

Participant Feedback from the Third McKee Learning Lunch

Chattanooga Values I

September 17, 2014

This learning experience was co-sponsored by Michael Harrell, Latitude Advisors, LLC, and the McKee Chair of Excellence in Learning, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Introduction

For reasons yet to be explored, societal core values often are expressed in threes, as the following examples show:

- United States: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- Canada, Australia, and New Zealand: peace, order, and good government
- France: freedom, equality, and brotherhood

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that the group of people who gathered for this McKee Learning Lunch produced a list of three primary basic elements of Chattanooga's values: generosity, faith, and collaboration. The list leads to two critical questions:

- Do these three conditions truly represent the set of basic values for the Chattanooga region?
- Would other Chattanoogaans propose different values as being representative the region?

Over the past few years, initially with a grant from the Kettering Foundation, we have been exploring the question of what stimulated Chattanooga to evolve from "the dirtiest city in America" to the tourist-destination city and industrial mecca that it is today—a process often referred to as the "Chattanooga Renaissance." In fewer than 30 years, the makeover represents a remarkable metropolitan change. As a result, outside observers, as well as the citizens of Chattanooga, have explored the basic values that undergird the area and that serve as the impetus for the transformation.

Don Soderquist, former COO of Walmart and Founding Executive of the Soderquist Center, was the guest speaker. After Sam Walton died, Don, who spent more than 20 years with Walmart, became known as "The Keeper of the Culture." He led Walmart as Chief Operating Officer during a period marked by exponential growth. Under his watch, the company grew from being the largest retailer in the world with sales of \$43.9 billion in the year of Sam's death, to becoming the largest company in the world with sales topping \$200 billion. Walmart's success is grounded in highly ethical, performance-focused, servant-leadership philosophies that Sam and Don espoused and encouraged. Don's current passion is to help other companies and organizations around the world to those same principles.

The text of Don's presentation is appended to this report. We would like to thank both Don and Mike Harrell, co-sponsor of this learning lunch, for taking part in this event. This McKee Learning Lunch sparked an ongoing conversation about Chattanooga's values. Indeed, on April 7, 2016, a second McKee Learning Lunch, Chattanooga Values II, took place.

In accordance with the process used at every McKee Learning Lunch, there were three general feedback opportunities, or Assignments 1, 2, and 3. The participants, who are listed at

the end of this report, provided their insights into and questions about the topic. The text of Mike Harrell's introduction follows.

Introduction of the Topic **Mike Harrell**

This is kind of an unusual discussion. We typically don't talk about some of these kinds of things—fuzzy, soft things. But we're going to talk about [one] today, in terms of what Jim [Tucker] mentioned about values.

In 2008, Volkswagen made the announcement that they had picked Chattanooga [as the location for a new plant]. It was a big deal in July of that year. As you know, there was a lot of work that went on prior to that. There were a lot of people doing work in the background, creating the site and hoping that we would be the one selected—and we didn't really know if we would be or not. It was a bit of a surprise, but they selected us. Obviously, a billion dollars of investment and 2,000-plus jobs and so forth have really helped change our community.

But do you remember what they said? What . . . the tipping point was as to why they picked Chattanooga? It was the *intangibles*. Have you ever thought about what those intangibles were? Was it the River Walk? Or was it the "renaissance" of downtown? Or was it that at the time that we were getting ready to build a gig network for 600 square miles?

I think those [accomplishments] are manifestations of things that were probably deeper. We meet people every week who moved here for those intangibles. We constantly receive folks that just show up here, even without jobs. Nine years ago [my wife and I] actually had that same opportunity and chose to come here, because every time we would come to visit in the late nineties, there was something so compelling that just drew us to the community. So what are those intangibles?

I think [that] as a community we do have some enduring beliefs and principles that have really shaped our culture over the years—and not just for a few years but also probably for decades. I think that we can say that it was those principles—which are really values—that really have guided the decision-making that has gone on in this community for a number of years. The question then becomes this: How do we leverage that? How do we capture those? Could we articulate those? Could we grow with those? Lead with those strengths? What happens if we don't? What happens if we just let them deteriorate?

One of the e-mails that you received had a quote in it by . . . John W. Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and who [author of] *On Leadership*. Our speaker today shared that quote with us about four years ago. Here's what the quote says: "Values always decay over time. Societies that keep their values alive do so not by escaping the processes of decay but by powerful processes of regeneration." Interestingly, Gardner didn't say that values decay over time in *organizations* or *companies* that want to keep their values; [rather], he said *societies*, and I think that speaks to us. How do we keep what we have? And not just keep what we have, but how do we lead with our strengths as we go on and set the pace for our communities, knowing that we still have things that we need to improve?

Today, it is a real privilege to have a speaker who knows a lot about values and how they literally shape organizations—large organizations. In 1980, Sam Walton hired Don Soderquist as executive vice-president for Walmart. In 1988, Don was elected as vice-chair and chief operating officer. And in 1999, he was promoted to senior vice-chair of the corporation.

When Sam passed away in the 1990s, David Glass was the CEO and Don was the COO. Together they took the company from \$40 billion in sales to \$240 billion in sales in a period of

10-plus years. If my math is correct, that's like adding a store per day with 500 people per store for that period of time. That's an enormous amount of growth. It's unprecedented. How in the world do you keep track of culture and manage this? If any of you have managed organizations or even a small team, you know how difficult it is to get everybody on the same page, with the same speed and direction and with the same energy and passion. How do you do that with a company that large?

Well, that's what Don did. He was the keeper of the culture. His passion was to make sure that the values that he had—and that Sam had definitely passed along—[were maintained] throughout the company as fast as it grew. And he had tremendous influence in that.

After Don retired, John Brown University created the Soderquist Center for Leadership and Ethics in 1998. They named it after Don, and his passion since then has been to work with organizations and companies and communities like us to help understand those same types of principles and how to pass them along.

So, it is a real privilege today to have Don here to talk about values and what that means and the impact it has, [including] its boundaries as well as its decision-making properties, as we think through as a community what that means for us.

Assignment 1

Post-presentation Questions: Following the discussion, participants posed questions about Chattanooga's values. The questions are listed below.

Who Determines Community Values?

- Who are the values-leaders who have led, are leading, and will lead Chattanooga? Did they meet together in the past? Are they currently meeting together?
- Who is the ultimate arbiter of values?
- What is the proper role of government in shaping the values of a community?
- Why do we allow political parties to define issues and solutions?

Developing and Maintaining Desirable Values

- What are the procedural steps for developing community values?
- As someone who has led values discussions, how do I convince people that you can't support more than 3 or 4 "core" values?
- At what point does commitment come into play, and how can we instill this along with the regeneration and continuation of values?
- How will we take what we learn about values today and integrate it into our community on a daily basis?
- What if a community value is something that is not that great—for example, watching television 5 hours per day? Do we reflect truth or aspiration?

Values as Truly Community-wide

- What are some strategies for bringing together a very diverse community to agree on a common set of values?
- Do the labels of values have the potential to divide more than unify—more so than the actual behaviors they entail?
- How do we create an environment that encourages all individuals to share their ideas about what is most important to our community's future?

- How do we ensure that the values we define as a community adequately reflect the values of the entire community?
- What strategy would we use to implement Chattanooga values citywide?
- How do we extend those values beyond the communication loop?
- How do we engage our youth in a conversation about values?

Chattanooga and Specific Values

- How do you make education a value?
- Do not some enduring values change through education, and what is the responsibility for or role of education in teaching certain enduring values?
- What is our most significant and valuable regional value?
- What are the most important values that have driven Chattanooga to where it is today?

Assignment 2

Discussion Question: Values are defined as (a) enduring beliefs about the way things should be done or about the ends we desire; (b) principles that are so intrinsically important to us that it's unlikely that we will easily change them; and (c) the underlying principles that guide decisions. Given that these definitions are accurate, please consider the following three questions:

- 1. What are the primary values that define Chattanooga?**
- 2. What are the behaviors that exemplify each of Chattanooga's values?**
- 3. How does Chattanooga ensure that values are maintained?**

Responses

Five groups of participants, made up of four to five individuals each, took part in the discussion. Their responses, which fell into several categories, are listed below. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of groups suggesting the same or similar values.

- Generosity (5)
- Faith (3)
- Collaboration/shared ownership (3)
- Family (2)
- Innovation/creativity (2)
- Resilience/perseverance (2)
- Support/concern (2)
- Hospitality (2)
- Priority of education, embracing the outdoors, "can-do" spirit, strong leadership, civic intent, accessibility to leadership, self-reliance, hope, enterprise, fellowship (1)

From this list, it is obvious that the three values most commonly identified with Chattanooga are generosity, faith, and collaboration. It is also interesting to note that only one of the five groups unanimously listed the same value—generosity.

Assignment 3

Post-discussion Question: After the discussion, we asked participants to respond, in writing, to two additional questions.

Question 1. What is the most important thing you learned today?

Common Values Define Chattanooga

- So many people, from “transplants” to native Chattanoogaans, share so many of the same value-oriented experiences in Chattanooga.
- The grafted-in folks are grafted, not “transplanted.” We share DNA.
- All the different groups recognize similar values.
- Chattanooga is a progressive city that invests in its youth.
- Chattanooga is unique. Chattanooga is not unique.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

- Values are translated into culture by the ways that we act and the ways that we do not act.
- The affirmation that words are meaningless without action.

Articulated Values Critical for Development

- There is a passion and desire to establish Chattanooga values *now*.
- The importance of not taking for granted what we have and the importance of intentionally passing [values] on.
- A leadership group is thinking about Chattanooga’s progress and about the importance of a sense of urgency in progression.
- There is genuine excitement about defining Chattanooga’s values.
- Chattanooga is a community of values and is moving forward.
- The foundations have blessed this city with a stable set of positive values and have articulated these values over time.

Developmental Needs

- The need for ethical leadership.
- We need a plan.

Historical Issues

- The history of Chattanooga and where it came from.
- The behind-the-scenes Walmart story.

Question 2. What unanswered question(s) are you leaving with?

What’s Next?

- Where do we go from here?
- Which Chattanooga?
- What are the next steps? (Posed verbatim by two participants.)
- What is the plan?
- What do *we* do next?
- How do we plan for the future and be ready for the next steps, whatever they may be?
- Who? How? When?

- When will we make a plan and execute it?
- How do we continue this conversation and translate to plans?

Developing and Using a Code of Values

- How do we construct a values code?
- How do we narrow down some of these values? How do we determine which ones are most important and/or most characteristic of Chattanooga?
- How do we set our community to really define our values and lead with them?
- Who will listen and who will care if we draft a solid list of values?

Educating Current and Future Chattanoogaans

- What is the structure for educating newcomers and future leaders?
- How will we teach “the Chattanooga Way” to the next generation?
- As Chattanooga becomes more attractive to younger groups, how will this history be relayed to them?
- Are the “transplants” the people who best see the potential of Chattanooga and its citizens?

Participants

We would like to thank the following participants for their interest in and contribution to this McKee Learning Lunch.

Steve Angle. Chancellor, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Julie Baumgardner. President and CEO, First Things First.

Tia Capps. Communications Director, CO.LAB.

Bengt Carlson. Experiential Learning Coordinator, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Al Chapman. Executive Director, Front Porch Alliance.

Pete Cooper. President, Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga.

Mike Harrell. CEO, Latitude Advisors, LLC.

Greg Heath. Professor and Assistant Provost for Research and Engagement, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Dan Jacobson. Vice President of Properties and Corporate Services, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Tennessee.

Lurone Jennings. Administrator, Department of Youth and Family Development, Chattanooga.

Leslie Jensen-Inman. Co-founder, Center Centre, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Tom McCallie. Executive Director, Robert and Kathrina Maclellan Foundation.

Chris McKee. Executive Vice President, Marketing and Sales, McKee Foods.

Matt McLelland. Director of Enterprise Systems, Kenco Management Services.

James Moreland. Chair, East Chattanooga Improvement, Inc.

Valerie C. Rutledge. Dean, College of Health, Education and Professional Studies; University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Don Soderquist. Founding Executive, Soderquist Center, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

Elizabeth Snelling. Graduate assistant, McKee Chair of Excellence in Learning, College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies; University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Perry Storey. Director, Challenger STEM Learning Center.

Roger Thompson, Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

James A. Tucker. Professor and McKee Chair of Excellence in Learning, of Education, College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies; University of Chattanooga at Tennessee.

Priscilla Tucker. Author and educator, Natural Learning Publications.

Edna Varner. Principal, Public Education Foundation, Hamilton County Department of Education.

Appendix

Don Soderquist Presentation

Thank you very much, Jim [Tucker] and Mike. It's great to be here again. I will tell you my first exposure to Chattanooga was when my wife and I were married and we came down through Chattanooga on our honeymoon. I will tell you, there wasn't much in Chattanooga that attracted my attention. I was focused on other things. We went to the Smoky Mountains and had a great time in this particular part of the country. So that was my first exposure to Chattanooga.

My second exposure was when I met Julie Baumgartner [President and CEO of First Things First in Chattanooga] while we were working with the city of Phoenix, as well as with the whole state of Arizona, which was recognized at that time as being the least interested [state] in nonprofit-organizations in the country, and the least interested in helping the community. But we worked with them for a little over a year, and Julie was down there also and told me a little bit about Chattanooga and she had been involved in the change that had happened here. Is that right, Julie? (Julie comments, "I said there's a great time here.")

What you were all doing here, in the Chattanooga area and the region around here, was pretty exciting as far as the involvement of the business community, the involvement of the college, the involvement of all of the not-for-profit organizations—and that's really what Phoenix was lacking, and they didn't have the unity as it related to that. Julie was able to share a story—the story of you all and what you were all doing here, which was really impressive to me. So that was really our touch-point with Julie. She was very proud of what this area had done.

Just before I came up to speak, I was introduced to Dan Jacobson of the BCBS [Blue Cross/Blue Shield] in this area, and he was sharing with me that he was going to be leaving this meeting and going to another one where they're going to be talking about three states and where they're going to be working together regionally to take advantage of the common interest that you have in this part of the world—in this part of the country—both from an economic standpoint and the use of resources and the rest of it. Obviously, that is continuing on, and what you have done over a period of years—working in the community to change the image of the community—I think has been phenomenal and is unique when you look across the country at what is happening. What has been happening throughout the country, in some of the cities, is that rather than building and growing, there has been a deterioration of the socioeconomic arena.

My son is a co-pastor in an African American church in the inner city of Chicago, and he lives there in the Black community. In the next community over is the Hispanic community. There are two or more Hispanic churches within the Hispanic community, as well. Unfortunately, what they find in Chicago—and you'll read about it in the newspaper and see it on the Internet—is [about] all the people who are killed every weekend. It's a dreadful thing. A year ago there was a Hispanic young man riding a bicycle in front of his house, and a gang killed him. It was not a gang of 18- to 20-year-olds but a gang of 14-year-olds. So, [my son] knows what that's like. Not much has been done or is being done there, and I don't mean to represent that that's the worst of things. But he has been dedicated to doing this kind of the thing for 20 years now, with his wife. And his two boys are being raised there. So I do know what's good and I do know what's bad. And I've seen it so much through his eyes and learned

so much about what's going on in the inner city and what's being done to try to change things. I appreciate it more than anything. It's a big job. It's a tough job.

Therefore, what you all have done as business leaders, educators, and not-for-profit people in working together to change the image of Chattanooga is very noteworthy. And you know the recognitions that you have received, and people are coming to know what it is that you're all doing. So, I commend you for that. I do think the phase that you're in now in looking at values is an incredibly important next step. As a matter of fact, the issue of values is fundamental to an organization, and to a community, and to any kind of enterprise, if you're going to sustain yourself into the future. For organizations to be successful over an extended period of time, you've got to have some basic things. You've got to have a vision of what it is you hope to accomplish. You've got to have mission and how it is that you are going to go about accomplishing it. You do have to have a set of sound, virtuous values on which you can build a foundation for the strategies that you develop over time, because the strategies grow out of what your vision and values are. It's fundamentally incredibly important what you've embarked on now, [because] you've demonstrated things that other people didn't think you could do. Therefore, this is not out of reach.

How do you get a community to agree on a set of values? I think first of all you need to identify what *values* are. What are you talking about when you're talking about *core values*? When we use words, like the word "values," what do they mean? [We need to do this] because we live in a dramatically changing society—and the issues that maybe 25 years ago were generally understood by everybody—are being changed, and we live in a very polarized society right now. You scratch your head when you see some of the stuff going on.

One of the reasons we started the [Soderquist] Center in '98 was that as I was starting to look to graduate from Walmart, I was concerned about what I saw happening. There was a deterioration of values taking place in our country. There was a fogging of issues of right and wrong. I was speaking to a group of media people from all over Arkansas, about six years ago. They had asked me to speak about ethics and the media. I didn't think I could because that was an oxymoron. They said, well, we want you to come anyway. So I have a PowerPoint presentation and a slide that says, *Ethics and Doing What Is Right*. A lady in the front row—and these are all media people—raised her and said, "Right according to whom?" And I said, "That's the problem. In the past, you never had to ask that. Oh, there was diversity of thinking. There's no question about that. And 25 years ago we didn't do everything right. We had some things askew, and we had some things wrong, but there are absolutes in this world." She said, "What are absolutes?" I said, "Well, a couple of them are [that] it's wrong to lie, cheat, and steal."

I remember looking up at the ceiling and saying [that] there are absolutes in the world we live in, and they are based on virtuous values and they provide direction to us as far as what is expected in the normal behaviors. When we use words that vary in meaning, I like to look them up in the dictionary. I used to use Webster's dictionary. Now you go on the Internet, and once, a long time ago, when I went on line to search, I found 33 different dictionaries, all to explain the same words. And they explained them with the same words, but they have little nuances of difference in there. But the dictionary says that values are the beliefs that people have about what is right and what is wrong. And it goes onto say [that values are] what is most important in life. And the third part [says that values] can control our behavior. So the idea is that values provide guidelines, if you will, about issues of right and wrong and what is really important to us. But ultimately values are what control our behavior.

What is behavior? Behavior is the culture that we live in. The values are translated into culture by the way we act. Or don't act. Values provide those fences that [set the] framework within which we live. This is the framework that defines what we think is important. Walmart was founded upon Judeo-Christian principles found in the Bible. The political-correctness police are going to check on you when you say something that is inappropriate in their minds or in their judgment. I only say that to say that that's a fact, because Sam and I spent hours talking about how it was that we wanted to run the company and what was most important in running the company and how to perpetuate that amongst the people so that they'd behave appropriately. And, as we talked about it, that's what he [Sam] wanted to evolve: Treat everybody the way you want to be treated. Don't be arrogant; be humble. Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to. You know, when someone gives you evil, don't return the evil. I hope you disagree with basic principles like that, and that's what we founded our company on.

Sam at one time said something in the mid-eighties that was virtually prophetic—that "I had no idea the scope of what I would start. But I was confident of the fact that if we did our work well and treated our customers and associates well, there would be no limit to us." That was prophetic. I mean, when I joined the company we were at 1 billion dollars in sales. We were the 29th largest retailer. When I left the board 23 years later, we were the largest company in the world, [generating] 244 billion. Unbelievable! How can that happen? We were a little guy. We became big. How did that happen?

Well it happened, in my judgment, because we did things right. We had good strategies. We had a good product and so forth. But [the growth] was driven by the values that we have and the beliefs that we have. Taking care of our people. Taking care of our customers. That's why we are in business. It was about striving to be the best we can be every single day—and I can tell you stories upon stories about that—but time does not allow that.

I sat with Sam, and we talked about it. Every organization, every community, every not-for-profit organization has a culture. And either it's orchestrated or it grows up on its on. And the culture can be best described in simple terms. I mean, have you ever heard anybody say, "That's the way we do it here?" Doesn't matter what the rules are! That's the way we do it here. That's our behavior."

It's incredibly important for you to educate the next step, to take this very seriously; that this not just as an exercise to put some words on the board. The words are meaningless unless they're written down. The words are meaningless unless people believe in them and are committed to them, and so forth. Can you get a lot of businesses and a lot of organizations and a lot of senior leaders all together to agree? Yeah, you can—if you want to, if it's important to you. You have something that's precious here. And it's your culture. It is the intangibles that we're talking about.

But you can bring something tangible to the intangibles, and it's more than what's in the mind: It's what's in the heart. You see, culture can be very emotional. Emotions are good, and I commend you on your pursuit of this. But don't take forever to do it! Do it now! First time I spoke here was four years ago. I'm glad you got the engine going now. I talked about values then and how important they are. So what you have to figure out is the process of how you arrive at the values that are worthwhile. You know, I can point out a lot of them that I see right now in the community, like integrity. Very important to you. I think faith is very important to this community, based on what I have seen. And one thing you'll have to be careful of is you'll have 25 minutes [to discuss this]—and that becomes too much [time]. So you have to have

fundamental values out of which other, if you will, practices or principles will grow from this set that everybody can agree on.

We live in a world in which it is hard to get people to agree. Look at our government. Oh, my goodness! Don't look at the government. That's not a role model. But if you're really serious about that, then you'll get down to brass tacks and you'll make it happen. And that's what I think you're trying to do. I think after lunch, you are going to sit around and talk more about it, but talk with an end in mind—not just jabber. What it is that we are trying to accomplish? And you all have to be on the same page. So, maybe the issue mission and vision comes even before you can agree on the values, because that says where you are going. And so, I commend that to you. That you attach a sense of urgency to what it is that you're doing. Don't think it can't be done. There will be the naysayers that say you can't do it—you can't get all these people to agree. And I disagree. It all depends on how strongly you might feel about it.

So, again, the Walmart culture established a framework where all the people in the organization knew what was expected out of them. They knew what behavior was acceptable. They were encouraged and excited about being a part of a winning team that had a goal and mission of serving other people [by] providing the opportunity for people to literally spend less on what they needed to for everyday essentials—and as a result of it, live better. There are a lot of outgrowths of that and involved in developing the culture of the company and so forth, but you have to get the foundation down. Otherwise, as time goes on, your values will deteriorate.

That quote by John Gardner—"Values always decay over time. Societies that keep their values alive do so not by escaping the processes of decay but by powerful processes of regeneration"—was made before there was a proliferation of books on leadership. Man, he was right on target! He ended up teaching at Stanford University, and I think he [did so into] his 90s. He taught and believed in these things. And, frankly, one of the greatest concerns when Sam died was this: What's going to happen to the culture? Here's this guy who built this company from the very beginning and believed in all these things. What's going to happen to our values? If we leave them unattended, what's going to happen? You know, it's like we've got to say I love you every day to your wife. You don't let too much time go by without that becoming questionable. Or your husband. And so, that was the greatest concern I had—that we would lose something special. It was a competitive advantage that we had over our competitors, because we actually believed in what we were doing.

Were we perfect? No! Did we make mistakes? Yes! Did we do things wrong? Yes! One of the things I appreciate about the company, one of the parts of our culture was when we did something wrong, we corrected it as fast as we could. I don't care if it was an idea Sam had or whatever Sam was. I had no propriety interest in it. If he had an idea and it wasn't working, then we changed. He was able to give it up and never look back. I don't remember him saying, "I'm sorry," but it worked. We made it work. I could talk to you about that but you don't need that.

What we've learned since '98 and since working with many companies—like we touched about 3,000 people last year, touched people from 185 different countries—we've been able to see broad views of different people, and we only work with the good companies. We're not in the remedial business to help people dig themselves out of the ditch. We work with good people. Some people don't get this. They don't understand how important building a foundation is. Now, if you talk to them about building a house, they get that. And the foundation is extremely important, but they don't understand that it's these intangibles that will drive people.

My favorite quotes come from *Primal Leadership*, which would not entice many people to read it, but someone told me about it. It's about emotional intelligence, and in it Daniel Goleman says (and his quote jumped off the page at me), "Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion. They inspire the best of us." I love that. Move us. Move us from point A to point B. Move us from where we are to where we would like to be. As we look along the horizon, we see what we can be out there, and it ignites our passion. And we do a lot better when we're passionate. I see a lot of people who are that passionate about football games. I mean that's real passion and so forth. I want to work with someone who ignites my passion and gets me excited. I want to follow them—not because he or she has a title, or they make a lot of money. I want someone who excites me about an issue—what I'm doing. I want a leader that inspires the best in me, who wants me to grow, who wants me to be as good as I possibly can be. If everyone in the organization did the best they could possibly do there would be enormous improvement in your performance. And that's what we all want.

We all want to be successful; we all want to accomplish. We all may want to accomplish different things. And that's why it's so important to have a central view of things. So, I commend you on what you've done so far. I also commend you for what you're looking to do now and in the future, and I also commend you to do it. You can spend a lot of time talking about it. You'd be surprised to know how quickly you can put a set of values together. An advantage that you do have here is that you don't have a big state university that teaches liberal philosophies—what I would call fallacies. You have an organization and an institution that really teaches young people what it's all about—and it's not money.

You know, I just saw a study the other day about the institutions where the graduates get paid the most. One question that the survey asked was, Are you happy in your job? It was amazing how many people were not happy in their jobs. They're making the most money, so maybe making money isn't the most important thing. I wonder. We live in a society where money seems to be so important in the minds of the graduates of our universities around the country. The fact is that this school will work together with business leaders and with not-for-profit organizations, and so forth, for the betterment of the community, and the students are immersed in that and that they see what teamwork and partnership can mean. They see the obligation that they have, because of their education, to be committed to those organizations that helping those who are less fortunate. That is a part of the Judeo-Christian principle—to take care of the poor. There's so much that Walmart does that's never in the papers: helping the poor, helping the widows, helping the homeless, helping the single parents. But that's what it's all about: helping each other.

I guarantee you that every one of you here was helped somewhere along the way by someone. It may have been Mom or Dad. But you were helped somewhere along the way to get to where you are. We have the obligation—and I don't necessarily like the phrase—to pay it forward. But we just have an obligation to people who are less fortunate than us. It's not a matter of paying anything. It's a matter of investing—not paying. There's a difference between an expense and an investment. This is an investment in the lives of the people next door to us. They live down the block, and they live maybe in the poor section of town. I know I'm preaching to the choir. You guys are the ones who are the leaders. I'm just trying to light a little fire under you. Get going with it! Let's do it. And you can do it. God bless you all!