is nearly all written, given my age and level of career attainment. So, as I write, “the jury is in.” This is not the case for you. You are still writing your story. What I am trying to do here is to stimulate thinking about how college educators prepare for or continue careers focused on increasing what we now refer to collectively as “student success” with special emphasis on achieving more equitable outcomes for all

students, and especially those who have historically not achieved equitable outcomes. And my story, unlike many in this field now, is one of a White man who was raised in a life of privilege and advantage trying now to help more students to become more advantaged. I am making the case for the importance of more people like me to get aboard this movement for social justice because we are all truly needed.

Question: How would you describe your “story” in a very brief elevator speech?

Share: If you are using this book in any group context, share your elevator speech.

Key Influences

Question: Just as I laid out my influencers at the time of this book’s writing, what are some of yours? In the context of reading and hopefully using this book, what are you trying to accomplish?

Share: If you are working in a group, share your answers to the questions.

Using This Book for Guided Reflection

The most important use I hope you will put this book to is for guided reflection that will be meaningful and useful to you, and, hopefully, also to your institution—especially your students. This is all about being more intentional about how you go about advancing student success as an educator.

Question: Do you have any particular objectives that led you to acquire this book in the first place? As you read about my purposes for writing this, what are your reasons for reading it?

Is There Anything in My Professional Life That Can Be Applied and Replicated?

Question: In this section I provide an overview of my career roles, highlights, outcomes. Did anything within that strike you as something you also would like to accomplish, but in your own unique ways? This is another way of asking how relevant do you initially see my career vis a vis where you might want to go in yours? Please be mindful that I am not trying to suggest you should emulate me. I most want you to be you and develop your own means to innovate to lead to increased student success.

Section I: My Collegiate Journey

Chapter 1: The All Important First Year of College

Going Off to College

Questions: In contrast to me, how old were you when you started college? How “mature” would you characterize yourself in retrospect? Were you a “decided” or “undecided” student? Note: I prefer to refer to these students of which I was one as “exploratory.” What really influential advice did you receive from your family? (And did you act on it?!)

Homesickness: There’s No Inoculation to Prevent This

Question: Were you homesick? If so how did you address this successfully or unsuccessfully?

Memories of Orientation or How Not to Orient Students for Success in College and Life

Questions: In contrast to mine, what was your orientation experience like? I hope better than mine! How well do you think you were oriented? Did you take a college success, University 101–type course, and if so with what results? In contrast to your orientation experiences, how does your institution today design and execute the orientation experiences? If you could direct changes in your orientation programs, what would you want to do?

The Orientation That Really Mattered: Greek Rush

This section illustrates the enormous influence played on many residential college campuses by the so-called “Greek” groups.

Question: Did you have any very influential experiences early in college by virtue of being a member of a student organization?

Discuss: Consider the power that students, both individually and in their groups/organizations, have over entering students. How would you like to see that power leveraged more constructively by the institution?

Discuss: Keeping in mind the reasons that students join Greek organizations, how might you or your institutions provide more group

support experiences for new students that are different from the experiences provided by Greek groups, but still beneficial?

Freshman Convocation: Setting Expectations Low

The convocation is a tradition dating to the Middle Ages and has multiple positive goals and outcomes. Those include laying out the expectations the institution has for its new students and celebrating their arrival. How effective is your institution at doing this, whether you have a convocation or not? How do you think your campus could be more effective at doing this?

Question: Do you know of any contexts at your institution where students, in effect, are being told: “Look to the left and look to the right and the two you just looked at won’t be there at . . . ?” If so, what could be done about that?

The Influence of Students in The First College Year

Question: Were you ever as an undergraduate what we would now call a “peer leader” or coteacher? If so, what was the impact of that experience on other students? And on you? Or, if you recall being influenced by a peer leader, what were those influences?

Discuss: We have long known that the greatest influence on student decision-making during the college years is the influence of other students. How is your institution intentionally trying to take control of this phenomenon and leverage it more intentionally?

Question: Do you remember when in college you first learned about the college dropout experience?

Discuss: Did you ever drop out of college and then return? Elaborate if you will.

Discuss: Share with your group what you know about who drops out at your institution compared to those who do not? Another way of posing this question is to compare the characteristics of those who persist to degree completion versus those who do not. As an example, during my time at USC, one of the most compelling studies I attempted to translate into improvement steps was a study comparing experiences and characteristics of Black students who graduated versus those who attended but did not graduate.

Question: Can you say, as I have, that you were “saved by a student?”

Discuss: What is known about how we can intentionally have more students “saving” other students?

What Does it Mean to Be “A Good Student”?

- Question: Admittedly, this is a profound question. Did you have anyone in your first year of college who offered you advice on this—advice that you actually took?
- Discuss: What are the institutionalized processes by which your institution strives to provide answers for students to this question? How effective do you think such practices are? And if you were in charge of them, what would you want to see done for improvement? When you ask successful students this question (which I hope you do!), what do they tell you?

Academic Advising in My First Year of College

- Question: What I experienced as academic advisement in the first college year, we would now call “faculty advising,” and it was alternately terrible and outstanding. Another luck of the draw. What was your first-year academic advising like? And how does your recollection influence your thinking about how we ought to go about academic advising today?
- Discuss: Today, many students are not advised by faculty at all and instead by what are now called “professional advisors” or “primary role advisors”—staff members appointed for that purpose. With your own experience and this context in mind, how would you characterize the effectiveness of first-year advising at your institution? What about it might you like to see improved? How and by whom?

Reading as Punishment

- Question: Can you say that you were “transformed” in college by something that somebody made you read?
- Discuss: If you were to attempt to provide a transformative experience for students by having them read, reflect, and act upon something you required them to read, what would you assign them? And why?

Getting On and Off Academic “Pro”

- Questions: Were you ever placed on academic probation? (I was and it is nothing I ever put on my CV.) If so, what do you remember you did to get off academic probation?

Discuss: What does your institution do to designate students as being on probationary status? Are there any requirements for special advising, classes, academic support, and so on?

The First-Year Athletic Experience

Question: Were you a first-year student athlete? If so, in contrast to me, what was that experience like for you?

Discuss: What do you know about the realities of the student athlete experience at your institution? What is the aggregate retention rate of your student athletes? And what is it when you disaggregate by gender, race, ethnicity, Pell, first gen, and specific team sport, and the amount of “PT” = “playing time?” What do you know about the amount of practice and levels of sleep deprivation? If you can’t answer these questions, then you don’t really know what is going on in the student athlete experience at your institution. How could you go about having more empathy for the sacrifices student athletes make for the sport and the institution?

Things I Didn’t Do in the First Year Because I Didn’t Have To

Question: In your own college experience, were you made to do some things in your first year that worked well for you? Were you not required to do some things that you should have been required to do?

Discuss: Consider the things you require of your first-year students versus those you leave to voluntary status. Are there some things you should be requiring them to do but for whatever reasons are not doing so?

My First Year of College in Sum

Question: In contrast to me, how would you summarize the impacts, outcomes, and meaningfulness of your own first college year?

Discuss: Do you find any parallels or differences in my first college year experiences compared to your own?

Discuss: Overall how do the ways your institution provides the beginning college experience compare to what I experienced at Marietta College in 1961–1962? And what are your take-away judgments about that comparison? What would you like to see improved?

A Different “Summer School”: The Can

- Question: What do you know about the kinds of summer experiences that might actually be positive for students and increase their motivation to remain enrolled in college?
- Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this section on the first year of college? Do you have new insights or something you might want to consider further?
- Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

*Chapter 2: The Second Year of College: Continuing Recovery From the First Year**Finding Spaces for Community: The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962*

- Question: Where on your campus can students find appropriate, even ideal, spaces for thoughtful, serious conversations, reflection, and peaceful contemplation?
- Discuss: What topics do students get together to converse seriously about these days? How does their pursuit of this vary in terms of real time versus online modality? What conversations are inclusive of educators? This is another way of asking what students care enough/are concerned about to converse in a manner that is not simply hanging out.
- Question: Given the varying degrees of alienation and isolation we have all experienced due to the pandemic, what kind of efforts are you making to find more ways to talk to students?
- Discuss: Some years ago, William Willimon in the book, *The Abandoned Generation*, argued that on residential campuses there were no adults around after 5:00 p.m. to interact with students—and hence we have abandoned them. What is your take on this?

My Coming Out as a Campus Provocateur

- Discussion: Admittedly, there are lots of ways to “come out.” In the sense that I came out as a college student willing to publicly challenge the behaviors and ethics of my peers, how does your college experience compare to this? Was there some event, something you did or said, that substantively changed how

people saw and interacted with you? And have there been any lasting impacts of this event on your character development?

Taking Action to End Racial Discrimination in College Housing

Questions: The action I took as described in this chapter to challenge and ultimately end international student and racially segregated on-campus housing was one of the most important steps of my development in college. And it was the first of a long succession of adult behaviors in this vein. How about you? Did you do what could be characterized as “taking a stand” in college?

It is a widely held assumption that once students get through the first year of college, they are somehow “over the hump” that might impede their forward progress in college. What evidence do you have at your institution that this is probably not a valid assumption? And what are you doing to support students as they move beyond the first year into year 2, when for many of them, they will finally be moving beyond general education and into the major?

Discuss: Some years ago, I was involved in commissioning a monograph on the topic of the second year. The thesis of this publication was that the most important developmental issue facing second-year students was finding purpose in college, a challenge that connects to processes like advising, career planning, and certainly the curriculum. What is your institution doing to help students develop this all-important sense of purpose(s)?

One of the take-aways from this chapter is that often some of the most important experiences students have in college are not those we planned for them as part of the official curriculum or cocurriculum. Discuss how you/we could be more intentional about creating these kinds of powerful experiential learning components of college.

Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter on the second year of college?

Have you had any new insights or something you might want to consider further?

Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

Chapter 3: The Third Year of College: Making Some Successful Decisions

Doing Something Real Men Didn't Do

Question: Do you remember giving any thought when making decisions in college as to whether you were conforming to gender stereotypes and how you might intentionally transcend them?

Accepting A Gift That Required No Repayment: The Transformative Power of Giving

Questions: During the college experience how significant was your own sense of personal obligation to others, including the thought that you “owed” some significant others for the fact that you were in college at all?
How about now? Do you find yourself remembering the gifts others gave you and thus the need for returning those gifts? In my own case, there is never a day I don't recall those who reached out to me, gave me a break, opened a door for me, mentored me, and gave me tremendous opportunities to make me what and who I am today.

One Class Presentation in Four Years

Question: About 20 years ago I worked with a team in the Gardner Institute to develop a survey for first-year students, now owned by the UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, named “Your First College Year.” One of the things we wanted to know from students was the dominant pedagogy they experienced in first-year courses. No surprise: It was lecturing. Thankfully, there are far more alternative pedagogies in practice today than when I was in college. Knowing what we now know about how important it is for students to experience “active learning,” what are you doing to try to provide alternatives to the lecture for faculty and students?

Memorable Global Events That Influenced Me

Discussion: I have given many commencement addresses over my career, and when I do so part of my advance preparation is to learn the most significant events on a particular campus impacting students in the preceding four years and to make reference to them. Thinking back to your own college days, what

significant events do you recall? What was their impact on you? In my case they were the assassination of President Kennedy, the adoption of the civil rights, voting, and Medicare acts, and the ramping up of the Vietnam War.

Beginning My Search for Justice

Discussion: In this section I relate the impact of the most important book I read in college, Plato's *Republic*, and how it led me to begin to formulate a specific life purpose: the search for the meaning of justice. I call this one of my life's "big ideas." It would be my hope that all our students experience the discovery of "big ideas" in college. What about you? What were one or more of your big ideas? Big realizations? Epiphanies? How can we intentionally design more opportunities for our students to experience these?

*Learning How Not to Challenge the Status Quo of Fraternity Life:
Being "Stonewalled"*

Question: I am just one in a long, long line of educators and public policymakers who has attempted unsuccessfully to moderate the negative influences of these groups. On balance, I do try to also consider the positive influences they have on some of their members. In the book I related multiple experiences I had with these groups both as a student and a faculty member. What about you? What has been your experience with these so-called "Greek" organizations?

Discuss: What about the role of "student organizations" writ large? What was your experience with these in college? And what do you know about their extent and impact on your current institution? Perhaps, most importantly what are thoughts about how institutionally licensed and sanctioned student organizations could be more intentionally and coherently integrated with the curriculum to deepen, integrate, and apply curricular learning?

Learning About Concepts I Could Apply Later

Question: If you were to pick a year that was most important and influential for you during your college experience, which one was it? For me, it's a tough choice. They were all so consequential. But mine would have to be my junior year because of my discovery of the intellectual roots of my purpose.

Ending My Junior Year

- Question: This section dealt with one of my most important relationships in college, what we termed then a “romantic” relationship. From your vantage point, what seems to be the overall status of such relationships for college students today?
- Discuss: What were your most important relationships, broadly defined, in college? How does your institution go about creating an institutional culture that truly sponsors “relationship-rich” education? (See Felten & Lambert, 2020.)
- Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter on the third year of college? Are there any new insights or something you might want to consider further?
- Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

*Chapter 4: The Senior Year Capstone Experience**The Academic Senior Year*

- Question: Did you perhaps have a similar experience that I reported in this section whereby I took courses in a field I had not yet pursued (English/American literature) and came to wish I had majored in this field?
- Question: Did you have any so-called “capstone” experiences by way of a research project, demonstration of mastery of some topic, thesis, and so forth? If so, what was the impact of that on your sense of intellectual accomplishment?
- Discuss: At his graduation from college my son told his major professor “If you had given me a freshman year like you gave me my senior year, my whole college experience would have been different!” This was a back-handed compliment if I have ever heard one, and I couldn’t tell if my son’s major professor ever got the full import of the feedback my son was giving him. So, are there any “senior year” types of experiences that we really don’t have to hold back until it is almost too late, and, instead, could be frontloaded to improve first-year student motivation and commitment to the college learning experience?

My Living Environment: Finally, Outside a “Dorm”

Discuss: Even in residential institutions by the time students reach the senior year, most of them are living off campus. How can we keep seniors more engaged with campus life?

The Senior Year CoCurricular Experience

When I reflect on my own college experience and ask myself which context influenced me the most in terms of my future life, I would have to say that it was my role as the founding chair of the Student Judicial Council. In that position I learned the most about how higher education institutions do or do not embrace change, how to effect change, and how to launch and attempt to institutionalize innovation. This cocurricular experience enabled me to integrate and practice much of my curricular learning, particularly involving writing, analysis, and speaking.

Question: How about you? Did you have any kind of cocurricular experience in the senior year that helped you bridge to life beyond college?

Question: Looking back at your undergraduate experience, with respect to either curricular or cocurricular choices that you made, what would you do differently now?

Discuss: What kinds of experiences do you offer your graduating students that provide opportunities for achieving reflection and closure on the meaning of the college experience? Do you offer any “senior-year experience” transition processes? What would you like to be doing that you are not?

Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter on the senior year of college? Have you had any insights or identified something you might want to consider further?

Decision: Is there anything you thought about while reading this chapter that has led you to make a decision?

Interlude: Graduate School—Even the Military Would Be Better Than This

Question: Surely your graduate school experience was more rewarding than mine! How so? Mine was much less engaging than my undergraduate experience. How about for you?

Discuss: Assuming you have graduate students at your current institution, what do you know about degree completion rates and disaggregated data on who is/is not completing a graduate degree? Have you given any thought to “student success” strategies that could be directed toward your graduate programs and students?

Section II: My Life and Learnings in the U.S. Air Force

Chapter 5: I Should Have Paid the Air Force

My Introduction to Military Life

Discuss: My own military experience had a profound impact on my thinking about how organizations “onboard” new members. I long ago concluded that higher education needs a “basic training” or “officer training” like I experienced. Those experiences for me in the Air Force were all about being introduced to a powerful new culture that was very strange and alien to me, about how to literally survive and thrive in this environment. I needed to learn the rules, the new language, the power structure, where to get help, what to do to advance and succeed. And all that is needed by beginning college students too. How do you onboard your new students? How effective is this? Would the success of your new students be better insured if you had some elements of military-style training?

Question: For many reasons, I find that among my higher education peers, especially faculty, that I am in a very small minority who have had active-duty military experience. In part, this is due to the end of the draft and the absence of any wars involving the United States calling for troop levels that cannot be met by volunteers. What about you? Are you a veteran? If not, have you had any other government-provided service, such as the Peace Corps, Americorps, or Volunteers in Service to America?

Question: What is your experience with college initiatives that get our students involved in community service and credit-bearing service-learning courses?

Discuss: How do our students learn anything about the meaning and value of public service to others? What is your institution doing about this? What could/should it be doing?

*My New Air Force Home and School for Life: Shaw AFB, SC, and On
Becoming a Psychiatric Social Worker*

Question: In this chapter I attempt to illustrate how this professional experience was outstanding preparation for all the higher education work I have been doing since I was honorably discharged upon completion of my Air Force tour of duty. What kind of professional experiences did you have before becoming a college or university educator that influence your higher education work today?

Dr. James Reardon's Eight Principles

Discuss: Surely you, like me, have had powerful mentors to whom you reported. In this section I enumerate what I am terming “principles” that my supervisor had and taught me about what we were both doing: providing mental health services to troops and dependents during wartime. Forget the Air Force context for a minute, and just recall an influential leader you had. Recall some of that person’s principles that you were obligated to follow. Recall and share some of them with a group. How did these principles impact you at the time? Do you still practice any of them today?

Question: What principles and values are you teaching those who report to you for the work you do in higher education?

Winning the Mentor Lottery Again

Questions: I described two Air Force psychiatrist supervisors I had very early in my career. In contrast, who were some of your early supervisors, and how did they influence you? How are you trying to influence those whom you supervise?

Summing Up: Why All This Mattered

Discuss: With others in a group, discuss how your pre-higher education work experiences “mattered” for how you go about your profession now as a college educator.

It's All About Mission

Question: As I relate in the book, I had no experience prior to the Air Force that invited or required me to think about myself as having a “mission.” And as I write at considerable length,

- I have certainly been on a mission ever since. How about you?
Do you have a mission?
- Discuss: Share your mission with your group and ask for their feedback and reactions. As you listen to the mission statements of others, how does what you hear make you feel about the uniqueness of your mission and how you describe it to others?
- Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter about my military experience? Have you had any insights or identified something you might want to consider further?
Did this chapter make you glad you didn't have a military experience or make you wish you had?
Did this chapter make you appreciate other service experiences you have had?
- Decisions: Is there anything you thought about while reading this chapter that has led you to make a decision?

Chapter 6: Becoming an Involuntary College Educator and Discovering My Calling

My First Campus: The University of South Carolina at Lancaster

- Questions: How does your first campus where you served as an educator compare with mine?
Were you ever an adjunct, part-time instructor? If so, does that give you any thoughts about how we might be doing a better job of integrating these marginalized academic workers into our more permanent work force?
- Discuss: Would you characterize your first college teaching experiences as “formative” in any ways? Why or why not?

My First Teaching Experience in Rural South Carolina

- Question: Have you had teaching or staff experience in both rural and urban institutional settings? What do you have to say about the respective advantages/disadvantages of those settings?

Teaching in the Terrible Year of 1968

- Discuss: Do you recall teaching or administering in a year that was particularly awful in terms of how this period may have traumatized students/faculty/staff alike? What do you recall as the standout experiences from this period? Has this affected you

in any way going forward in your career as it certainly did me? Obviously, an immediate case in point might be the pandemic.

Witnessing History: The Orangeburg Massacre

Question: Had you even ever heard about this tragedy in American history? If not, I recommend you read the book of the same title by Jack Bass, a journalist who covered this story and who was a colleague of mine for a period at the University of South Carolina.

A Principled Resignation

Question: Have you ever submitted what you consider(ed) a “principled resignation”?

Share: If you are willing, as I share in the book, what were the circumstances surrounding that resignation? How did you “land” following this action?

Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter about my first college teaching experiences? Did you have any insights or identify something you might want to consider further?

Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

Section III. Becoming Who I Am as an International Higher Education Leader

Chapter 7 My First Full-Time Teaching Position: Learning From It, Losing It, and Moving On

A Good First Year of Full-Time College Professing

Question: What kinds of memories did this section about my first year of full-time college teaching evoke for you? How similar or different were yours to mine?

Getting Fired for My Civil Rights Activism and Big Mouth

Question: You may not want to share this, but I have wondered how many of my readers may also have had the experience of getting “non-renewed” for their political views or social justice work. Did this happen to you?

Chapter 8. On Reinventing the Beginning Year of College

Formative USC Influences Before the Creation of University 101 in 1972

Question: As you could tell from the book, I remain thankful almost 50 years after my first TRIO teaching experience for all that I learned from TRIO. I recommend you try something that I have done many times. Ask your IR people to compare your first- to second-year retention rates for two categories of students: honors students and TRIO Student Support Services students. I almost always find they are essentially comparable even though these initiatives are populated by very differing student populations. What do you think is the common secret sauce of both?

Question: In TRIO Upward Bound the challenge I learned the most from was how to motivate students in classes in which you don't get to award traditional letter grades and academic credit. How then can you provide incentives for what you might want students to do and learn without traditional grading metrics?

Discussion: I have met scores of college educators who express disdain for committee work. I wish they would realize that in the absence of participatory governance the alternative could be rule by administrative fiat. The faculty complainers about committees would understandably like that a lot less. As I reflect on my career, I have concluded that I learned a tremendous amount and managed to effect many institutional changes through good faculty committee stewardship. Share with others some positive committee experiences you have had. What suggestions do you have for making committee work more productive and collegial? In that vein, I have one academic colleague who would bring into any committee meeting she thought had potential to be acrimonious a floral arrangement to be placed prominently on the table in front of all the players! Can you think of issues or topics that you would like to add to your institution's established committee system? Remember that an institution's committee system is really a metaphor for what the institution values.

One of my many hopes for inspiration that my book might contribute to is that some of my readers decide to pay more attention to the plight of transfer students. As I explain, I have been on a 50-year crusade to win more

attention and support for this significantly underperforming and discriminated against population.

Questions: Were you a transfer student on your journey to a bachelor's degree? If not, how have you gone about obtaining some empathy for better understanding and appreciating challenges these students face?

At this point in your career what kind of an investment, if any, are you making in increasing transfer student success?

How would you describe the level of your institution's commitment for enhancing transfer student success? How high a priority is this?

What would be needed to make transfer a higher priority for attention, resources, and improvement actions at both the institutional and national levels?

Questions: In my career, I got a lucky break in that I was able to shine without having substantive expertise in technology utilization. Admittedly, on a personal level, I have been a slow adopter even though, as I describe in the book, early in my career I was an early adopter of several alternative pedagogies. Therefore, I am loathe to give advice on the topic of technology knowledge and utilization. The innovations I am known for have not been noted for their technology sophistication, although they have certainly been disseminated by technology. How central has been/are technological capabilities for the advancement of your work? If this is not one of your strengths, how do you compensate? The only advice I would want to offer is that you constantly question how your institution's technologies are being used. Is technology used primarily for institutional bureaucratic convenience and needs or for student needs? Are you using technology to replace high touch for students from fellow human beings and, in effect, outsourcing more time and labor-intensive in-person support to that which can be provided by technology?

All It Took Was One Phone Call

Discussion: This was my big break, a phone call from my university president. Have you ever experienced an outreach from a powerful figure who opened the door for you? How can your institution move from advancing student successes by means of serendipitous "lucky breaks" to much more intentional strategies? And which of these can you manage?

First Steps in Designing University 101: A Story of Presidential Leadership

- Question: What opportunities have you had to observe and/or to participate in presidentially led innovations? What are the pros and cons of having the actual innovation driven by the institution's most senior officers? The USC's presidential founding of University 101 is a classic illustration of these pros and cons.
- Discuss: What experiences have you had in founding and institutionalizing innovation, especially to enhance student success?

My First University 101 Class

- Question: Have you ever taught a so-called college success/University 101 course? If so, what are your recollections of that experience? Did you learn things that you were able to apply to your teaching of other courses? Could we conclude that teaching the first-year seminar was, in some ways, a faculty or staff development experience for you?
- Discuss: Does your institution have a University 101-type course that is linked to a mandatory faculty/staff development experience as a precondition for teaching this course? If not, why not? If yes, what is the current status of this course, and what do you know about its effectiveness?

Being Adopted by a Presidential Mentor

- Question: As I have confessed at length, I was adopted, sponsored, and mentored by a university president. Have you had a comparable experience, or know of someone who has? How can we help our most senior officers to be more effective at sponsoring and mentoring?

Another Visit to the President's Office as His Third Choice

- Question: Have you ever had the experience, as I did, of being the second or third choice for a leadership position, accepting it anyway, and making a success of it despite not being the top choice?

The Power of Lifetime Mentor/Mentee Relationships

- Question: Are you currently engaging in lifetime mentoring relationships? As a mentee? As a mentor? I certainly am. This is one of the most important responsibilities of student success leaders.

The Groundbreaking First Formal Evaluation of University 101

Discuss: As I reported, the results of the first evaluations of University 101 were and continue to be profound. The findings showed any who might care exactly what we need to provide to entering college students to help them be successful and persist in college. Over my career I have become very aware that the practice of assessment and decision-making based on assessment are very important to career advancement for student success educators. In looking at your own career, how have you successfully made use of assessment to improve educational outcomes? Share your knowledge and expertise in this vital area with others in your group.

Chapter 9: Evolution of University 101: Major Developments and Research Outcomes

Question: How are you making important uses of research literature and findings to effectively make the case for initiatives for which you are an advocate?

The Evolution of University 101: Major Developments

Question: If your institution has a college success course, what type of grading system are you utilizing? This was a decision that took us a long time to get right at USC, as I related in the book.

Question: It is my considered opinion that the use of peer leaders is one of the most important student success practices we can and must practice. In this connection I recommend the excellent book to buttress this case, *Students Helping Students* by Stephen Ender. When you were in college, did you serve as a peer leader? How effective do you think your institution is at formalizing this function?

Becoming a Faculty/Academic Administrative Leader

Discuss: I have had academic administrators admit to me that they had absolutely no professional preparation for their roles. In the book, I lay out my own journey to becoming a senior academic administrator based on my foundation as a faculty member. If you are now an academic administrator who has evolved into this role from a prior life as a faculty member, do you have any advice as to how colleges and universities might be more intentional and successful at home growing our own?

- Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter? Are there any insights or something you might want to consider further?
- Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

Chapter 10: The Conferences on the Freshman Year Experience and a Transformative National Movement

The Roller Bag Moment

- Question: In the book, I described my getting what turned out to be an original insight and idea from which to launch a sustainable innovation. Have you ever had an idea that you proposed and was implemented by others? What were the results?

Launching the First Conference on the Freshman-Year Experience

- Question: We have been offering these FYE conferences since 1982. Have you attended any of these? And if so, did you have any significant experiences/results related to your attendance?

What Then Is the Freshman Year Experience?

- Discuss: This concept is, of course, one of the most important in the book and one of the most widely used in the design of undergraduate student success improvement initiatives. If you use this phrase, what do you mean by it? What about your institution? If we asked you “What is the first-year experience at your institution,” what would your response be?

A Vision for a New Center Focused on the First Year

- Discuss: This center that I asked USC to authorize and support in 1986 continues to flourish as of this writing in 2022. If you have had any interactions with the people and offerings of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, please share those with your group.
- Question: What kind of resources, tools, and experiences would be helpful to you if these were available from the National Resource Center?
- Question: As I have explained in the book, this center was an outgrowth of 4 years of the newly established Conferences on the Freshman Year Experience from 1982–1986. Can you think of any other prominent university service and research centers that grew out of a conference? If you were to organize a new conference

around some idea of interest to you, that you could envision or wish to ultimately evolve into a national center, what would that focus be?

Chapter 11: Other Contributing Factors to the National and International FYE Movement

A Course for USC Seniors: University 401

Discuss: If you and your institution have not yet considered creating a “bookend” course, a senior capstone seminar, to complement your first-year seminar, I highly recommend you do so. If you were to pursue this, what steps could/should you take to explore how to launch such an initiative?

Moving Beyond Conferences on the Freshman and Senior Year Experience to “Students in Transition”

Discuss: What other major student transitions do you think we should be subsuming in this generic focus on “students in transition?”

It’s All in a Name: Changing One Word and Causing a Firestorm

Discuss: Is your institution still one that officially uses the anachronistic term *freshman*? If so, what explains this? Have you given any consider changing this terminology? If on the other hand, you have moved to another nomenclature, what language do you use to refer to this special cohort of students?

Chapter 12: Another Important Transition: Moving the Annual FYE Conference Out of South Carolina (and Ultimately Its Founder)

Question: In recent years we have seen many institutions make decisions in response to local political and policy actions, just as I did to support the coming NAACP boycott of South Carolina, that for whatever reasons we do not find compatible with the purposes and cultures of our own colleges and universities. What has been your experience in this regard? How are you personally and professionally dealing with these political actions that may be an affront to your own values?

Discuss: I have written extensively about the many forms of challenge and support that I received from colleagues at USC. In comparison, how would you assess how you have fared in this same regard? More challenge(s) than support? An appropriate

balance? What unique factors explain this in your case and that of your current institution?

A Conversation That Changed My Life

- Question: This refers to the question put to me by a foundation program officer in 1998: “John, if you had \$1 to \$5 million dollars and 1 to 5 years to do anything you wanted to improve the first year in American higher education, what would that be?” In your case, if you had the resources and time, what would you most like to do to improve student success? What would it take to convert this hypothetical question into a reality for you?
- Discuss: What have been your own experiences in seeking additional resources for support either internally within the institution or from external philanthropic entities? What advice would you give to your group in this regard?
- Question: Is your institution seeking external support for anything a funder could argue you should be doing on your own?
- Discuss: Today’s external funders of student success initiatives have some criteria for support such as capacity of what you are proposing to be “scaled”; the ability to impact multiple institutions rather than just yours; and potential for replicability in other comparable settings. What innovations are you considering that might meet these criteria?

A Decision to Do Something I Never Thought I Would Do: Leave USC!

- Question: I am truly glad that I stayed at USC as long as I did. I feel I accomplished far more as a result and had a much more gratifying career. But I realize that for many, both individuals and institutions, loyalty is a relatively passe concept. And this distresses me.
Reflect on your own experiences with decision-making regarding staying versus leaving higher education positions. How satisfied are you with your decisions in this regard? Are there any recurring themes that characterize your career and life patterns related to this consideration?

What Have My Time and Effort at and for USC Amounted to?

- Question: If you were to ask and answer this question right now with respect to whatever the amount of time is that you have spent at your institution, what would you conclude have been your

accomplishments? How do you feel about how you have answered this question?

Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter? Are there any insights or something you might want to consider further?

Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

Chapter 13: Twenty-Plus Years of New Work From North Carolina and a New Organization Home

Moving on From South Carolina

Question: What kinds of thinking processes are involved in “moving on?” In my case, I didn’t totally move on. I retained an official appointment at my former employer and continued doing similar kinds of work. So, what are the dynamics involved in deciding whether to make a clean break or a partial break from your former work life?

Discuss: As I have related in the book, I intentionally pursued ways to give myself closure as I moved on. And, as I wrote in my 1998 *Senior Year Experience* book, the transition out of my South Carolina work was designed by me to accomplish the theme of that book: “reflection, integration, closure and transition.” What have you learned in your life and career about how to accomplish professional closure when you move on?

Starting A New Center: The Policy Center on the First Year of College

Question: Have you ever thought of founding a national or international organization? If not, what’s holding you back? If I can do it, so can you!

Question: My now wife, Betsy Barefoot, and I were able to start a new center for two reasons: (a) we had a gift from a foundation to launch this new center, and (b) we had done the kind of work for 3 decades previously and had gained the confidence of a major foundation. In your case, how could you demonstrate that you are worthy of external foundation investment? Many funders prefer to go with the “known” producers and to avoid the risks of investing in unknown applicants. So, what are you “known” for? What has been your primary focus, a body of work for which you are now known?

Laying a Foundation for the Next Level of Organizational Development

Discuss: As I have related in the book, the “foundation” for our new organization was essentially laid out by the expectations of the funder, The Pew Charitable Trusts. In this case our program officer, a wise leader and sponsor of innovation, indeed, Russ Edgerton, gave us a “charge.” I report our charge in the book. This leads me to wonder whether any of my readers have ever formed a new organization or taken on a new position with a “charge” outlining the expected directions and deliverables. Have you had any such experiences? Was the charge clear, specific, helpful, and achievable?

Creating and Becoming an Independent National Non-Profit Organization

Discuss: One of the unique things about our country are the millions of so-called nonprofit organizations. Of course, there are statutory requirements for the establishment of nonprofits, for example, having a charitable purpose, a governing board that owns the nonprofit corporation and exercises fiduciary authority, an annual meeting, and a chief executive officer selected by the board. You must also have a driving mission or purpose that provides some form of public good. If you were to create a new, independent, nonprofit organization, what would your guiding vision be? What is it that you would really like to do that can best be accomplished through a new, independent organization rather than a for-profit, taxable business, or an existing legal entity? Many nonprofits are not sustainable. But many more are. Betsy and I did this, so you could too. What do you think about your own prospects for setting up a nonprofit organization?

What Is in an Organizational Name? Everything!

Discuss: What is to be said about a person and the practice of naming an organization for the founding individual? Not very smart? Definitely not modest? Very difficult to institutionalize? What happens to the organization after the founder is no longer at the helm? From what you have read in the book, what do you think about the merits of this strategy? Can you conceive of ever naming an organization after you? Why or why not?

Running a Nonprofit Organization Like a Business

Question: As one of our founding board members, George Mehaffy, frequently reminded me in and out of board meetings: “Not-for-profit’ is a tax classification not a business operating mantra!” So, what does it mean for educators to run a nonprofit “like a business?” How have you personally attempted to do this?

Advancing our Work With Support From Foundations and Institutions

Discuss: In this section I think I make it clear that it was only possible for Betsy Barefoot and me to establish our organization in 1999 with the support of private philanthropies, The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Atlantic Philanthropies. We have had equally as much support from individual colleges and universities that have funded our work in a fee-for-services model. As I pointed out on this topic, the foundation world uses the concept of “deliverables”—what grant recipients are expected to do or to deliver. This leads me to ask you, my reader, what are you are expected to deliver, and to whom? How mindful are you of this obligation? Would you be more in touch with this sense of obligation if your support were from a grant rather than in return for your regular salary?

Discuss: What should our deliverables be to students in student success work?

What Exactly Is Our Business at the Gardner Institute?

Question: This question “What exactly is our business?” is one that could be put to any of my readers about the work they are doing and the employment units in which they are housed. What then is your “business?”

Discuss: In this section I attempt to tell you what our “business” is in terms of core values, concepts, and types of processes. But I don’t get into the specifics of our business. How would you emulate this and describe in more fundamental, generic, maybe more abstract terms what your business all comes down to?

It All Comes Down to Organizational Mission

Discuss: I must leave it up to my readers to determine how effective the case I made for the need for our organizational mission was. Is our mission clear to you? Do we sound like we are

living/practicing what we are preaching? How do you fare in that regard with respect to your organizational mission?

Question: One of our wise Gardner Institute board members, Mr. Ed Case, regularly observes in our board meetings that a particular initiative or budget item “is mission consistent.” I love that phrase. And I can’t hear him say it often enough! Please apply this phrase to your organization. What are you doing that is especially “mission consistent?” Is there anything you are doing that you know isn’t really mission consistent but you keep doing it anyway? What would justify that?

Discuss: As I have reported, there were multiple occasions in my career when I both had my academic freedom challenged, but there were far more when such freedoms were strongly supported by my university. An example would be in the 1980s when I launched in our University 101 course an intervention in the AIDS epidemic and the explosion of sexually transmitted diseases that we called “Sex and the College Student.” This initiative set off a firestorm from the right in South Carolina, but the university administration toughed it out to do what we needed to do protect our naïve but sexually active students. What kinds of subjects and activities can you identify that need to be incorporated into student success experiences that could or do raise questions of academic freedom in terms of your freedom and support for offering such for your students?

Discuss: Of course, there are critics of the practices of extending academic freedom and tenure to academics like me. What is the state of play in this regard where you work? Are you taking steps to protect and preserve these privileges that we have worked so many decades to maintain but to use wisely and appropriately?

Returning to an International Focus

Discuss: Are there aspects of student success work that you think you could learn more about by visiting postsecondary institutions outside the United States? I highly recommend this. Americans like to think that we are the leaders in all forms of education, but my experience suggests we need to break out from the constraints of our own ethnocentrism. If you wanted to expand your horizons in this regard, where have you thought about visiting? What organizations do you know about that offer

international conferences on different facets of global student success challenges?

Consulting: An Additional Delivery Mode for My Mission

Discuss: Based on your own experience in consulting, as you prepare for an institutional consultancy, what kind of documents and data tell you the client's story that you are trying to understand? When you visit another campus, what are some of the clues you look for that reveal the dynamics of an institution other than your own? How do you think you can be most helpful in such a process? Do you have your own code of ethics as a consultant? I hope so. It will keep you and the institution out of trouble!

The Long Journey to a Succession Plan

Discuss: Are you currently in a position of leadership whereby a succession plan would be a good idea? Have you known of any organizations and situations where you have seen effective succession planning done and successfully executed? Please share. Betsy Barefoot and I are convinced that the preservation of our legacy can only be achieved through the effective succession planning we have affected with our governing board.

The Jury Is In!

Question: I am assuming that for most of my readers, that the jury is not in, at least on their careers. But the jury may well be in on some aspects already achieved and completed in your career. What about your career manifests some aspects of the jury being in, and how do you feel about the verdict?

Increasing Student Success Will Take All of Us

Questions: This section suggests the question: Who should be doing, let alone leading, student success work? In recent years I have encountered significant resentment and even prejudice leading to discrimination from some very "woke" members of the student success professions directed toward me, whom they correctly identify as a privileged White man. This perception is accompanied by the belief system that I cannot possibly understand or empathize with students whose backgrounds (through accidents of fate just like mine) are vastly different

from mine. I have spent a lot of words in this book trying to disprove that argument. But the questions remain: Who is needed to be doing this work? Who should lead it? Who should advance in it and serve as a spokesperson for this work? These are very open and fluid questions. My conclusion is that to have maximum impact on student success it will take all of us. And the privileged White males are also needed to support this cause for advancing social justice. What do you think? Your answer to this question will determine what you do—or don't do.

- Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter? Did you have any insights or something you might want to consider further?
- Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

Conclusion

- Discuss: I realize that I didn't totally hold off until this conclusion to offer explicit suggestions and advice; instead, I know that advice and encouragement was at least implicit throughout the book. Nevertheless, I wanted to lay out as many suggestions and recommendations in one section of the book that might advance my readers. And I wanted to do this relatively succinctly by my standards.
- Question: Now that you have read my advice, I am wondering what you thought of it? Which items pertained to you? Which struck you as particularly appropriate? This is also to ask you what you agreed with, disagreed with, or just weren't sure about? What have I omitted that you think definitely should be included?
- Question: How have you been successful, by your terms, even though you did not do some or many of the things I have suggested? Is there any advice offered in this section that you wish you had done earlier in your career?
Here's a forced choice question: Which item of advice did you think was particularly relevant to you at this point in your career?

Overall, what has been the impact of your reading this book, including my advice, on your thinking about whether you are going to pursue a career in student success, and if so, how?

Reactions: What are your reactions to reading this chapter? Did you have any insights or something you might want to consider further?

Decisions: Is there anything you read or thought about in this section that has led you to make a decision?

References

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