

So You Want to be a Dean?

Pathways to the Deanship

Edited by

Kate Conley

William & Mary

and

Shaily Menon

University of New Haven

Series in Education



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Acronyms

AAC&U	American Association of Colleges and Universities
A&S	Arts and Sciences
ACE	American Council on Education
ADVANCE	NSF programs for Organizational Change for Gender Equity in STEM
Alt-Ac	Alternate Academic
APAHE	Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous People of Color
CAL	College of Arts and Letters at Northern Arizona University
CC	Colorado College
CCAS	Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CDO	Chief Diversity Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLAS	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Grand Valley State University
CMU	Central Michigan University
COLL	College Curriculum at William & Mary
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSWP	Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession
CU	University of Colorado
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
EPC	Educational Policy Committee
FEC	Faculty Executive Committee, Colorado College
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GE	General Education
GED	General Education Development Test
GIS	Geographic Information System
Grad Gen 1	First-generation graduate students
GSC	Graduate Student Council, Harvard University

GVSU	Grand Valley State University
H2C	Here to Career, Here 2 Career, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
HEC	Humanities Executive Committee, Colorado College
HERS	Higher Education Resource Services for Women in Higher Education Leadership
HFA	College of Humanities and Fine Arts, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
HR	Human Resources
HSS	College of Humanities and Social Sciences, CSU, Fullerton
IU	Indiana University
LEAP	Liberal Education and America's Promise
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer +
LSAT	Law School Admission Test
MLA	Modern Language Association
MTSU	Middle Tennessee State University
NAU	Northern Arizona University
NSF	National Science Foundation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
POC	People of Color
POROI	Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry, University of Iowa
PWI	Predominantly White Institutions
PR	Public Relations
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
R-1	Research-One universities: very high research activity
R-2	Research-Two universities: high research activity
RCM	Responsibility Centered Management
SCH	Student credit hours
SFSU	San Francisco State University
SLACs	Selective small liberal arts colleges
SUNY	State University of New York
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEAC	Teacher Education Accreditation Council
TT	tenure-track faculty

TU	Tulsa University
UC	University of Cincinnati
UMaine	University of Maine
UMass	University of Massachusetts
USD	University of South Dakota
UVA	University of Virginia
WGS	Women's and Gender Studies

Introduction

Kate Conley

William & Mary

Shaily Menon

University of New Haven

Abstract

This volume comprises essays by humanist and interdisciplinary arts and sciences faculty who became academic deans, with reflections on how each of them used their position to further the liberal arts, fulfill special projects, and play a leadership role in shared governance on their campuses. The volume grew out of a series of panels co-sponsored by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the Council for Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS), the professional organization to which these deans belong. The essays are designed to serve as brief reflections that together provide a textured overview of what to expect in the transition to the deanship, how the responsibility of being dean can be used to benefit faculty colleagues and goals, and why the willingness to take on such a sizable administrative role matters. The essays are organized in three sections: Leadership as Journey, Leadership for Institutional Change, and Leadership Preparation. Recognizing the power of storytelling in their role as leaders, the essays share the stories of how these colleagues were motivated to join the administration in public and private, large and small institutions, how their career pathways led them there, what their jobs entailed, what were some of the satisfactions they derived from their work, and, in some cases, how they felt about the experience.

Keywords: arts and sciences, assistant dean, associate dean, college, Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS), COVID-19, dean, faculty, faith, feminism, institutional change, interdisciplinarity, journey, leadership, literature, Modern Language Association (MLA), narrative theory, pandemic, storytelling, university

This volume of essays was conceived as part of a Modern Language Association panel held in the moments before COVID-19 became a household name. In

January 2020, COVID-19 was known only to those closely following health news and, in Seattle that month, it seemed like an illness limited to a handful of cases that were being monitored outside the city limits, well beyond the Convention Center where the panel took place. The authors of these essays started their leadership journeys well before 2020 and that preparation helped them navigate their colleges and institutions through the uncertain times that followed.

Few of the authors in this collection set out to become administrators. Many of the narratives begin with personal stories of deans who started their university careers as first-generation students and then became faculty members themselves seemingly by chance, and whose rise to leadership was partly rooted in gratitude for the opportunities higher education afforded. Many of us have found the work rewarding because we can work collaboratively, give back to our institutions, be accountable to the faculty we serve, and dedicate our creativity to further the dreams we recognize in our students and colleagues.

The Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences (CCAS) is a professional organization for deans in the arts and sciences with the mission of “Empowering Deans to Lead.” As part of our outreach to arts and sciences faculty, the CCAS Board organizes panels at the annual meetings of arts and sciences deans, associate & assistant deans, and faculty in a variety of disciplines. Our purpose is to encourage faculty colleagues to realize they can and should consider and assume administrative positions. We answer faculty questions about what it is like to serve as an academic dean, what the job is like, how we got our jobs, what kinds of preparation we had, and what sorts of goals have motivated us. Informally, the Board calls these panels, “So You Want to be a Dean?” Members of the CCAS Board volunteer to chair panels at our own professional conventions. As we describe above, the essays here grew out of a panel held at the last pre-pandemic Modern Language Association meeting in Seattle, Washington, in January 2020. An editor for Vernon Press, who was in the audience, expressed interest in publishing a book of essays based on the panel. We discussed this possibility at the next CCAS Board meeting and decided to pursue the project. This volume is the result.

We recognize the power of storytelling that deans wield in their role as leaders and so we encouraged them to tell their personal stories, to focus on projects that motivated them, to reflect also on how they kept their faculty and staff motivated and, when appropriate, to review the impact of the pandemic on their most recent work. The lessons we have learned can serve as advice for those who are already serving deans and also for those who are about to become deans. We hope so.

The first section focuses on essays that tell the story of leadership as a journey: from the sciences through the arts to the arts and sciences (Menon); from an academic background in feminism to a feminist style of leadership

(Conley); from training in narrative theory to deploying narrative in order to lead (Massé); how a background in history and a grounding in faith served as preparation for coping with a pandemic (Hall); and how training in literature and culture helped provide resources and solutions for leading through change and a pandemic (Ferme). The second section comprises essays that describe leading institutional change such as heading a faculty through a process of becoming an antiracist campus (Garcia); founding a new College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Antczak); becoming Dean at your home institution (Gunzenhauser); and becoming Dean in a new institution, supported by strengths drawn from an untraditional background (Petersen). The third section focuses on ways to prepare for deanship that include trusting one's team through a crisis such as a pandemic (Fontaine); understanding how a background as an academic prepares one for deanship (Haddad); maintaining the perspective of a faculty colleague through and in leadership (Wilburn); relying on one's academic interests and values in order to effect institutional change (Hayes); and understanding that everything counts, that all of life's experiences serve as preparation for deanship (Krebs). All the deans in this volume wound up leading faculty outside of the disciplines in which they had trained and that cross-disciplinary approach, taking into account *all* of arts and sciences in their commitment to leadership, expanded their perspectives, as they recount, and made their approach inherently interdisciplinary.

We thank all our contributors for their openness to telling their stories, both professional and personal. We thank you, our readers, for your interest in the administrative work of higher education and how it is evolving and remains relevant to the changing societal landscapes around us.

Leadership as Journey

One

**Work, Pilgrimage, and Identity:
An Interdisciplinary Journey
in Arts and Sciences**

Shaily Menon

University of New Haven

Abstract

This essay shares the story of the author's journey in the liberal arts and sciences, which she began as a young girl in India fascinated by the arts and also the sciences, and which she continued through graduate study in the United States, in US laboratories and in the rainforest. It is a story of how the foundational love of both the arts and sciences led her to join the faculty and then administration in Colleges of Arts and Sciences at public and private institutions. It is also the story of an immigrant and woman of color, of representation and inclusion, of role models and mentors. The essay includes reflections on the role of liberal education, the value of the arts and sciences, the importance of shared leadership, collaborative approaches and interdisciplinary initiatives, and key lessons learned along the way—during and outside times of crises, such as the ones we are all currently navigating.

Keywords: ACE, ADVANCE, anthropology, biodiversity informatics, Biology, Campus Philly, climate change, conservation biology, distributed leadership, early-career faculty, GIS, Global Philadelphia Association, Grand Valley State University, HERS, inclusion and equity, Interdisciplinary Research Clusters, journey, leadership, liberal education, Mural Arts, Natural Resource Management, NSE, pilgrim's path, private institutions, public institutions, Saint Joseph's University, sciences, transdisciplinary approach, San Francisco State University, STEM, University of New Haven, zoology

In *Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity*, the poet David Whyte describes the central concerns of leadership as similar to those of a purposeful life: taking real steps on the pilgrim's path, making everything more personal, understanding "life or leadership not as an abstract path involving devious strategies but more like an inhabitation, a way of life, a conversation, a captaincy; an expression of individual nature and gifts and a familiarity with the specific nature of your own desires and fears."¹

This is the story of my journey in the liberal arts and sciences, which I began as a young girl in India fascinated both by the arts and the sciences and which I continued through graduate study in the United States, in US laboratories, and in the rainforest in India with the design of an interdisciplinary doctoral degree. This is the story of how the foundational love of the arts, humanities, and sciences as a child led me to become first a university faculty member and then associate dean and dean in colleges of arts and sciences at public and private institutions. This is also the story of an immigrant and woman of color, of representation and inclusion, of role models and mentors. I hope that my story will resonate with early-career faculty who are not thinking of leadership but practicing it; faculty who are facing some of the messages I did so that they can recognize the false dichotomies inherent within them.

In telling my story, I will share key moments and insights that guided and shaped my journey. Then, I will offer my reflections on the value of the arts and sciences, the role of liberal education, and the importance of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches. Finally, I will share some lessons about shared leadership and epistemic humility I learned along the way—during and outside times of crises, such as the ones we are all currently navigating.

Messages about identity and work

The idea of "work as a pilgrimage of identity" resonates with me on many levels. Starting from a young age, we are surrounded by implicit and explicit messages about identity and work. Whether we are aware of them or not, these messages affect our choices in significant ways.

My earliest messages came from growing up in a small family of limited means, but which never suffered from a lack of library books. My interest in the sciences was sparked by books about scientists: Paul de Kruif's *Microbe Hunters* and *The Story of Madame Curie* by Alice Thorne, with illustrations by Frederico Castellon that brought the story to life. These books set my mind on fire and I was drawn to the idea of such a purposeful and adventurous life. A life of exploring language, writing, art, and the sciences.

As a young child, I became aware of implied and overt messages that girls can't or oughtn't to do science or be scientists; the public imagination was beholden to a

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