

Kopenhaver Fellows Remarks  
August 3, 2016  
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Women Moving Forward: Keeping the Momentum Going

Good afternoon. It is great to be with you, the Kopenhaver Fellows, who have this very special opportunity, through mentoring, networking, and reuniting today to continue the momentum in your career development.

Thank you, Lillian, for your vision to help women junior communication faculty find their successful academic career paths through the Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication. And, for your invitation to talk about women moving forward: Keeping the momentum going.

Keeping the momentum going for women in the academy for me happens at AEJMC.

At a 1980s San Antonio AEJMC conference, I, as a nervous assistant professor, and others attended a Commission on the Status of Women session called the Wild Women of Academe. Behind closed doors with candles and incense, I remember a room filled with women giggling with relief upon hearing a speaker tell us realistically about the remains of old norms that had barred women from professional careers because men pursued intellectual pursuits and women emotional and relational ones. It felt wild to defy the academic norms of competitiveness and the isolation that we felt. We saw that we were stronger working and supporting one another.

Fast-forward 30 years. In 2015 as president of AEJMC, I helped re-launch the leadership program for women and people of color that AEJMC called JLID. Thanks to

the AEJMC national board and the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication, we developed a permanent sustainable budget model for the renamed Institute for Diverse Leadership (IDL) that will continue JLID's successful mission.

JLID had been a phenomenal yearlong training and mentoring program for AEJMC women and people of color who were aspiring to administrative positions. For the 76 graduates of the JLID classes, more than 60 percent went on to become deans, directors, associate deans, and department chairs. These placements represent 22 people of color and 21 Caucasian women, with a gender representation of 11 males and 32 females.

It was great to have been part of the leadership effort to re-launch this invaluable leadership-training program. And, I hope that you will consider applying to the IDL when you start to consider whether you want to take your leadership into academic administration.

My topic this afternoon is about how to keep you moving forward, to keep the momentum going in your academic careers. So, first some good news and bad news about women's advancement in the academy or why keeping the momentum going matters.

Now and for almost a decade, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), women are earning half of all doctorates.<sup>1</sup> According to *Change* magazine women academics have reached gender parity at entry-level hires and the number of women in senior university administrative positions continues to increase.<sup>2</sup>

These are very encouraging national statistics. But we are also aware that women do not hold associate professor or full professor positions at the same rate as their male counter-parts.<sup>3</sup>

The ACE report found a persistent pay gap, with men out earning women by over \$13,000 at public institutions and nearly \$18,000 at private institutions. “In fact, no matter the academic rank, men make more than women and are more likely to hold a tenure track position; and women are under-represented as university presidents, upper-level administrators and senior level faculty.”<sup>4</sup>

According to *Change Magazine*, women still lack an academic work environment that would encourage women’s success because it is composed of outmoded policies, procedures and prejudices.<sup>5</sup> Women in the academy still are over-burdened with service commitments. They are generally evaluated lower than men on classroom teaching. And, women continue to be caught in a double bind of expectations. On the one hand, women are expected to be authoritative and clearly in charge but on the other hand they must be communal and collaborative.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, these are national statistics and individual women’s representation and experiences in universities vary by institution and discipline. But, to start out so well in entry-level tenure-track positions and then have a pipeline that begins to leak as women seek tenure and promotion continues to be something we need to address because we know that women in the academy make a difference.

Women academics make a difference to the students they meet in the classroom, who are more likely to be women because women students have earned half or more of all baccalaureate degrees in the past decade.<sup>7</sup> Academic women make a difference in the

research topics that they will pursue. Their research has challenged the binary of men vs. women. Women scholars have made it acceptable to research women's lived experiences.

And women professors will add to the leadership talent that their colleges need to meet today's expectations for higher education.

In the Q&A session after my remarks, I am happy to continue the conversation on women's issues in the academy, some of which I've mentioned already such as lack of role models, pay disparity, policies and practices with built-in biases, and issues of tenure and promotion.

For my formal presentation, I would like to talk about your "leadership momentum." In the academy, we need women to contribute their leadership talents to provide the requisite variety that strengthens our university educational missions. It matters a great deal to have women leaders to add to the efforts to make university environments encouraging of women academics' professional success. And, universities need women's voices to address how universities must adapt and change to meet the increasing political complexities and rising social expectations for what a university education should be.

Women's leadership has made a difference in my university, the University of Maryland by successfully lobbying to create family leave policies for women and men academics, in order to have children and advance to successful tenure and promotion. At the University of Maryland, official HR family leave policies are less than four years old. Without the work of senior women professors and working with Project Advance, a National Science Foundation funded program to increase the representation and

advancement of women in academic careers, Maryland might still be trying to provide time off and continued pay for women with what I call “an uneven playing field.” For resource rich departments, giving women time off with pay wasn’t an issue, while poorer departments could not afford to do so. Women academics had to depend on the goodwill of individual department chairs because no family leave policies were in place to support leave with pay and health benefits, resulting in women having to barter for ways to offset their absence from the classroom.

Leadership has been defined in hundreds of ways. I still use Bales’ two leadership categories, that leaders must accomplish two things: they must build group morale and they must accomplish the group task.<sup>8</sup> Others have identified authoritarian vs. collaborative styles of leadership or transformational vs. transactional leadership. In my research with Linda Aldoory on leadership and gender in public relations, we concluded that women moving into leadership positions “may need to seriously consider the complexities of enacting a feminine, a masculine, or a mixed style of leadership, depending on the circumstances.”<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes leadership might seem to us like something only for the very courageous or for those gifted with personality or charisma. Perhaps, you have thought of leadership as far off somewhere in your future when you get tenure and promotion, or when you get promoted to full. You might be thinking that we’ll just plan on someone else to carry the lead because they’ve done so in the past. But it is rare that one person can do all of the “leading” and do it well.

Instead experts on leadership today have recognized that everyone has leadership skills to give. That your team, department, or organization is stronger if everyone

contributes their leadership talents. We in groups need to take advantage of everyone's leadership capacity, or as authors of a book on *Appreciative Leadership*<sup>10</sup> define leadership: "leadership is an individual relational capacity to set in motion confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance, to make a difference in the world."<sup>11</sup>

I hope to encourage your leadership abilities with five 'take-away' points that I've learned about leadership. First, find your leadership style. There is not one pattern for what a leader does or is. Find what works for you. How have you influenced a group decision by providing an idea? Have you summarized where the group discussion is? Provided pros and cons to the discussion? Are you able help the group 'cut to the chase' --always helpful in long faculty discussions.

Sometimes your colleagues will be able to describe your talents to you before you recognize them in yourself. Think about what they have told you about your leadership. Their feedback can help you build awareness when you might think that your actions don't merit the term "leadership." You may think that everyone has the same characteristics as those pointed out as yours. Not so.

I have a colleague whose leadership talents I admire greatly because she is a wonderful thinker and writer and I have not only told her this but I immediately convinced her to be part of the department leadership team. Academic materials such as requests, memos, letters, and reports are "long form" essays. I have counted on her as the person to help me put my thoughts into the proper persuasive words and I am very grateful for her leadership talents.

I became aware that what I have done as a leader is "to get things organized." I am for keeping at the task, especially the long-term objective. I became department chair

in 2007 right before the U.S. financial crisis hit public university budgets. I was determined to keep the department budget “in the black” during those recession years in which my state kept cutting the budget and eliminating jobs and merit pay. Delivering the bad news on a seemingly annual basis to my colleagues was not popular. Although we all understood the circumstances that had led to no raises and less money for our program goals, leading in this environment meant to me keeping going, through consensus with my colleagues, at the task of finding new sources of revenue.

But, my colleagues have told me that it is calmness and being positive in my interactions even in the face of disagreement and failure that they see about my leadership. With pretty good humor in their voices when we have faced problems, they call me “Pollyanna”, but we have achieved our goal of bringing in funding for our needs.

Second, say “yes” to leadership opportunities. At my very first AEJMC conference in 1983 I sat at lunch next to someone I didn’t know at all, Carolyn Cline, and then an assistant professor at the University of Texas, who had obtained a \$2500 award from the International Association of Business Communicators, to benchmark what it meant for an increasing number of women to enter public relations. Carolyn asked me if I’d be interested in helping with the study. Out of that chance encounter, Carolyn and a group of junior women including me, Judy VanSlyke Turk, and Lynne Walters produced a report called the *Velvet Ghetto*, really a booklet, about 2000 copies that IABC printed and distributed. But, as modest as it seemed to us, it started a national conversation about gender and public relations.

Third, be a flexible leader. Plans don’t work out and this is ok. It is never possible to anticipate all of the consequences. Have a Plan B and C. I have tried to

correct my mistakes as soon as they are pointed out because even-though I thought I had made the best decision based on all the available input, the results didn't always turn out as we anticipated.

For example, the Institute for Diverse Leadership advisory board has just selected a second IDL class and they will start their sessions tomorrow. We expected to select from the applications people who had achieved tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor, or had had at least five years of academic experience, because we made the judgment that they'd more likely have the university socialization they needed to do administration. But, we had applicants who had already been thrust into leadership positions as assistant professors without tenure. Here was the academy telling us that it had thrown out our definition of "readiness" for those who would benefit from IDL training and we had to change our criteria accordingly. We did.

Fourth, network with other academic women, including but beyond Fellows. Moving toward a successful academic career requires a support group, whether the group helps with your research, is there to celebrate your successes, or to encourage you when you are stuck or frustrated by life. AEJMC, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Fellows, Project Advance at your universities, can lead you to your network. Our former Maryland graduate students who are now women assistant and associate professors, who are dispersed across the country, network with each other through emails, tweets, co-authoring, working on national committees together, or just having coffee together when they are "in town." My network happened almost organically through meeting up at conferences or being connected with other women by leadership interests.

Fifth, I hope that you will be visible and be present in the decision-making processes of your department. Listen and engage in the discussion. Some people are fortunate to grab on to the floor and relish the debate. I am not. I'd rather wait for the moment when a statement is needed to move things forward. Think of this as exercising your leadership skills. I know that this can feel daunting in a room of seasoned colleagues and I have felt this nervousness. It is like learning to do extemporaneous speaking. But, it is like any skill we develop, it just takes practice.

In short, have a willingness in your careers to contribute your leadership skills, help with the plans and be flexible when changes are needed. This means living and working in 'the now' and foregoing how things used to be done. Be open to plans B and C. Four years ago at the AEJMC St. Louis conference, some of my public relations colleagues approached me to run for the AEJMC vice presidency. I smilingly suggested that perhaps they had had one to many to drink but they persisted even when I didn't believe in myself. I had not planned on this turn of events. But, I found out through the election process and now participation on the national board that I could contribute my leadership skills.

We need everyone's leadership talents now and I want to encourage you to become aware of and exercise your leadership talents so that you are ready for those designated leadership roles ahead.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about why moving your leadership momentum forward is important. I look forward to hearing about your leadership experiences and hope you have questions and comments to contribute to our time together.

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<sup>1</sup> “New Report Looks at the Status of Women in Higher Education,” *ACE*, par.3, <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/New-Report-Loks-at-the-Status-of-Women-in-Higher-Education.aspx>, June 26, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Pamela L. Eddy and Kelly Ward, “lean In or Opt Out: Career Pathways of Academic Women,” *Change*, (2015, March-April): par 2, [http://www.chngemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2015/March-April%202015/lean\\_full.html](http://www.chngemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2015/March-April%202015/lean_full.html), June 26, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> “New Report Looks at the Status of Women,” par. 3.

<sup>4</sup> “New Report Looks at the Status of Women”, par. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Pamela L. Eddy and Kelly Ward, par. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Pamela L. Eddy and Kelly Ward, par. 1.

<sup>7</sup> “New Report Looks at the Status of Women,” par. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Bales and Fred Strodbeck, “Phases in Group Problem Solving.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 46: 485-95, 1951, in Hugh M. Clubertson, “On the Many Sides of Leadership.” *The Public Relations Quarterly*, (1968, Fall): 27.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Aldoory and Elizabeth L. Toth, “Leadership and Gender in Public Relations: Perceived Effectiveness of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles.” *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 16, No. 2 (2004): 180.

<sup>10</sup> Diana Whitney, Amanda Tresten-Bloom and Kae Rader. *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on what works to drive a Winning performance and build a thriving organization*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 3.