

Stepping up to the challenge of leadership

One of the best blessings of my life is the fact that I've encountered so many people who showed me what true leadership is all about.

From my youngest days until now I've come in contact with a number of role models who showed me the necessity of strong leadership. Some of those people would be familiar names to you (Woody Hayes immediately comes to mind) but others are not quite as well known.

Still, whether they were famous or not the best leaders I've met shared some very similar traits. All were good at setting goals but even better at crafting the plans that helped you achieve those goals. All understood the interpersonal dynamics that can make or break a project or team. And all had the consistent focus you need to stay the course even when things look bleak.

These elements are things I've put to use since I took over leadership of the Alumni Association. We set the ambitious goal of being the biggest and best alumni organization then put together a strategic plan to direct those efforts. And while I can't say that we have yet achieved the goal of being the biggest, I am confident in saying that we've moved much closer to being the best.

Today, we offer more programs and services than we did in the past. Our online capabilities have improved immensely and will continue to progress in the coming months. We truly feel that we are putting the pieces in place to make some major transformational jumps in the next few years. At the same time, we recognize that we can't be satisfied with progress. Satisfaction can lead to complacency, and we will never be a complacent organization under my watch.

So what does this mean to you?

I understand that guiding clubs and societies presents even more challenges from a leadership perspective. Our constituent groups are powered by the spirit of togetherness and volunteerism, but members are not being paid for their efforts. This presents a challenge to the leaders of these groups. How do you keep people engaged and focused in efforts that may lack a tangible personal benefit?

First, I think that it is necessary to recognize the common bond that brings us all together. One thing all Buckeyes have in common is a great love of Ohio State. We all want to see our university grow and improve. Much like I have the goal of being the biggest and best alumni association, President Gee wants to see Ohio State rise to a position of eminence in the world of academia. We can all play a role in that effort and being organized makes that impact even more powerful.

I also think there's a great deal of importance in goal-setting. Your group should have a clear goal or goals that all members are working together to achieve. Whether it's to raise scholarship money, advocate for the university, or recognize tremendous faculty members, your group should have a clear goal in mind. Activity for activity's sake is great, but purposeful activity is more valuable.

Lastly, I think that there must always be focus on growth that starts from leadership. All of our constituent groups have Ohio State alumni audiences they've yet to reach. It is up to you to help find

these people and get them engaged. No Buckeye should even be able to say that no one has reached out to them. That would be an opportunity missed.

The challenge of leadership is clearly not an easy one to meet. Nothing worth anything is. At the same time, our university has given you the tools to lead effectively. I know you can do it.