LEADERSHIP SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone!! It’s really great to be here and have the opportunity to speak to all of you. It is very gratifying to see so many of you here and so many segments of our company’s population represented here today. These meetings serve an essential purpose. When we meet we reinforce our unity. We share in the context of this online university and the energy and enthusiasm that is generated by this collective presence is inspiring. I want to take a moment to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me to say a few words and share some thoughts. (**If you think it’s appropriate to acknowledge the President and CFO, you can say**) I can’t imagine speaking about leadership and not acknowledging our own truly fearless leaders. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I am honored to have the opportunity to speak to the group and the chance is made even more special because the both of you are here. Your proven leadership has inspired me and my coworkers and your actions motivate me to assess my own progress every day. Thank you for that!

(**Take a deep breath and say**) Wow!! This is some great view!!! What a privilege to see all of you from this vantage point!! I am proud to be a part of this team, and I am thankful to the leaders who have motivated us to prevail, even during the most challenging of times. It takes dedicated management and a motivated team to persevere, and it’s an honor to be part of this group.

Business tycoon Warren Bennis said, “The new leader is the one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change.” For the past few years, we are all aware that we have experienced more than our share of “growing pains.” Our system was broken. We had serious issues. We were on public sanctions for two years and based on that, success and longevity did not seem to be on our side. We came dangerously close to losing accreditation, but we didn’t. We had a 10% chance of survival, and wouldn’t you know? We did it!! All of us are the living, breathing testament of a system that was able to be fixed thanks to a devoted workforce, committed managers, and single-minded leaders.

The past several years have been a real eye opener for all of us. When we enter the workforce as young adults, with no experience, we take a job, listen to our bosses, do the work, and so on. We tend to take so much for granted when there are no challenges in life. Everything seems to work on autopilot. Momentum self perpetuates. But then, something happens to threaten to derail the machine-the place from which we get our sustenance, our livelihood, and hopefully our future security. No one likes to admit they thrive in crises, but I have to say, if we take a look at the hardships and challenges we faced, there is a positive side. We who have weathered the storm of recent years have lived through a priceless experience. Life will never be the same. Although in a large way our “professional innocence” was sacrificed, we learned how strong we are. We learned what we were willing to do and do without in order to survive. We worked together to become creative problem solvers. We learned to look to our leaders for guidance and we learned to swim upstream until we were in safe waters. I think we also learned that there are no guarantees in life, we can no longer take anything for granted, and I think we also found a new level of respect for our workplace, our teammates, and what it means to fight for your livelihood.

As I look back on those times, and although it is hard to imagine and even harder to really discuss, there were moments that really stand out that taught me so much about life, work, survival, and most of all, our own personal inner strength and determination. I can recall several obstacles and how we, as a team, with strong leaders, were able to correct our course.

**(Name the 2 or 3 obstacles that you had to overcome and what you learned from handling and conquering each one. Also discuss the leaders who supported you, what they did to overcome each obstacle, and name them if appropriate**)

Some of the incidents that really stood in the way of our success at remaining a viable and accredited university, in my recollection, are:

* **INCIDENT ONE**-use 2 or 3 sentences to describe the problem, the solution, who the leader was, what the leader did to turn around the situation, and what you learned. Do this for each incident)
* **INCIDENT TWO**
* **INCIDENT THREE**

I believe in the work of this company and I am proud to be a part of a company whose philosophy is to build on its resources and strengths while doing what is best for the students and the university. I support our motto of “Appreciative Inquiry,” and our dedication to transparency demonstrates a commitment to integrity and honesty.

As I was preparing my thoughts for today, I focused on discovering the qualities that make a great leader. In my search, I found an article on the Forbes website that I think is worth sharing with you. It discusses the most important qualities found in great leaders. Here are some of the points:

* **HONESTY AND ETHICS** –A true leader inspires with integrity; leads by example; establishes a core set of values and beliefs and encourages the team, no matter how large or small, to align.
* **ABILITY TO DELEGATE**- A true leader empowers his or her team. An effective manager knows he or she cannot get all the work done single handedly. The ability to effectively delegate can carry the essential messages of business much further than one overwhelmed individual. A truly great leader knows how to choose a team with diverse talents that complement each other. An effective leader knows how to motivate in the process of delegating.
* **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**- it doesn’t matter how smart the person in charge is. If he or she cannot get the desired result based on the message or request delivered, the team will not be led effectively and they won’t get the job done. Part of being an inspired and inspiring leader is understanding the team and making sure each member understands the message. Empathy goes a long way.
* **COMMITMENT**- No matter what, the workforce wants to know that the people in charge are willing to do whatever it takes to produce a positive result. They want to be assured that their leaders are as willing to put in the hours to succeed as they are. The days of the “absentee figurehead” are gone. We are all too connected. In order for a company to succeed, commitment has to be apparent on all levels. We are very lucky here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, because as I said earlier, our management believes in transparency, and that transparency fosters mutual respect across all levels of employees.
* **POSIITVE ATTITUDE**- British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, “A pessimist see the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” Let’s face it, how effective is a dull, negative leader? The sentence doesn’t even make sense!! We want to be inspired and motivated. We want to know that our work means something. We want to know that all of our efforts will pay off.
* **CREATIVITY**- Sometimes solutions are not obvious. Discovery depends on the leader knowing the challenge, being aware of the team’s strengths and weaknesses, and finding new and different ways to highlight the qualities that will make for a successful completion of a project or business.
* **INTUITION**- We all know what it’s like to “trust our gut.” An effective leader knows how to assess a situation, place him or herself in the middle of the problem or project, and really search deeply to discover the best way to handle the challenges that present themselves.
* **ABILITY TO INSPIRE** – The leader by nature has a different vantage point from which he or she sees the issue as a whole and from that vantage point can find the way to inspire and motivate the team towards success.

It’s been said that leaders are born, not made, and when a person exhibits the innate characteristics and drive essential in any leadership roll, that person declares his intention to lead. As you all look around the room, you can see who the leaders are and who the valuable team members are. Let’s face it; leaders don’t exist were it not for their team, and vice versa. The team dynamic is very special and all members get life and energy from teammates as well as leaders.

I know I am inspired by all of you. I am interested to see how new challenges present themselves and how our team responds and handles each situation at every level. Within each one of us is our own inner leader, eager to prepare for the tests we are about to face. Each test and project serves to make us stronger, both individually and as a group, and no matter what your function is at this company; you are an essential part of this team. We’ve fought the hard fight, now let’s all face the future with eagerness, integrity, and intention that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gets stronger and stronger as we serve our students now and into the future.

I want to thank you again for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to learning more about our great business and resolving new challenges that come our way! Thank you very much!