



# Leadership Interview

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EDLD 9531 Educational Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
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# Introduction



- Name:  
Mohamad Mustafa, PhD
- Current Position:  
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Qualifications:  
B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in Civil Engineering (Wayne State University)
- Experience:  
> 30 years in Higher Education



# Career Path to Leadership

- Dr. Mustafa began his career in higher education in 1994 as a faculty member in the Engineering Technology Department at Savannah State University.
- He served as the Civil Engineering Technology (CET) program coordinator for over 15 years
- He accepted the role of Interim Chair for the department in 2011. A year later he was appointed as the Engineering Technology Department Chair



## Career Path to Leadership - cont.

- In 2017, he became the Interim Dean of the College of Sciences and Technology, eventually being appointed Dean.
- This past summer, he is serving in his current leadership role as Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs



# Perspective on Different Roles

- As a coordinator, he focused solely on his own program and faculty members in the program.
- As department chair, he focused on the different programs and the faculty/staff within the department
  - “I always have meetings with the program coordinators because they are responsible for designing the program curriculum”
  - Share information that was not confidential to improve the functionality of the department



## Perspective on Different Roles - cont.

- As Dean, he focused on different departments, faculty/staff within the college.
  - He advocated for the success of the entire college rather than a department or program
- One of his primary focus in his role as Chair and Dean was to retain qualified faculty/staff and ensure student success
- In his current role, he must focus and consider the needs of the entire university rather than the college

# Leadership Philosophy



- Dr. Mustafa's philosophy includes collaborative style that involves shared governance
  - Leadership is a service
- Gather input from leadership team (chairs and deans) and members of the institution
  - Leaders do not set rules/policies without collaboration of others
- Shares information to involve others in decision making
  - Leaders must serve constituents and take their ideas into consideration prior to making a final decision

# Leadership Philosophy - cont.



- Makes final decision based on policies and team members feedback
  - Decisions must be in compliance with the system, the institution and the constituents the leader serves
- His leadership philosophy and style is to serve others and collaborate to reach the institution's goals and comply with its mission and vision. Some leaders have naturally intuitive skills, while others develop the skills through learning and experience



# Major Challenges in Leadership Role

- Personnel issues and dealing with conflict between faculty/staff
- Major budget cuts resulted in difficult decision about layoff
- Ensuring transparency and open communication during challenges



# Major Challenges in Higher Education

- The biggest challenge across institutions in higher education is the decline in enrollment due to:
  - Students going to the workforce without a college education
  - Declining birthrates slowing population growth
- Faculty innovation to create new programs and improve current programs demonstrating career benefits to attract students



SUCCESS

# Major Accomplishment

- Minimized faculty cuts during budget shortfalls in the college
  - Writing reports to justify faculty work retention
- Increase grants, justified STEM programs
  - From \$10M to \$22M
- Maintained transparency and faculty morale
  - “The leadership team and system expressed that the College of Sciences and Technology runs extremely well, and there are no complaints from the college.”



SUCCESS

# Aspirations

- Bring the institution into compliance with the USG System
  - Summit reports and data on time
- Increase graduation rate and retention
- Improve student success
- Improve colleges performance and faculty morale



# Advise for Emerging Leaders

- Importance of shared governance and open communication with your team
- Being proactive rather than reactive
- Having backup plans for potential issues
- Documented work and collecting data to make informed decisions



# Conclusion

- Emphasized collaboration and faculty engagement
- Address need to attract students amid changes
- Highlighted experiences advancing student success

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# Analysis and Reflection



# Initial Reactions

- The interviewee's perspectives on how different roles shaped his understanding of the institution to be most insightful and demonstrate the value of diverse viewpoints and continuous learning
- His emphasis on collaborative decision-making and shared governance was somewhat surprising; however, it aligned well with his views on leadership development
- The challenges related to personnel issues and budget cuts were impactful to hear



# Influence on views

- The interview reinforced my belief in the importance of transparency, faculty engagement, and diversity of thought in educational leadership
- It challenged any preconceptions that higher administration requires a more directive approach
- The importance of life-long learning and adaption to be an exceptional leader
- The interviewee exemplifies leadership strengths through experience



# Connection to Leadership Theory

- Demonstrated situational, transformational, and servant approaches through his different leadership roles
- His focus on serving and valuing feedback mirrors Greenleaf's view.
- Advocates for different approaches tailored to specific challenges
- His emphasis on collaborative problem-solving to drive new initiatives through stakeholder buy-in mirrors transformational leadership ideals



# Overall Reflection

- I learned that authentic, reflective practice is vital for educational leaders facing complex problems with many stakeholders.
- Adapting one's approach through various roles allows continuous improvement of leadership skills.
- Focusing on student success during challenges reflects leader's commitment
- His collaborative philosophy sets an example I aim to follow in continuously developing strengths through diverse input while prioritizing institutional and leader needs.