



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 4
Cottey College

Destiny Agbonyeme on “Leadership is Dynamic and Context Specific”

Producer: You are now listening to... Season 4 Episode 4 of the “I Believe Podcast: Leadership Edition.” Stay tuned for fresh, new perspectives from people from all walks of life.

Intro music starts playing

Music fades out

I believe that leadership is dynamic and context specific. Now, what does this mean? By definition, something that is dynamic is characterized by constant change, activity, or progress, meaning that there is no single definition of what being a leader is, and even upon becoming a leader, there is always room for growth and improvement.

Soft music starts playing

Growing up as a young girl in a conservative West African household, I was taught to remain “hidden” in the background and let my older, more boisterous brothers take the lead. I was only ever talked about or noticed by family and close friends when I received awards and recognitions, leading me to tie my worth to my achievements and remain as the good but quiet kid. When leadership opportunities arose during my childhood years, I shied away from them, firmly believing that I was not competent enough to represent my classmates or contemporaries.

These sentiments are not uncommon among many because of their beliefs about what leadership is, but according to Forbes, these are one of many misconceptions. Many people believe that in order to be a leader, you must be all-knowing, extremely sociable, and you must possess the skill of commanding and controlling others. With time, in my experience, I was able to disprove these misconceptions one by one.

I am a high achiever and have a tendency to pay close attention to detail, but because of this, the greatest thing that I fear is making a mistake or embarrassing myself in front of others. This led to me being afraid to interact with my teachers and classmates. Despite this, teachers knew how well I was performing in class, and they wanted me to help my classmates, so they would jokingly nudge at me to tutor my classmates and “teach them my ways.” It wasn’t until my last two years of high school that I began to come out of my shell and become more expressive and outspoken, but compared to my classmates, I still remained quiet during class. I saw this change

in myself throughout the course of my junior year, specifically when I was in my U.S. government and economics class.

While teachers in the past would only nudge at me to speak up and simply move on when I chose not to, this teacher was very different. This class was much smaller in size, so he would encourage class discussions and group activities to keep students engaged. I was the only junior in this senior-level class for most of the first semester, so I felt very uncomfortable and would be too shy to speak up, so I would instead express myself through the efforts I put into all of my work but as time passed, I became more and more comfortable with the class and began to open up. I became less nervous presenting projects, and slowly became more eager to talk about news and personal discussions. I greeted the teacher with a warm smile and a “good morning” every day and mustered the courage to speak to my older classmates and became comfortable with them too. However, it wasn’t until my senior year during meet the teacher night that I decided to bring my mother around to show her all of my current and past teachers that he opened up to my mother about me, his statements almost making her cry. He described me as one of the best students he had ever taught, not only being a high achiever but guiding other students to follow in my footsteps. I was respectful, hardworking, inclusive, and seemed like an exceptional example to not only my contemporaries, but other teachers who had talked to him about me as well.

I was unaware of the impact I made on this man and my other teachers and knowing that I was able to affect in his life in a positive way with something as insignificant as going to class, turning in assignments on time, and actively participating warmed my heart. His words gave me the motivation to power through my senior year, becoming more and more confident by the day and leaving an impact and influencing more and more people, growing into the person that I am today. This became more prevalent as I transitioned out of high school into college, where I had my first experiences with people who truly came from various backgrounds. Compared to high school where you will usually see the same people or classmates and friends are of the same age group or grade level, the student body in the postsecondary world can span across ages, interests, and specialties, making it more difficult to not only find your footing but to make an impact on others. I soon realized that in order to make an impact in this new environment, I would have to put myself out more than I did in my later years of high school and remain open-minded so as to expand my horizons and build connections, granting access to more people to influence.

Going forward, as I age, I hope to become more confident in myself and my abilities. As I get further and further into my education and pursue my dream career as a physician and gain an understanding of just how fascinating the physiological and psychological aspects of human life can be, I hope to become an efficient and impactful leader of the health care team for both my patients and coworkers, which is why I believe that leadership is dynamic and context-specific.

Music fades out

Producer: Thank you for listening to Season 4 Episode 4 of the "I Believe Podcast: Leadership Edition." If you would like to listen to more episodes of this podcast, please click the link below.
Works Cited

Works Cited:

Panel®, Expert. "Council Post: 15 Big Misconceptions about Leadership (and the Truth behind Them)." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 3 Nov. 2022, www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2022/10/21/15-big-misconceptions-about-leadership-and-the-truth-behind-them/?sh=71e28d1e7bba.