

MC Forward Podcast
Season 3, Episode 3
Dwayne Henry
Transcript

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 Dwayne Henry, Instructional Lab Manager of Chemical and Biological Sciences. Dwayne thanks for joining me. I appreciate it.

Dwayne

Thank you for having me.

Mike

I came across an article that was published, I believe, in January from a Lab Manager Leadership Summit that... that you attended. It was a Q&A and... and one of the answers jumped out at me, and I... I want to start off this episode talking about your... your focus and being a big fan of Marvel and DC movies. [Dwayne laughs] Talk to me about that.

Dwayne

Oh, wow. [Laughs] Um, well, that's something obviously started when I was, you know, when I was younger, when I was a kid. So, when the first movie started, um, coming out, well, actually even before these... these movies, a successful series of movies started coming out, even just when it was like the Blade movies that came back, um, a while back, I was always a big fan of those. Um, but now it seems like it's become more of an obsession. My... my kids say I have a problem because I watch it every time... every time they come on TV. No matter how many times I've seen them, I just continue to still watch them like I've never seen them before. So... so, yeah, it's, um, I don't know... I don't know why I've gotten like that, but they've really got me captivated at this point. Even the four-hour, uh, Snyder's cut of Justice League, I'll sit there and watch and they're like, how are you watching this four-hour movie again? I'm like, I don't know. I just... every time I see it, it's like I'm seeing a different part that I didn't catch before, so...

Mike

Well, and you... you mentioned in this interview that you're really fascinated by the character development and... why?

Dwayne

Well, I... I thought it was, um, interesting and almost to the point of saying it's ingenious. The way they were able to develop all these different characters across all these series of movies and then bring them all together into one culmination but still not over saturate the story lines. Um, everyone was still able to have their own storylines, still

able to have their own development and plots and things of that nature but still tie it all into one overall, um, one overall scheme or one overall goal output, you know, what have you. So, I that was something that I thought was... was interesting. And even... even tying that into... although, I mean, it may seem corny, but even... even tying that into my job now in the way that, um, for instance, with me being over both, uh, Biology and... and Chemistry Labs at the Tacoma Park campus. Um, there are various, you know, differences. There are some similarities of course but then there's differences, and it's kind of, um, overseeing things, allowing things to develop in the particular discipline, whether it's chemistry or biology as they need to. But then, at the same time, there are some tie-ins, and there's an overall culmination in goal at the end that we're trying to go to, particularly, for the students, um, and their learning and their, you know, and their ascension throughout the... the College and the program and moving on whether that be in industry or moving on to, you know, to another four-year institution. So, but, um... so, yeah, I think that's the biggest part that... that captivated me was all the different movies and how all the characters were able to develop in their... in their own way, but yet, still tie in with everything and be able to, um, you know make sense, and then move forward.

Mike

It's very similar, I think, to the way we look at leaders, or the way we are as leaders in different aspects where we're all different. We all have different ways of getting to an end goal, but it's that development as we go along, and I look at this list that, you know, you provided. Captain America, Black Panther, Avengers. They're all leaders in in their own way just... just different... different ways.

Dwayne

Yes. Yeah, different ways. And then, also, you know, even in addition to that, they were all leaders who ended up having to work with other leaders, you know. So... so, there were certain points in which they had to know when to lead, but then there were certain points and they had to know, you know, when to follow, you know, um, as well. So... so, there were—

Mike

How does... how does Dwayne Henry relate to that, uh, knowing when to lead and knowing when to follow?

Dwayne

Well, because... so, I have my... my own staff that's, you know, that reports to me as well, so that's when I, you know, when I know that I... I need to lead. I'm at that time, but then, of course, there's also whether it's other committees, whether it's the, uh, the Biosafety Infectious Materials Subcommittee that I'm on, or the Chemical and Physical Hazards, uh, Subcommittee that I'm on. Even though I'm a co-chair for the, um, the Biosafety Infectious Materials, uh, Subcommittee with Jim Snizek, it's still, you know, I... I still know that there... there are times when I just need to listen, even if... even when I have ideas. Um, you know, I need to listen so I can fully understand exactly what's going on

and then I can maybe implement my ideas or bring my id-- my ideas up at that time, um, to move forward. But, um, you know, I... I have like even with, uh, Jim Sniezek or even Jaime Bartolomeo, you know, the two collegewide... the two I really consider. I guess unofficial mentors because I never officially asked them to be a mentor. But, you know, watching their leadership and... and being under them and seeing how they operate, um, has taught me also because I see them doing it as well. There's... there are times to step out front, um, and do what it is that need to be,,, that needs to be done, but then there's also times where you have to kind of sit back a little bit and observe and really fully understand what's going on and then kind of know your role and, um, almost, I hate to say stay in your place, but almost, stay in your place to a certain degree until it's time for you to move... move forward and be the leader.

Mike

Is that... is that a product of... of just maturity? You know, knowing when to... to stay back and then step forward. I, because I... I see a lot of young leaders who... who come in, they want to be gung-ho about it, you know? They're... they're going to take the reins right from the beginning. Alienate some people along the way and burn bridges before they even get started. So, your journey, has it just been one of... of leadership maturity?

Dwayne

You know, I... I... I do believe, um, that... that's part of it by, you know, seeing a lot of the things that were taking place in... in my development, um, and not necessarily with myself but just being observant enough to see what's happening and what maybe, what happened in the situation that I didn't even have anything to do with but I see how you know the... the operational moves of one individual negatively impacted that relationship and kind of said to myself, okay, well that's something that I want to make sure that I... I don't do. Um, so, and some of it, you know, sometimes not, you know, I'm sure I haven't been perfect. I'm sure that I've, um, jumped out there sometimes and, you know, and did things, but I... I think a lot of it also in addition to, you know, the experience and the maturity also came from my training ahead of time. I was fortunate enough that I didn't really, I mean I feel like I left from where I was all the time or at least I tried to, but as far as having like an official title per se and being officially placed in a position that I was fortunate to have training, um, before then. And some of it I started out myself whether it was, uh, getting certification and management supervision things of that nature, um, diversity training and, you know, all of those things. Um, but then also some of it was, you know, some of the things that the, uh, College like I did, um, Cynthia Mauris', um, Leadership Development Institute. Um, and then also when she has the, um, LDI2, you know, institute that... that's going as well, but then a lot of the course work as well. I guess it's ELITE now. But a lot of the, you know, a lot of those course works and things like that that I took to put me in a position where there were things that I knew ahead of time of being in the position of management as opposed to having to just learn everything on the spot. I'm... I'm from an industry in which the norm is really to take a person who's just been somewhere for a long time and is the, I guess, elder state man or has the most seniority, and then take that person and when there's an opening

just place that person in the opening, um, for whether it's a unit leader, team leader, department leader, or, you know, or what have you. But the only part of that is that I kept seeing which is something else that made me want to take, uh, management courses and things of that nature, is they were placed in those positions with no type of management experience at all, so although they had all the technical know-how and, you know, the bench work and maybe they knew the direction that the, uh, that the project was going, where the research was going. When it came time to, um, doing or showing, showcasing all the other leadership skills, whether it was, you know, the people skills and, um, even what we're talking about now knowing when to say, you know, what at what time and when to sit back and... and listen and find out and what's exactly what's going on and all of those things and communication skills and, um, things of that nature, they didn't have that. So, they, you know, a lot of times they had a really rough time because they, even if it was for good intentions and they wanted to come in and make an impact, they made the wrong type of impact. And then they also took them because they didn't understand the dynamics of leadership and management, there were a lot of times that I saw where they took certain situations the wrong way. They took it personal without actually understanding, um, like I said the whole dynamics of just how... how everything works in the chain of... chain of command, leadership, you know, and all of those things. I was fortunate enough to... to do that, but I... I definitely understand what you're saying about, uh, people... people coming in and kind of coming in like gangbusters and just trying to force things and burn into, you know, burning bridges and not really working collaboratively and that type of thing. So, and I just tried to avoid that as much as possible.

Mike

I... I like your... your comment about looking at what people who came before you did. And it reminds me of my youngest son and... and we have we have three boys all... all adults now, but the youngest one we are convinced didn't get in trouble because he watched his older brothers and what they did to get in trouble and said I'm avoiding all of that and I think as leaders we... we do the same thing. We look at people who have come before us and say I'm not following in that, um, path. I'm not going to follow in their footsteps. I'll... I'll make my own way and I'm going to avoid those mistakes.

Dwayne

Yeah, I... I definitely agree. What they didn't know is that I was watching them, um, even before I was in management I was just watching all the things that they were doing in the way that they were doing things and handling, you know, certain situations and what worked and maybe what didn't work and just, you know, kind of took mental notes to... to be able to apply those things whenever I had the opportunity, and thankfully, I got the opportunity.

Mike

I used that that concept in just about every committee I'm on, um, look around to see who I want to partner with down the road. It may not be someone that I am going to

directly work with within the next week or month, but it may be a year or two down the road, but I... I identify people. I watch them, take those mental notes, and figure out who I want to partner with and who I want to be teamed with in some project, and it works really well.

Dwayne

Yeah, I agree, I do... I do the same thing. Actually, it's kind of like just, you know, I guess partly in the room but just, you know, again, just being... sometimes it's good to kind of just be observant and, you know, so you... so you can know what direction that you want to go in before you embark on that directions.

Mike

What's your biggest challenge as a leader?

Dwayne

I think that the biggest challenge is to not be everybody's friend, um, per se, because there are... there are times where... well, I guess maybe... maybe before... for me when I was placed into the position, um, I then became a manager of people who were my peers, uh, previously. So, that, I think, that took a little, um... that took a little getting used to, and I don't necessarily think on my part but probably, you know, probably on their part, um, a little bit. It went well. I mean, by no means do I, you know, want to make it seem as if there were a lot of issues and things like that, but... but it was an adjustment period. So, it was that for staff and then also for, um, for faculty as well because in twofold with Biology, there were, uh, people who I was now in this different capacity, um, and so our... we always had a good working relationship, but then, the relationship changed, um, and not only changed as far as changing a bad way personally or anything, but it just changed as far as the working relationship and how we would have to work with each other and I would have more input as opposed to how it was before where I was just kind of told to do something and that was just it as a coordinator. Then, as the manager, it was diff-- it was more of a collaborative effort and that type of thing. So, that changed. Um, but those... that wasn't really an issue. And then in Chemistry, it was the type of thing where I had to build trust because they never had, well, Biology never had a lab manager either, but the Biology faculty knew me already so they were familiar with me and my work ethic and things of that nature. Uh, the Chemistry faculty, they've seen me before, they know of me, but they didn't really know me, uh, and so, they... they more so, you know, the lab coordinators who are up there. So, you know, and then, somebody being made manager, and then, you know, from... and then from Biology, from a different discipline, even though actually I mean I've been here at the College for almost 30 years at this point. I actually did work in, uh, Chemistry before but it was just before they were there, so they didn't, you know, they didn't know that. So, that was... that was all a part of a process of, you know, building up trust and them knowing that, hey, I'm, you know, I'm here. I'm in the best interest of the students and... and you all and, you know, just... just as much as Biology, I'm going to be putting the same effort in and I think, um, it seems as if it's going well. And they... I seem to have

been able to build, you know, build some trust with them and, um, and... and the other way too because I didn't, you know, I wasn't as familiar with them as well. So, they built trust with me, you know, also, so I would say that that was probably the... the most, um, the most difficult, um, part. Not that it was extremely difficult, but the most difficult as far as, uh, when I was dealing with as a manager at the time.

MIKE

As a leader, how do you work to change the mindset of people who have done things a certain way for years and over time they've become set in their ways? How do you as a leader work to make those changes happen?

Dwayne

Well, it's so... it's ironic and funny that you say that because that's almost the exact situation that, um, that I was talking about that, you know, that I was in. So, my, you know, my... my way of doing that is... is to one like we kind of spoke about before not to come in and... and try and just change the world in four days, you know? Um, so... so, I go in, uh, I have as much communication as possible with everybody who this would be, you know, affecting. And I don't just make changes but I, you know, get their input, things of that nature. Now, if there are certain things that there's just no way getting around it, this has to change, or for instance, if we're, you know, if it's a violation of, uh, you know, federal regulations or something like that, or College's standard or whatever, and it just has to change, then what I do in those instances is if there's an emergency change then I will, you know, do the change right there, immediately. But if it's something that, okay, it has to change but, you know, it can be changed in a week or what have you, I make sure that I have some type of communication with everyone that that affects. So, not only to tell them, uh, that the change is going to take place but then to also explain to them why this change is necessary, and even though I understand it has been like this for ten years or, you know, or what have you, but it's not...it's not really a thing in which you've been doing this for 10 years and everything's been fine, it's just... it's more of thing, well, you've been doing this for 10 years and, you know, you haven't been caught, or and... and not... not so much caught in the... in the aspect of, you know, they were trying to do something wrong, but more so in the, you know, you've been doing this for 10 years, we've been fortunate there hasn't been an accident. Um, you know, there hasn't been like a safety audit that hasn't, you know, like that type of thing. But, you know, my... my job is to make sure that those things don't happen, so whereas I'm thankful that it hasn't happened yet, I want to make sure that it doesn't, you know, that it doesn't happen. So, that's, um, one instance. Or, if it's some type of change that, um, I think change or... or upgrade or things of that nature that I think can be made that I have ideas about, then that's something that I will again communicate with the people who it would involve but then also get their, um, perspective on it as well. And then, but not... not just get their perspective on it but also incorporate their perspective in the decision and then make sure that afterwards, however the decision goes, that they, you know, it's shown that they do know that, you know, I did listen to what you said. I did incorporate it as much as I could into this decision, and so, this is how everything, you

know, how everything played out. So, there's communication before, communication during, and then communication at the end so that they do understand that they're part of the, you know, full process. Um, and there's been times where, you know, I... I had an idea. There were things that maybe was already being done a certain way, and after communicating with the individuals and going over, you know, a full, um, you know, examination of everything where I decided, you know, what actually I think, you know, maybe later on down the line, you know, I can implement this, of what I was thinking, but right now, for the time being, yeah, I actually think what they're doing now probably works best and... and just left it the way it was. So... and I think by them seeing that, um, and understanding that I am really listening to them and really taking what they're, you know, what they think and their perspectives into consideration, um, that... that's something else that, you know, helped to build the trust and, um, made it a lot easier when those changes need to take needed to take place. The... of things that had just been doing, you know, they've been doing for the longest time and they were kind of setting their ways.

Mike

Wonderful. And as we wrap up, one final question. Who's your favorite DC/Marvel character?

Dwayne

Oh, Black Panther. [Laughs] Black Panther.

Mike

Why?

Dwayne

Um, I don't know. I guess the... the regalness of him and the fact with... with him ruling over a whole nation, um, but then at the same time, like a hidden nation, and then having to branch out into the real world and, you know, connect with all those people, but then at the same time try to still preserve everything that's, you know, that's part of his heritage and... and all of those type of things. Um, I just I just found that... he's just all, every way, accomplished. He's always attracted me, and I guess it could be because he's from Africa and I'm African-American as well, and, you know, so there was a lot of a lot of connection, um, there as well. But I actually even became more of a fan, um, when the movies came out, uh, well, one because I knew Chad who... who played Black Panther, you know before he... his unfortunate passing. Um, so, that... that really pulled me in, you know, even... even more to it. But I just like the fact with, you know, the fact of him being a leader and all the different aspects and ways that he had to deal with things whether it was in his own country or out, you know, outside but other factions. And I, um, as crazy as it sounds in a lot of ways, I kind of see that with me, uh, doing that, you know, managing with the labs and everything. I mean I have my own people and everything that I... not that I rule over, but that, um, you know, that I'm in charge of it, but then at the same time, I have to branch out and I have to talk with others across the

College and make alliances and, you know, and that type of things. So... so, yeah. so that's... so that's one of the reasons why. And then, I just... his powers and everything are real cool too. [Laughs]

Mike

Dwayne, this was fun. Uh, I... I got to learn a little bit about you, things I didn't know. I appreciate it. This was... this was a blast for me.

Dwayne

Thank you. Thank you. Me as well. I really appreciate the opportunity.

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.