

Transcript of Conversations with MU President Maravene Loeschke - Episode 7

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KATRINA BRUMFIELD: Welcome to Leadership in Progress, a conversation with Mansfield University president Dr. Maravene Loeschke. On Tuesday, April 1 Public Relations Director Dennis Miller had a conversation with President Loeschke about the progress of the leadership programs on campus, both in the classroom and in the various clubs and organizations. Dr. Loeschke talks about programs, speakers and what she and others envision for the future.

DENNIS MILLER: Well, good morning and thanks for coming by.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: My pleasure, always.

DENNIS MILLER: I wanted to review our progress on leadership development, but first I wanted to talk a little bit about why leadership development is important.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Well, I think the world is in a leadership crisis and I think most people would agree to that, to some extent or another. If you take a look at the state of our world clearly we need people who are going to guide a more positive vision, across countries and ethnicities and religions and all of that. It seems to be very difficult to find those people. I think it's the responsibility of higher education to help young people develop their innate talent for leadership. I think most people have it to some extent or another, are gifted with it, and others learn it. Both are possible as well, but part of being an educated person, I think, is understanding that you use that education somehow or another in service to make the world a better place than you found it. And one way to do that is to exercise the kinds of skills that are needed to solve problems and develop your own sense of a moral compass and to create visions and stay on task and make change and negotiate and address conflict and all of those issues that are part of almost any successful career anywhere.

So how do you apply those to moving your family, community, country, the state, the world, your profession, in a more positive direction? And if we can fold that into the education of the whole person I think we'll have done our part.

DENNIS MILLER: Which kind of leads to the next question, when you talk about leadership you are talking about it as a way of life, from the home to the community to the state to the corporation--

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Yes.

DENNIS MILLER: Do the same principles apply from say, a mother at home to--

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Absolutely. Our mothers and our fathers are our first role models, usually. Grandparents are right up there too. Sometimes a next door neighbor. Sometimes a teacher. Then when you get into school it's usually a teacher, somewhere in the elementary years. We're role models in the way we go to the grocery store, the way we deal with people in a parking lot when they take our place, what we perceive as being our parking place. And so if we are helping our own children, in our own families, to develop the skills I just mentioned, then our job, when we get to higher education, is easier, because we building on a very solid base. So yes, I see that very clearly.

When I work with leadership groups and ask them who their major role models are, not making any guidelines about that, it is very rare for people's mothers not to be on the list, their mother or their grandmother. And so yes, it starts all the way back there.

DENNIS MILLER: Interesting. Has the role of fathers changed over the generations, as far as being role models? I'm looking specifically at today's society, as opposed to--

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: I think it has, only in that I think both are critically important, but when I was

growing up my father was the head of the family and generally the only one working. And so you looked at your father for more of your professional role modeling and your mother was more often the person who guided your daily character building and those kinds of things. Now, with people sharing more equally the working and the raising of the children, more and more fathers are stay-at-home dads, the woman works, all of these models I think, open up a lot of opportunity for role modeling for both parents on a daily basis. So in that sense I think it has.

DENNIS MILLER: What progress have we made in creating leadership development programs at Mansfield? Now you were talking about this, almost from day one when you arrived. And now we're sitting here, two years later.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Well one of the reasons I wanted to come to Mansfield, I was pretty sure I would take the job if offered, was that the Middle States report that the University had done a few years before the search clearly identified leadership as an opportunity. An opportunity for brand and an opportunity to develop a uniqueness in relationship to its mission for a liberal arts institution and strong professional programs. It looked like a match for me because I've always cared deeply about leadership in the arts, mainly where my career has been, and then moving into administration and higher education. It has always been a significant of mine, how do you use your life in service this way, creating visions and moving forward? So, helping people to work together as a unit.

So coming to Mansfield, knowing we might be able to get started more quickly, than to take five or six years which we don't have, to develop our uniqueness, it looked to me like an opportunity worth having. I was delighted to find so much support in moving in that direction quickly and took that opportunity and moved on it quickly.

Now it is utterly amazing to me how we are known for this. When I am in Harrisburg, when I am at the alumni meetings, when I'm in Florida, when I'm in California, people are already using the words 'leadership' and 'Mansfield' together. And I'm very happy about it because particularly alumni know they got this here, and they're happy to see us expand upon it. Others feel it's a good fit because of the creed, our creed, which I think more people on the campus know than on most campuses that had a creed. The notion of scholarship, character, culture and service is a natural base for leadership development. And the fact that we sort of, not sort of, I think we very well live that creed here on campus. So tying all this together seemed like a pretty productive activity.

We then did a search for a person to head our Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute, which will eventually be located where Admissions is now, when everyone moves into South Hall along with Career Development, tying those two things together, has three primary missions. One is to help serve the campus and its leadership development, be it individual students or departments, upon request. "What can we do to help you?" Dennis Hinely who's the director of the Leadership Institute is skilled in many, many different systems of leadership that are very useful for students to be introduced to.

The second mission of the Leadership Institute is to develop corporate partnerships so that we can provide leadership training that is custom designed to community groups, corporations, existing leadership programs. And really connect with the community in a meaningful way, in service to helping our whole region, even the state of Pennsylvania and hopefully the country some time. We would be known as a place you go for that. That includes summer programming, bringing everybody here, from elementary students who are beginning to develop their leadership skills, right on through to senior citizens, to corporations, to anybody that wants to use our campus. We have so much space here in summer to use it as a Leadership Development Center.

And through that, the third mission is to become, in five years, nationally recognized for leadership development. And that's our goal.

DENNIS MILLER: Five years from now or five years from two years ago?

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: I would say five years from two years ago, except for the fact that we're

writing our strategic plan now and that sort of sets us in a new five-year framework. That's a tough question.

DENNIS MILLER: Yeah, the reason I ask is because so many facets of the campus have picked up on leadership and really started to run with the ball.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Well the delight of that, Dennis, is how well known we are for it already. It amazes me that it would even be possible, that nearly every place I go recognizes that that's a part of what we do here and it's very different than what other people do. I can't even accommodate the number of speaking engagements I'm asked to do on behalf of the University. I'm doing one tomorrow at Bucknell, but how many across the state that I'm asked to do, to talk about what we're doing here. And that's because they've heard about it, not because I'm sending out a memo saying I'm available to speak. That's good news for us, it's very good news for us, because generally it costs a whole lot of money to get out there that fast with a fairly large marketing agency, which can cost a million dollars. We didn't spend that money on that. We didn't spend any money on getting the word out. We just did it. And when you have a leadership minor like we do, none of this kind of thing would be happening without the faculty, but the faculty have moved very quickly on our leadership minor. They passed the Masters in Organizational Leadership. We're all ready to go to PASHEE for approval. Academically it's remarkable that our campus would be moving so quickly on something as different, but yet connected, to a new brand.

There's rarely a day that I go out of my office when there isn't a student waiting to meet with Dennis Hinely because they want to take the Gallup Strength Finder, which is a test that helps one develop what are their top skills on which they can build. Now a lot of surveys we take identify what we need to work on. This particular instrument identifies what your strengths are. And so therefore it helps to build self-confidence in many of our students that come to Mansfield without a lot of self-confidence that they can even do well in college. So this helps them know what they can build on. So a lot of our students are becoming interested in knowing that information. Dennis is working with individual students on that. And then I see them walking around campus talking about their five strengths and "What are your five strengths?" It's really an interesting dialogue to have across the campus.

My hope is that through a kind of intuitive thread, strong thread, that leadership will be embroidered throughout the fabric of our community in a way that is appropriate to various academic disciplines, in a way that enables students to hone these skills outside the classroom that gets them off campus. Our really good students could earn their way to a scholarship funding to an off campus leadership program maybe in Nebraska, which we don't think often that we can afford to do. We're doing a lot of fundraising for this. And also bringing events to the campus that will be open to everyone. You want to develop this particular piece of your leadership, let's put students and faculty and staff, alumni, administrators together in these workshops and see where that takes us. So you have some of the more organized ways of getting it, such as the academic programs that have been developed, and then you have more of a participate-as-you-wish, develop these, and then you have the ability to really reinforce your students who are very, very good at this and earn their way through their grade point average and service to the community to have off campus experiences.

DENNIS MILLER: The students themselves have really picked up on this through organizations and clubs and stuff. It just amazes me that it's taken off like wildfire. Two years is not a long time.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Well I'm very pleased. One of the things that struck me the other night, we had John Dau here, he's one of the young boys of Sudan and the documentary "God Grew Tired of Us" is based on his and the other 20,000 young men, their walk from southern Sudan to Kenya back to southern Sudan to Ethiopia and then coming to this country--

DENNIS MILLER: They're known as the "lost boys."

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: "The Lost Boys of Sudan" is what they're called. From everything I can gather, from students and the faculty and staff that attended that, and Straughn was full --

DENNIS MILLER: Straughn holds 13-1400 people.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: It was amazing. It was utterly amazing. We could have probably have gone to the balcony. But everyone reports that it was a transformational experience for them in terms of a contextual view of what challenges are and what other people are experiencing and cultures. John Dau did not go to school until he was 17. None of the young boys from Sudan know how old they are, because they weren't born in hospitals, there weren't any hospitals in southern Sudan. There aren't any doctors. There isn't any medicine. There's no pharmacy. There was no record of when they were born except their family's memories. So they really aren't sure. So all their birthdays are January 1st, which is when they came to this country, the United States assigned them. These are things are students, many of them had never perceived could be the case.

One of the things that pleased me about that is we opened the Leadership Institute in October with Jay Sidhu, who is from India originally, and he just left the position of CEO of Sovereign Bank. Now that's about as corporate as corporate gets. And his message to the students, they thought, "Oh my goodness, corporate America. I don't know if I need to go to this," was very inspirational. He comes to the view of leadership from a very organized path of training and study and application of that in the corporate world. Then we close this lecture series this year with John Dau, who never had a leadership course in his life. He didn't speak English or read or write until he was 17, in the refugee camp he started school.

DENNIS MILLER: I'm going to jump in here. He now speaks six languages.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Six languages. And I'm always telling the students, "You need languages." If somebody with this kind of a challenging background can do it, my goodness, we can all do it. And so what this hopefully shows our campus is that leadership comes in many, many forms. And it's not about, "Let's identify a leadership style that fits everybody and move towards it." With one exception, and I think that is that because of our creed and because of our other mission as a liberal arts university, I do think most of what we do here in leadership will be focused towards leadership as service. How do you use these skills to make positive change? Other than that I would be very reluctant to define what leadership is. I don't think the campus needs a president or administration or cabinet to tell them what leadership is. Finding it within your own disciplines can be a very exciting journey.

DENNIS MILLER: To be honest, I hadn't thought about it that way. So let's jump to three years from now and we're sitting here talking and the campus will be, what? As we know, three years is going to fly right by.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Well hopefully we'll have some new buildings. South Hall will be operational. I'm tying all this together with leadership. The Allen Hall renovation will be done. Grant Science will be done. I would love to see a new residence hall by then, or sooner. It will be a nicer campus to be in and stay on so that you can develop your leadership skills. I would love to see a Leadership Institute, a building, that is the Leadership Institute. Not a massive building but a simple building that could be a conference center so that when people come here we have a nice room to meet in, seat 300 or 400 people, break out rooms. This could be used at other times during the year for all kinds of things on campus besides this. We don't really have a nice, convenient place to hold conferences that people want to come here now to have. And so it's a real struggle, "Where will we stay?" and "Do you have air conditioning?" and "Where do we meet?" We have to use North Manser or Straughn, which seats 1300 even though it's only a 300 person conference. If we had that kind of building, I would never prioritize it away from classroom buildings, but I would like to raise money, I would like to get a name on that building. Because it would not be a highly expensive building to put up.

I would like to see the Leadership masters running very positively. I would like to see a huge percentage of our students taking the leadership minor because I know in my heart of hearts what that's going to do for them down the road with the tough competition that's out there for jobs. I would like to see more of our students electing to take a language because they're going to need it to do anything that they're going to do. But for leadership you've got to have it. I would like to see a leadership lecture series that doesn't just open and close well but every two months has a major speaker in here that the students are that excited about it,

as they were with these two. I would like to see a very large percentage of the students who are eligible, through their grade point average and service, to go to major leadership workshops out of the state. I'm amazed by how many of our students haven't been out of the state. I'd like to get them out of the state. I'd like to get them out of the country too, in terms of study abroad. But out of the state into these major workshops, other students have an opportunity to do.

And I would like to see us have moved terrifically, positively in terms of our own leadership development, the administration, are we into some best practice knowledge about what that is, what about our staff, our managers. I would like to see our residence hall RAs using their floors as a lab for leadership in a meaningful way. I'd like to see the mountaineer leadership program expanded and I'd like to see programs for the community, the state, the region and the country, on this campus in summer to the point where there's people who are the top heads in the Leadership Institute be able to serve the community in the way it needs, not the way we tell them it needs. And therefore we're really building good community relationships. So that's a part of what I'd like to see.

DENNIS MILLER: A part?

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: That's a part of it.

DENNIS MILLER: Okay. Well, we'll get back together a few years from now. But in the meantime we'll get back together for other things. Thank you very much.

MARAVENE LOESCHKE: Thank you. It's always a pleasure.

DENNIS MILLER: Yes it is.

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KATRINA BRUMFIELD: That's it for Leadership in Progress, a conversation with Mansfield University President Dr. Maravene Loeschke. The Mansfield University podcast series includes nearly 200 shows on a large variety of topics. Visit podcast.mansfield.edu for a complete listing, or subscribe through iTunes. I'm your host Katrina Brumfield.