Statement of Leadership and Career Goals

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Statement of Leadership

(a) ***Leadership for Learning***

Leadership Beliefs

I entered the education space because I believe there is a tremendous opportunity to influence a new education model where learning and curriculum are more closely aligned with the needs of the marketplace. Currently, I believe that both professors and students alike are limited by their fields of study. In order to solve complex problems that cross disciplines of study, there must be a bigger emphasis on cross-curricular learning where students are not limited to one field of study, but have the training and knowledge to develop integrated solutions.

I believe that a strong leader in education will push for interdisciplinary study and degrees that are more reflective of the challenges and opportunities a worker faces in the real world. For example, a scientist must not only have the strong scientific skills to develop new drugs, he or she must also understand the ability of that drug to do "good things" in the marketplace while also being profitable. I believe that the popular mindset is moving toward a more cross-curricular learning approach and I would love to be one of the catalysts of this change. The da Vinci Center, which combines engineering and business, is a great example of interdisciplinary study but I believe this example should be the norm, not the exception.

A strong educational leader should be able to develop a strategic educational plan that gains consensus amongst the stakeholders (professors, administrators and students), can be guided through to fruition and measured for success and failure.

Philosophy

My philosophical approach to education leadership is to first understand the needs of the students (which also means the marketplace), think deeply about the best way to develop a pedagogy that results in the right learning outcomes, and work with faculty and staff to accomplish this. I believe a leader needs to have a vision and then put the time and energy into executing that vision. Developing that vision and conducting the research to justify change in our education model cannot be done by Universities alone. In order to define that vision and develop a new educational model, Universities must partner with corporations and non-profits to share knowledge, understand each other's needs and provide solutions in a systematic and reflective way.

Accomplishments

As a Director of Planning for Environic Foundation International (EFI), I developed and taught sustainability education that was introduced at VCU and the University of Richmond. This was the first time that a true sustainability course, combining environmental, economic and social issues, was taught at these institutions. As a requirement for these courses, students were tasked with developing a plan for solving a real issue in the Greater Richmond Area, such as lack of affordable solar energy systems. Due to the success of these courses, they are now offered on a recurring basis. In this role, I was also charged with managing a student marketing project for Ford Motor Company for introducing an electric vehicle in Richmond. As this was a pilot project in Richmond and consumer acceptance was unknown, I organized a local panel of car experts to speak to the students to further their understanding and to enhance their project.

As Program Director for James River Association (JRA), I managed Education and Outreach programs. I oversaw the opening on their ecology school on Presquile National Fish and Wildlife Reserve on the James River. This is the only ecology school on a fish and wildlife reserve in the country. I also directed a project named "Envision the James," which is a partnership with JRA, the Chesapeake Conservancy and National Geographic Maps to educate the public on the recreational amenities and environmental projects along the James River.

In my current role as MBA Program Manager, I manage the evening MBA program at the VCU School of Business, which includes the administration of this program and the student support services. I recently developed a speaker series which will bring leaders in emerging companies in Richmond together with MBA students to discuss innovative ways to conduct business. Once approved, I will also be responsible for managing a new full-time MBA program which will infuse more experiential learning into the curriculum and where I will have a role adding topics in sustainability, corporate social responsibility and ethics. An Ed.D will help me greatly in this regard.

Capabilities

I do not have a traditional background for a career in academics, although I believe that my experiences in business and, more recently, in the non-profit world have provided me with a strong skill-set to provide leadership for learning. In addition, I gained experience developing pedagogy during my two years with EFI. I also completed an adjunct teaching certificate from the University of Richmond, with a focus on experiential learning.

I strongly value the administrative and management skills I have gained from fifteen years of business experience launching and managing large programs. In addition, the five years I spent in non-profit showed me the importance in providing for the greater good of the community, which goes hand in hand with my educational philosophy. I strongly believe that I can utilize

these capabilities, combined with an Ed.D, to help lead VCU forward as an innovator in education.

(b) Leadership for Equity

Leadership Beliefs

Education is the lifeblood of society. It provides citizens with the foundation to be successful in life. With this in mind, it is of the upmost importance that everyone be given a fair share in obtaining a quality education and it is up to leaders in education to ensure this happens. In my role as MBA program manager, I have observed that having certain acceptance guidelines, such as a 3.0 G.P.A. and 18 months of work experience applied to all applicants in the MBA program is an equitable approach. It has resulted not only in a fair process for evaluating and accepting students into the MBA program but also generated a diverse, as well as high quality, number of new students. However, there is also a personal component to the application. Student are asked to tell their story in a Q&A format on why they would be a good addition to the program. This provide students the opportunity to talk about their background and experiences which they could bring to the program in terms of unique perspective and valuable life skills.

In addition, while students are in the program, there are equitable and consistent policies in place for maintaining academic standards and ensuring that all students are treated fairly. I believe that these policies provide for a climate of fairness when applied consistently to all students, regardless of race, sex, sexual preference, or religion. A strong leader should enforce these policies while always striving to improve them.

Philosophy

I believe that an educational leader must uphold equitable policies for all students. However, it also takes a leader to question those policies and lead a discussion to change policies, if necessary, to keep up to date with best practices. I also think that a leader can and should make exceptions to the rule as not all rules can be maintained all the time when a real life situation gets in the way. A recent example occurred when one of the students I was advising was required to take two classes at the same time (which is the case in the MBA cohort). However, due to a family member becoming gravely sick, the student felt that he could only take one class, and asked for an exception to postpone the other class. I recommended making an exception for that student because of his family life situation.

In addition, I see similarities between leadership and managing. When managing people, it is important to lead by example and treat people the way you would like them to treat you, regardless of race, religion or sexual preference. I believe that results in long-term trust and respect. As a result of my work experience, I have managed many people through the years and

when I evaluated employees, I always tried to be fair and apply the same performance criteria to all my direct reports. The evaluations I gave all my employees were equitable and fair, deriving from their skill-set and effort to do the job.

Finally, I know that there are still inequities in the world in various capacities. While pursuing the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI) certificate, I learned about environmental justice and, more importantly, the injustices that are being served in our communities. Highly polluting industries tend to locate in poor, underserved communities where residents do not have the ability or means to stop companies from moving into their neighborhoods. One only needs to drive through the poorer neighborhoods, such as in Hopewell, Virginia when the stench of industrial pollution is evident. There will always be inequities in the world. Acknowledging them is one step. Providing leadership to solve these inequities is the next step.

Accomplishments

When I was a Program Director at the James River Association (JRA), an advocacy and conservation organization charged with improving the health of the James River, I was asked to develop an advocacy policy. The purpose of the advocacy policy was to set guidelines around how JRA should deal with different issue that affect the James River and the best approach employees should take to deal with the issues and parties they encountered. I could have written this policy myself, receiving direction just from the CEO, but did not think this would a good representation of the entire organization. Instead, I conducted surveys with all the employees, board members and a sample of parties with which the organization worked.

The results of these surveys and the final policy incorporating this feedback were compelling and refreshing at the same time. Whereas other environmental organizations take more of combative approach toward opponents on certain issues, JRA was most successful when it listened to the view of the opposing side, discussed the pertinent facts, agreed to possibly disagree, but most often found some common ground. It was found that by keeping the door open, JRA was able to accomplish much more than by slamming the door shut and not having that conversation. As a result, JRA developed the reputation, especially with companies working along the James River, as an open and reasonable party to deal with so this resulted in more conversations with more entities. In some cases, companies that were on the opposing side of an issue ended up becoming a partner with JRA on issues and opportunities they could work together on. When CSX railcars fell into the James River in Lynchburg, Virginia and started leaking fracking gas, CSX invited JRA to work together with them on the emergency. I immediately went to Lynchburg, Virginia to lead my team and work with our counterparts at CSX to limit the environmental impacts and to discuss steps for remediation. I don't think CSX would have invited less reasonable and more combative organizations to the table.

I am equally as proud of the accomplishments I made when I developed and taught business sustainability courses. One important reason was that I was able to weave the economic aspect of sustainability in with the environmental and social issues to tell a compelling story. However, most fulfilling from a leadership perspective was seeing the transformation of the students in the class as their level of understanding of sustainability increased. In particular, I remember three students who sat in the back in one course and did not look happy to be there (their company made them go). By the end of the course, these students were some of the best contributors to the class conversation and their projects was quite impressive.

Finally, I am very proud of my management accomplishments. One year I was rated to be a "Manager of Choice" by employees in a large and growing company, the highest grade a manager can receive. I believe I was rated this highly for a number of reasons. First, I like managing so I enjoy spending time with my direct reports. Secondly, I believe it is important to praise employees when they are doing a good job and provide constructive feedback when they are not. Finally, I give employees as much responsibility as I think they can handle and encourage them to continue to reach for the next level.

Capabilities

I believe that my capabilities regarding leadership in equity are mostly ingrained in me from an early age. I was taught that everyone receives a fair shot at life and that you treat everyone the way you want to be treated. I grew up in a pretty homogenous society in Dublin, Ireland but was fortunate enough to have traveled extensively since my mother worked in the airline industry, so I was exposed to different cultures and diverse people from an early age. I embraced moving to America at the age of eighteen due to the opportunities it presented me, particularly with education. I attended junior college to take advantage of the more affordable tuition while I familiarized myself with the United States and its many types of colleges and universities. For my Junior year, I transferred 61 credits to Georgetown and had a great experience at a private institution. Later, I attended the University of Maryland, a public institution, for my MBA while working. This experience of attending a junior college, a private university and a public university exposed me to varying levels of diverse students. This, combined with traveling and my twenty years of for-profit, non-profit and educational work experiences, have given me a vast background, understanding and capability to work with and help provide education services to students of all walks of life.

Two capabilities which I learned more recently, and believe are important in working on equity issues in education, are the ability to listen and the skills to negotiate. I was trained to be a befriender by my church at a time when the ministers required some extra help meeting with individuals who were going through challenging life experience and needed someone to listen to them. I believe that the practiced skill of active listening, which I predominantly used in these interactions, is very important when it comes to equity, especially when there may be multiple

perspectives to take into account. I also believe that when determining an outcome to a dispute or concern, two parties need to come together as the truth often tends to lie somewhere in the middle. I took a negotiations class in my MBA program and received the highest scores for the practical assignments we undertook. Negotiations skills can help to provide a win-win outcome for both parties.

(c) Leadership for Accountability

Leadership Beliefs

In business, a successful enterprise always keeps the customer at the center of all strategies. If the customer is not happy or satisfied with the product, the company will not be successful. The same is true in education. In a university setting, providing the best education to students should always come first and those responsible for providing this service, whether it is the professor, administrator or Associate Dean, should be held accountable. As a leader, you have to try new things to push students and expand their horizons. Sometimes, you experience success and sometime failure. Holding yourself accountable for these actions and the resulting outcomes when things do not work out is important. Bottom line - if the student is being served well, by extension the family and the public interest will benefit.

Philosophy

I was fortunate to have gone to Haiti after a devastating earthquake on a mission trip with my church. I spent a week teaching at a school with members of my church. I saw how appreciative the children were to have the opportunity to be in school versus being out on the streets. Because of that, they worked extremely hard as they knew that if they were successful (and had someone to sponsor them), they may have a chance to come to America to continue their education. I was so impressed with the married couple from West Virginia who moved to Haiti to start this school. In my opinion, they are an example of education leaders who take accountability to a whole new level. They cared enough about the public interest (be that the well-being of Haiti) to leave their comfortable lives behind so they could give children in a different country the opportunity to be educated and possibly become the future leaders of Haiti.

While I may not be in a position to pick up my family and move to a third world country, this experience did teach me how lucky we are as a nation to be able to provide the education we have, but that we must not take this for granted. We have a responsibility to continue to strive to provide the best education to our students but also to hold them responsible for their education so that they hopefully appreciate it and work hard to maximize the opportunities they have.

Accomplishments

I spent the greater part of fifteen years in for-profit where I had the opportunity to manage departments that, combined, had a budget of $3.5 million and revenues totaling $1.6 billion. This meant that I had to be very accountable and exact with the way I ran a business line or department. Some examples of my accomplishments included:

- 9 years of Professional Leadership experience directing departments and managing major programs
- Directed business lines generating over $1.6 billion in revenue, with budgets totaling $3.5 million
- Headed efforts to enter four new markets, obtained #1 and #2 market share in two of those markets
- Orchestrated summit for Fortune 500 executives, worked with fellow manager to develop meeting strategy
- Led and motivated staff, recognized for being manager of choice

How does this translate into education? While universities are non-profit, they still need to be able to fill seats in a course, pay a professor, keep the lights on, etc. I would and do take the same approach in education as I took in for-profit – that is to be responsible for coming up with a thoughtful plan (be that a new program or course), work with multiple parties to implement, and then ensure it was successful while providing a high quality of education for the students as the same time.

I spent the last four years of my career in non-profit. While the budgets or financial production may not have been as great, the scope of work and goals were quite lofty and large in scope; increase energy efficiency usage by consumers, steward of 340 miles of the James River and develop sustainability education in the Greater Richmond area. Some examples of my accomplishments included:

- Responsible for building and implementing education relationships and programs with universities and Fortune 500 companies; co-developed curriculum and co-taught sustainability courses
- Oversaw K-12 ecology school which generated over 2,000 meaningful watershed educational experiences in one year
- Spearheaded Executive Board Strategic Planning Taskforce; presented at quarterly meetings
- Managed energy efficiency programs which generating 1,500 new enrollees in Richmond
- Created advocacy policy which was adopted by employees and executive board
- Opened two regional offices and hired staff

I believe past successes will be an indication of future successes. I will apply the same level of accountability to education at VCU as I did with all of my previous work experiences.

Capabilities

My capabilities in leadership are derived from the experiences and training I have had as a manager and leader. As a leader, I would be responsible not only as an individual to educating students, I would hold others accountable, including professors, administrators and students in developing, accepting and achieving worthwhile educational goals. As a leader who is accountable, I would utilize my management skills to ensure that the process is rigorous. I have significant experience managing different aspects of the value chain including concept/idea creation; research; development of product and service; creating processes and procedures for managing behind the scenes operations; marketing/promoting the service; tracking and reporting success. I believe these capabilities will translate well in the academic world in terms of developing and implementing a strategy for an educational plan, including stakeholder politics, consensus building, and accessing results.

Career Goals

My goal is to work with faculty to develop solution-oriented pedagogy and curriculum that will inspire students and provide them with the knowledge and tools to be successful in their careers. In addition, while I greatly enjoy my role as MBA Program Manager, and look forward to launching the full-time MBA program at VCU over the next few years, I envision myself moving up the administrative side of the university.

While my background is in business, and I believe that the business school at VCU is a good fit for me, I know that participating in the Ed.D and learning how to approach complex learning organizations using reflective, systematic understanding, will open new doors for me. I would like to explore different areas of VCU, with a particular interest in the Global Education office, due to my international background and the great opportunities this presents to VCU and its students. My career goal is to be an Associate Dean, leading a school toward ethical, equitable and accountable outcomes.