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MIKE: Welcome to this episode of MC Forward, a podcast that focuses on Montgomery College individuals who are leading from where they are. I'm your host, Dr. Michael Mills. Joining me today is Goli Trump, Internal Audit and Advisory Services Director. Goli, thanks for joining me.

GOLI: Hello, nice to be here. Thank you, Mike.

MIKE: So, I want to start off with a quote that I…I came across when you were with the Fairfax County Public Schools School Board and you were talking about enterprise risk management and you said this in…in the article: "ERM is a discipline but it is most successful when it entails a cultural change, and cultural changes tend to take hold faster in private organizations because they thrive on change. Change takes longer in the public sector." So, two…two questions. Why does change take longer in the public sector and what can leaders do to help move that change along?

GOLI: So, I wish I had the answer for the why. It takes longer but I…I know what we're… what we see, what I have seen in the public sector having worked at non-profits that are quasi-public and fully private as well as and then, obviously, public sector institutions of education, is there…we tend to have a lot of, um, decision paralysis. And again, if I knew why…uh, here at the College sometimes I think we are also very…very talented that, uh, taking hold of one good idea versus trying to decide, you know, where we perhaps defer to somebody else's good idea or want to be held accountable might be a little more difficult. Um, you, in other public institutions, there's a lot of talk. I've seen just lots of meetings about a decision that takes sometimes up to eight--I've seen decisions take up to 18 months. But I wish I knew the why in the public center sector because I think then, especially as my role here as Internal Audit Advisory Services Director, I might be able to help audit that. But the, um, interesting thing when you talk about culture. One of the newer, uh, provocative areas for audits, not just in institutions of higher ed but globally, is culture audits. You know, to try to figure out what the culture is and whether or not it's…it's where it needs to be for an organization to meet its strategic goals and its objectives.

MIKE: What can leaders do to help move that along?

GOLI: I, you know, the--what I've seen successfully is accountability. Right? If somebody would step up and hold themselves accountable. Say, you know, that, you know, that funny, um, when somebody wants to ride in the front seat or not ride in the front seat or not, take the trash out if they're not in. It would be great to see leaders who are willing to put themselves out there to take accountability and say, "I'm…it…I'm on the hook for this. I'll take it." But, you know, what has to go hand in hand on that is the empowerment and the authority, and when you are a decentralized multi-campus, multi-facility

organization, it's harder to allow one person to be held, uh, to give them the authority to then be accountable.

MIKE: We don't often like to…to have that accountability though. Right?

GOLI: I know. I know. Our accountability is squarely in student success, but what really is driving that student success, um, behind the scenes? Sometimes, like you said, we don't always like to have that accountability. Again, I think part of it is there is a lot of talent. Um, we're also really compassionate, especially at Montgomery College. There's a lot of compassion in higher ed, and I've seen it with my colleagues at…in Audit and Risk and other institutions. The institutions of higher ed tend to be quite compassionate with each other, with their students. More so, I, you know, even more so than K-12 where it came from, so.

MIKE: In your role you…you delve into a lot of information, you talk with a lot of people, some of which may not be well received, you know, the…the concept of audit scares people. How do you as a leader help overcome those fears?

GOLI: Yeah, I'm fortunate. I love what I do, and my goal is to build relationships so that at some point, and it has--it happens when you do this. Well, I've seen it with other audit colleagues and, um, leaders is, you know, we turn it from, "Uh, the auditors are coming," to, "Yay! The auditors are coming." And that really is that trust factor and diplomacy, the, um, I know where you're coming from, I hear you. And that's really important because everybody's unique program, department, right? Has its own objectives, and I go in right away trying to make sure that everybody understands I'm here because my objectives are your objectives. But again, it's not an overnight rate. We don't wake up saying I'm going to trust the auditor. So, it's been a…I, my friends and family laughed. They're like, you're in a job where you have to deliver not so good news. Sometimes I go, yeah, that's true, but on the flip side, as an internal auditor, I also get to say, but here are some really good practices where we might be able to improve, do better. And here's what you are doing well. So, that has to come along with the part of building the relationships, right? I'm not just here to give you problems. I'm going to help you with the solution. So, that again takes a lot more time. External auditors have it easier. They come in, they go, you're doing this wrong, bye-bye. Let us know when you fix it. But I love that relationship building. Um, that's where, um, it takes a lot of time, but that's where the value added.

MIKE: In a previous life when I was a newspaper editor, I was covering the…the town of Rehoboth Beach and there was a town commissioner who was a former school principal. And she would come into my office after I wrote something that she didn't agree with and she would chastise me for it, but I wouldn't know she was delivering bad news to me until after she left because she had built this relationship where she could just give this news in such a way that I trusted her with it, and that's really what you're talking about. Building those relationships to deliver bad news, if bad news is warranted.

GOLI: Yes, yeah, yeah. And you really have to trust each other, right? I'm doing what's best for you, you're doing what's best for the college. Um, and then in the case of the…the chastising, right? It's delivery, right? So, we do that with our kids. How we deliver discipline, bad news, but, and I think that's again where the compassion comes in…in the college too. It's easier to have to build those relationships in a compassionate environment. I've been places that have not been compassionate that have been run by more egos than is helpful, for example. So, I really think the integrity and the values of the college help us try to improve. But again, it's slow, it's really slow. I do what, uh, follow-up audits after I complete an audit or even if somebody else completes an audit, and just as sometimes the time it takes to get our corrections in place is longer than might be helpful.

MIKE: What kind of leader is Goli Trump?

GOLI: Um, you know, I'd like to say I'm really aware of what I'm doing and I'm doing it well, but I'm constantly worried and I try to lead with kindness. I think that's just my mantra in life. Um, I try to set examples, which sounds cliché, but, you know, it's true. And being a parent has really helped me become a better, if not a better leader at least a better manager. I know I'm a good manager. I get things done. I'm outcome based, but being a leader where people want to follow that. My goal is to always create an atmosphere of kindness. And hopefully, people will believe me because I'm doing it with compassion.

MIKE: The head of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, Jim Fielder, often says the difference between managers and leaders is that you manage projects but you meet people. And…and I just find that so true. Um, you know, there's such a distinction between managers and leaders.

GOLI: Yeah, yeah, I mean any relationship requires some element of managing with a balance of leadership whether it's our kids or work. Um, because, you know, we can…we can build a house and make sure that everybody's fed and all the needs are taken care of, but, are we also building those relationships so that people want to talk to us, people want to emulate us? And I think the most important…there's two things that I…I try to do every day which is seek to understand. Everybody has a story, and every day their story might be different. So, as a leader as, a colleague, as an employee, I…I try to seek to understand. Um, so I think that's really important to make sure that that I'm stopping and being aware of my employees, you know, if I have employees or my colleagues. Um, and then the second one, which actually just escaped me, but oh I…I don't mind being wrong because I'm learning something. So, that's really important as well. And again, the one thing I think I missed out. I mentioned to you when I was in sports broadcast journalism, I didn't have a mentor, peer mentor, leadership mentor, I think we all benefit from that as well. So, no matter what phase or pinnacle or summit we are in leadership, at least this is how I feel, I'd like to make sure I'm always being mentored by peer, by you, Mike, by my current supervisor, and of course, we all know our supervisors don't

have to be our mentors. But really having somebody that we can learn from and from example or…or coaching is also helpful in leadership.

MIKE: So, the traits you identified in yourself as a leader, are those the same types of traits you'd look for in others as leaders?

GOLI: That's a great question. I…I wonder now, you've made, you know what, this is really you're doing really well on [laughs] your interview skill. You're making me be self…self-reflective and introspective. I…I don't know mike you've given me homework. And so, I guess the answer is, um, it depends. Right? It depends, and I like where this this question is going to take me after this interview. I appreciate that.

MIKE: One of the things I look for in in a leader is I have to respect the person as…as not only as an individual but as a leader. And I find when I lose that respect, it's tough for me to…to get it back. It's tough for me to put trust in that individual again. And you know, as I've reflected on my career, a lot of times when I've left a place of employment, it's because I've lost respect for the leadership. It hasn't necessarily been because of better opportunities, the better opportunities have resulted in those decisions but the…the initial decision was based on just respect of the leaders.

GOLI: Right, right. But what--how do you know then, the question is what were the traits that they didn't have that you lost respect? So, reflecting on the seek-to-understand piece, I think there is a lot of benefit when, yes, I would look for leaders who seek to understand, I, you know, audit especially is complicated, but I…I think, um, any of our jobs can be complicated. Ad if we have leaders who also try to understand what…what we're doing, where we're coming from, what our intentions are, um, it really does help foster that mutual respect. So, I think that's a…that's a good point. So, I appreciate it.

MIKE: How has your leadership been impacted during the pandemic? Has it changed? Has your view on leadership changed? Or has your…your method of leadership changed?

GOLI: Moving to a virtual environment has been, obviously, that for all of us the most drastic physical change. I'll tell you, I think for me I am much more of an introvert than people believe I am because I have, you know, I have an effusive personality, top of my hands, but, um, I think having the, uh, opportunity to ground every day in the fact that we're in a confined space, right? We've got virtual meetings and instead of face-to-face, um, has helped me stay more even keel and peaceful, and that's an important aspect of leadership. But I do think some of the extracurricular activities of driving and, um, you know, for better or worse, meeting people at the water cooler created a little more intensity. It's, and maybe that's because we just don't have time for some of those social interactions that really are important, but I feel like there's been more time to…to be at peace with some of these relationship building nuances that you can't have in the office. So, that's my perspective, but I know for other people it's been really important to

lead face to face or in person I should say because this is face to face. Um, so, that's… so, I think it's changed because of the conditions.

MIKE: If we go back to the…the concept of change and how hard it is in the public sector, the pandemic forced us to change quickly. We didn't have the opportunity as leaders to think through a lot of these decisions. They were made quickly and oftentimes as we were flying the plane, so to speak. It was hard for a number of people.

GOLI: Yeah, crisis, it's interesting, crisis did create the necessary haste or urgency I'd like to think, that it wasn't paced. I think we made some really deliberate and good decisions. And at the College, time will tell as we look at things like enrollment and the strategic plan and our new presidency whether we did anything with haste. But the urgency was there because of the crisis. And you know, there was another situation that the College faced which is the, uh, cyber security breach. Um, you know, we had the fraudulent activity breach our…our internal systems. And I was the lead investigator on that and we made some urgent decisions at that point too, but what was interesting is when we started the conversations, the leadership team, we were about to go into some of our cultural norms, which is let's…let's talk about it, let's figure out what we want to do, and maybe because of…there was, I had the experience in in fraud investigations, and so maybe because of that I was able to to…to help us move things along a little bit faster. Everything from talking to the media and how we went about that and law enforcement. It…it's what was going to protect us. And so, that urgency was there as well. So, at the end of the day, are we really good at making decisions and crises, but when there's not a crisis, not so much. So, then I would say, how can we make some things feel like crises then if we are on our best actionable behavior, decision-making culture? I don't know, but maybe that's the way we can look at it.

MIKE: When I first got into education I…I was asked by my dean to do some sort of report, and coming from a journalism background to me that meant…

GOLI: 24 hours [laughs].

MIKE: [laughs] Yeah, like, right, the next day. So, I gave it to her within a couple of days and she said, what is this? And I said, well, this is the information you wanted. And she said, well, I wasn't expecting it for six months. [Goli laughs] Oh, my gosh. Six months is like forever.

GOLI: I can…I can do 80 more in six months [laughs].

MIKE: But it goes to that…that urgency, that crisis part. I…I think we get complacent in making decisions when we're not faced with those, that those crises.

GOLI: Well, then I'll bring it back to ERM because that's where you pulled the code from was a…an article in public sector for ERM. And one of the things that ERM is intended to

do is find a through a disciplined approach is find a…a priority to our objectives. So, we're not, you know, the…the College has hundreds of adjectives. In fact, in the first year I was here, I went through a few of our master plans and started counting all the initiatives and I'm like I stopped counting at like 160. It was like, oh my gosh [laughs]. You've heard of, you know, death by meetings. I feel like sometimes death by initiatives. And so, coming back to ERM and how do we change the culture, maybe ERM is where we could succeed. It's putting priorities in place. That's the intent of ERM, um, instead of being all things to everybody immediately…not immediately but at the same time, is can we build some immediacy to the things we want to be and prioritize those based on, you know, velocity? Put some urgency to them so we can make decisions. And then on the second leg of that or maybe at the same time, is that accountability. So, maybe that's how we change the culture. Again, it's intended to do that in enterprise management. Can we do it without a framework called ERM? We sure can, but time will tell from how our new leader, right? Our new president comes in and how he or she wants us to make decisions and lead student success.

MIKE: Goli, this has been wonderful. Thank you. You've given us a lot to think about as we—

GOLI: Oh, no. I hope not [laughs].

MIKE: No, no, it's…it's just great conversation. I appreciate it.

GOLI: I appreciate this and I hope I can turn the tables and interview you, and we're on record but I'm asking to do that.

MIKE: Alright, we'll, uh, we'll see what we can work out. Thanks a lot.

GOLI: Thanks, Mike. Again, thanks for having me and this is a great podcast series. I've been I've started watching some of them as well. I can't wait to finish it all. Thank you.

MIKE: If you know someone who you think would be a great fit for this podcast, have them reach out to me at michael.mills@montgomerycollege.edu. Meanwhile, keep moving MC Forward.

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