

Learning from the Field

Women in Leadership Presentation Video Transcript
April 10, 2025

All right. We're going to go ahead and get started. Good morning, everybody.

Thank you so much for being here. This is our fourth women in leadership of the 24-25 series.

And our last one for this fiscal year.

And we'll be, you know, looking to start them over again in next year.

But we're really excited today, to have one of the amazing women leaders on our campus, share her journey.

Before we get started, I do want to acknowledge and thank many offices on campus who help support this.

We're supported by the Office of Advancement, the Office of Human Resources, Staff Council,

the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, the Office of Student Affairs, and the Office of Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs.

So thanks to all of those offices who are committed to helping us have conversations about women in leadership at CU Anschutz.

My name is Jan Gascoigne and I'm one of the co leaders of, this women in leadership series.

And I'd also like to acknowledge Debbie Lammers from Human Resources and Laura Borgelt from the Gate Center, who also, co-lead this,

and the wonderful team from Human Resources, the development and learning folks who really helped make,

this process easy and, make it seamless with the technology.

So thanks to everybody there. And I'd like to take a minute to introduce you to our speaker today.

Our speaker is Jori Leszczynski, and she is our assistant vice chancellor for animal resources,

the director of the Office of Laboratory Animal Resources and attending veterinarian at the University of Colorado Denver|Anschutz Medical Campus.

She's also a professor of pathology in the School of Medicine.

Doctor Leszczynski attended the Ohio State University for her bachelor's in veterinary degrees,

performed her residency and laboratory animal medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago,

and became a diplomat of the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine in 2004.

In addition to C.U. Denver Anschutz Doctor,

Leszczynski has held numerous leadership roles to include programs at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation as an Associate Director,

National Jewish Health, as a director, University of Colorado Boulder as the interim director.

Throughout her career, Doctor Leszczynski has volunteered for many organizations,

serving on committees and the board of directors of multiple professional organizations to include the Mile High branch of AALAS,

which is the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine, American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners,

Public Responsibility, and Medicine and Research, where she served as a treasurer and the chair of the board,

and she served on the American Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine,

where she is currently the vice President and will serve as a president beginning in the fall of 2025.

So I also know she serves as a person that I call up when the baby deer is walking down the middle of campus because she's an amazing colleague, an amazing friend. And we're really excited to hear from you.

So I'm going to pass it over to you, Jori and thanks so much for being here this morning.

Right. Thank you very much, Jan, for the introduction.

And it no problems with calling me for

my veterinary expertise. Although I can freely admit, baby deer are not my expertise.

But I definitely want to thank Jan, Laura, and Debbie for inviting me to speak at this, for this, women's in leadership.

I have been an attendee for many years since they started this,

and have always been, learned a lot from those women leaders that have spoken and just, really appreciate it.

So I was I was kind of very humbled and honored to be asked to come and share my

journey with all of you and just want to thank you again for letting me do this.

As for the title, I know that was brought up.

So I've been an athlete all my life and, have learned from many, many coaches and then ultimately the leaders that I have had.

So when I was trying to come up with a title, I started pulling all of those things in together.

So that's where learning from the field comes, because I've learned from a lot of people about how I want to lead individuals.

So I'm going to get started. Let's see if I can get this to move forward for me.

So these are my parents.

My parents have been married for 55 years as of last summer.

They had a huge influence on me.

And I would also include my brothers.

So, grew up, born in Chicago area.

My parents were born and raised in Chicago, spent most of their life there, met in college.

They both were teachers.

My father was, college swimmer and ultimately came back and taught high school and was the high school swim coach.

My mom taught fourth grade. Ultimately, when my older brother was born, they still were working.

My mom then decided to take a step back and be a homemaker when I was born.

My father then picked up additional shifts working in the restaurant industry because they were on one income and fell in love with the restaurant industry,

ultimately leaving teaching, which brought us to Ohio when I was six years old.

And then my father, because my father got, worked for Dunkin Donuts.

I had to beg to get donuts, though, because my dad's a donut snob.

He had. Dunkin donuts has a rule that after 12 hours, the donuts have to be turned over.

You can't just have old donuts. And so for him to bring them home from his business trips was like heresy.

To be able to, eat donuts that were old.

So, my parents, though, even though they were both busy, my mom went back to work.

She started teaching again, and they they were very busy, but they were the involved parents.

They were the Girl Scout troop leader, the Boy Scout troop leader.

They volunteered for any of our sports or other things.

They were always volunteering for the classrooms and they never, even to this day, they always show up.

So I have multiple nieces and nephews. My parents will travel all over the country to see their sports games or big events.

They were always down when I was in college watching events.

They just are always very involved parents, but they also imparted a strong sense of volunteerism and service.

These are my two brothers, now grown. Both of my brothers served in the military.

My older brother. This is his retirement from the Air Force, after 24 years.

My younger brother, served in the Air Force and now works for the FBI.

So. But we all also have always volunteered.

Well, whether it's within professional organizations or in our community.

And I really feel like that came from my parents.

So in this talk, I'm going to kind of talk about lessons learned.

And I had ten that I was I was going through that I kind of boiled it down to.

So my first lesson that I learned was really from my family,

and I've pulled that into everything that I do, that really volunteering, that service is very important,

and it's helped me to grow my leadership skills, my network, and ultimately it's really given me back more than I put in.

So I am one of the first people to say yes to almost anything, not just doing a talk like this, but to volunteer.

So shortly within my professional career, shortly after I

got out into the field and achieved my board certification in laboratory animal medicine, which means I'm a specialist in that area.

I started volunteering first for the American Society of Live Animal Practitioners.

I sat on some of their membership committees and then ultimately served on their board of directors from 2011 to 2014.

American College of Lab Animal Medicine.

I was on their Career Pathways committee when I first, got into Lab Animal and then ultimately from 2020 to 2023,

I served on their board of directors and their task force chair. Mile High branch of aalas,

which American Association of Live Animal Science is a big national organization.

There's about 13,000 members of anybody within the profession that can be vendors.

They can be technicians, veterinarians, people who work in the administrative side, just a large community.

But then it's broken down into districts and then further down into branches.

This was my first time where I served as a leader leader, not just on a committee or as part of a board.

In 2009, I was the president of this organization, and that was when our national meeting was here in Denver.

And so I ended up meeting quite a few people at the national level, because I had chosen to volunteer at the local level.

And that put me on a pathway to meeting even more people at a national level versus, the committees I had been on up until then.

That led me to meeting several people, which pulled me into another organization,

which is Primer, which is public responsibility and medicine and research.

It's a community of individuals, the primary group are people who administer IACUCs, IRBs.

But their whole goal, the whole mission, is to perform ethical research.

And this community was very interesting because I had only been in with the lab animal community at this point.

But this allowed me to meet individuals that were on the human side of the research and the ethics side of research,

and it really greatly expanded my community.

And I have met so many very interesting and amazing people through that.

I first started working with them because they were going to do their local meeting here in Denver,

and they needed a person locally because they tried to get some local speakers.

And so I ended up on the program committee for the IACUC conference.

And then that led to me chairing that committee.

And then ultimately,

I got asked to be on the board and served as treasurer for two years and just rotated off this last December as the board chair after two years.

So it really, this has been a pretty seminal group for me and just expanding my horizons

much further and outside of my realm of what I know within my own community.

And then from there, I also have volunteered as a site visitor for alack.

Alack is a international body that goes and

accredits research programs for their animal care to make sure that we're achieving the highest standards.

I am an ad hoc site visitors, so I get to go other places and learn from those individuals how they run their programs, which,

you know, yes, I'm assessing them and there's a lot of work there, but I get to bring things back to help my community.

And then finally, aalas, I'm currently, as Jan said, in the pathway to be president of the American Association of Laboratory Animal Science.

And I will start serving that in November.

And that's a one year term. But leading up to it, your vice president elect, I'm currently vice president.

And then there's a past president. This is a very large organization.

There is an international component as being in that executive leadership team.

And this is, this was actually just taken last week.

I had the opportunity to go down to the Brazilian Society for Laboratory Animal Science.

This is the president of aalas Couldn't make it. So as vice president, I got to step in.

And this is me with one of my colleagues who is down there representing aalac, the man in the middle is the president of the Brazilian society.

So I got to meet people from another organization,

another country that had the same passions that I do about making sure that we're doing ethical research and animals.

And, this is I'm not saying that everybody needs to ultimately be the president of their national organization,

but what it did show me is by volunteering, I was able to really expand my horizons, meet a lot of people that I never would have had.

I just stayed within my small group.

I really do also try to impart this is, these types of opportunities are available to the other people that I work with.

Quite a few of our group volunteer for aalas on committees.

They are, we have a couple that are on national committees for aalas.

We have, people who have served on the board and president of Mile-high branch.

And it's it's just a way for people to really learn from others because you you just don't know everything that goes on within your small world.

You really need to meet other people. So I'm going to move on.

I kind of said I was an athlete my whole life.

This is me very, very, very early on.

So part of this, I got to go back and look at old photos.

This is very early on. This is my mom taking me to a swim

lesson. As I said, my dad was a college swimmer. My mom actually can't swim, and that always was something that was a stressor for her.

So my brothers and I, before, I don't even remember learning how to swim.

My mom had us in the pool at a very early age.

It was not my father who pushed it.

It was my mom because she wanted to make sure we could enjoy being in the water, that she didn't feel that same comfort level.

That grew in for me and my younger brother, not my older brother, into a lifelong love of swimming.

And ultimately I became a swimmer, but my parents.

So I was born in 1974, and in 1972, title nine was passed.

And that, I feel like, really had an effect on me as a girl growing up, my parents were super enthusiastic about me especially,

but my brothers, getting us into sports. They felt that that was very important.

And, you know, in the 70s and 80s, parents still hadn't, even though title nine was there, weren't necessarily pushing their girls into sports.

And my parents were like, you need to be active.

You need to be able to, understand your body and move and be competitive.

They were very supportive of that. I always wanted to beat my brother in everything.

My older brother, so from there they had me in gymnastics dance.

I throw in bike riding because I ended up doing, I've done quite a few triathlons at pretty high level, baseball and not a ball sport.

I don't have very good hand-eye coordination. I started doing synchronized swimming, and, because that was a sport.

It was going to be in the 1984 Olympics. So my mom got me into that.

I actually got pretty good. I got to the level that I was competing at the regional and national level at the age of 12.

And, but they really wanted me. This is kind of one of the first times where I had to really make a decision.

I really wanted to keep playing lots of sports. I wanted to play basketball in middle school.

I wanted to run track. I wanted to do other things. I'm still on a competitive swim team at this point, but synchronized swimming,

they really wanted me to just focus on that, and I just didn't want to do that.

I still to this day, think that kids at the age of 12 should not be pigeonholed into one sport.

And so I made the decision to no longer do synchronized swimming when I was in middle school and went on to just continue doing other sports.

When I got to high school, I actually was a cross-country runner.

I swam in the winter and then ran track. And, so I really enjoyed running.

I still run a lot to this day.

In fact, that's probably the primary thing that I do, that and cycling, because swimming is a little harder to get to the pool and back.

I want to pause here, though, and call out this person.

So this is Rick Thompson. He was my high school cross-country coach.

He, I've had lots and lots of coaches you can imagine.

And most of them, especially in the 70s and 80s and 90s, the way you coach was very.

High volume, very aggressive, like yelling at people, or you are so meek and mild that people just kind of rolled their eyes and didn't do the work.

And Rick was different. So Mr. Thompson, to us, he was a physics teacher and he had ran cross-country in college,

and the coach he had was very innovative from a scientific standpoint.

So he approached running with a very scientific err.

In 1988, my team, high school girls cross-country team, when I started, won that year, we won the state championships.

But he was doing heart rate training back then, which was new and novel.

He also was somebody who was very kind but had high expectations.

And it was the first time I had actually run into somebody who could basically be at a point where you just didn't want to disappoint it.

You worked your butt off because he was somebody who had just so high of expectations that you didn't want him to be.

Not necessarily upset, but just disappointed in what you had done that day.

So everybody worked hard, everybody on that team to the point where we had to put in our resting heart rates in the morning,

and he could tell if you were going to get sick or you were overtrained.

And even if it was the key workout of the season, if your heart rate wasn't tracking right,

he would actually have you either go home or just do a light workout.

People, girls would be crying in the locker room because they couldn't go do the hardest workout of the season.

I'd never been on a team like that before, even in college.

People just respected this person so much and it really set.

You know, I realized you could lead in a different way.

You didn't need to be mean or cruel, or yell at people or belittle people in order to accomplish something.

And so I've always tried to live up to the ideals of him.

So when I got to college, I ultimately had a choice.

I could have ran in college or swam. I decided I was going to swim.

That was actually where I was more successful than in running, and I also decided to go to a Division one school I didn't want.

I could have been the best swimmer on a Division three or Division two school, but I decided I wanted to go Swim Division one and came in.

I was by far not the best person on the team.

I wasn't the worst, but I wasn't the best.

I was a 100, 200 breaststroke or 200 IMer and, but this, more than anything, taught me just how hard I had to work.

College athletics, especially at the Division one level. You work hard.

Especially swimmers that are getting up. We had practice at 6:00 am almost every day.

The entire time I was in college. We worked out about 30 hours a week, even though 20 hours was the limit.

We had a lot of optional practices that we had to do.

But it was very humbling.

It was a situation where, you know, going in and just doing the grind and realizing what your body could really do was kind of impressive, because, you know, it was it was tough.

And within that, you're trying to do your classes and graduate.

And I was on a pretty aggressive track because I wanted to go to professional school.

So I was picking up a lot of lab courses and a lot of hard, harder courses.

So to be able to do this was a real honor.

And because I finally was swimming all year round, unlike my teammates who had been doing it since I was 12,

I wasn't burned out and I saw huge results and became one of the best breast stroke swimmers on our team by the end of my time there.

But if it wasn't for that hard work, it really set the stage for what I could do and what I could push myself in later in life.

So, that kind of gets me to my second lesson, which was do hard things.

I had to set high expectations for myself in order to be able to do this, not just walk in and kind of, you know, go somewhere else where I would have been more successful.

And I really felt like I could set more high expectations.

So, as you know, I went to the Ohio State University. Yes.

That is part of the name. If you have to write a check to Ohio State, you have to put the.

So the football players are not wrong. It is kind of funny though.

And I ended up also while I was in school doing, research work.

I was a food science and nutrition major. I knew I wanted to go to either med school or vet school.

Once I got in with the lab, I worked with a rat line that had fat rats that went into heart failure.

I was doing echocardiography on rats. At that age, I learned how to do some lab work.

And it was a great way for me to get exposed to science.

And really bench research science.

You had taken science in high school and and in college,

but this was true bench research where you're working with a scientists who I ultimately ended up meeting again back when I was working in Boulder,

which was kind of an interesting full circle of my career.

Through that, I was able to get into some honors societies.

One of them is mortarboard because they look at both your activities and your academics.

And then I went to Ohio State in the College of vet med and graduated from that.

And then since then had kind of rode that into other, aspects.

So let's talk about vet school a little bit. So I always liked animals.

These are me. I, my kids actually found it funny that I ride horses.

My oldest is very, very into horses, but this was like casual.

Occasionally I'd jump on a horse that a friend or a neighbor had.

But what really got me interested in potentially going to vet school was when I was a freshman in high school,

they had an extra curricular course in marine biology that me and a friend of mine, decided to take.

They weren't going to take the freshmen, but they had a couple slots. And so you met after school or in the evenings.

And so we had a whole semester of that. And then and it was a week in the Bahamas on a sailboat, and we studied fish and, did a lot of stuff.

But as part of that, we had to do an assignment on different jobs

you could be as a marine biologist and one of them as a veterinarian.

So I was like, oh, well, that could be kind of cool.

So that throughout high school and then college got me interested in that.

And when I was an undergrad, because of my association with swimming, the men's swim coach sat on the athletic council.

And this man here, his name is Steve Reed.

He's a veterinarian.

I didn't realize at the time until I finally got a little further in that he was the head of the equine medicine department at Ohio State,

but he also sat on the athletic council, and the men's swim coach leaned in one day and said,

I have, there's a woman swimmer who would like to go to vet school.

And he said, come and, have her shadow with me.

I am convinced, because I also showed up every day that I had scheduled for him,

to shadow that I showed up, I was interested, I ask good questions.

Ultimately, he ended up writing a letter for me to get into vet school. And I know he,

when I interviewed, he actually said, come see me after you're done interviewing, I did.

He walked me out and he walked right into the admissions office.

I'm pretty sure he had a nice conversation with the interviewer as well.

So I think being able to take that opportunity was important.

So that's another kind of life lesson. Take your opportunities.

But when I went to vet school, I thought I wanted to be a zoo animal vet.

Believe it or not, Ohio had a sea world in it growing up, so we had a Shamou in north eastern Ohio.

I know that sounds weird, but combining my swimming with my love of animals, I was like, I am going to be Shamou's

Veterinarian. That was what I wanted to do when I got into school.

It's incredibly difficult to go that path.

And frankly, zoo animal vets don't get paid very much because everybody wants to be a zoo

animal vet.

But I was going to pursue that until I got to the end of my first year of vet school and I met this woman, and her name is Diane McClure.

She, I took a fish medicine class because I was interested in that area, and she realized that I had a research background.

I didn't want to work in private practice with cats and dogs.

And she said, come with me. And she introduced me to this woman who is Elise Orchard.

Elise, had spent her first year out of vet school at a chimp colony in Liberia.

So she was a primate medicine doc, and Ohio State at the time had chimpanzees.

They also introduced me to a lot of other people doing research.

And even though I did research with rats when I was in undergrad, I didn't really think of this as a career.

The veterinarians that took care of animals that were in research.

But these two individuals started introducing me to a lot of other scientists and other people, and I got to do cool things,

with the monkeys and primates and other animals that I was like, whoa, this is a pretty cool field.

That summer, I started working at Battelle Memorial Institute, which is a contract lab in the Columbus area, and I was a technician,

so I took care of the animals that were being used in research when I didn't have when I was done with my day,

they had three lab animal veterinarians there, and they took me under their wing and would,

introduce me to other concepts within lab animal medicine.

And so they really, focused me into wanting to be a lab animal veterinarian.

I came back for my second year of vet school, and since then I really haven't looked back on this as a career.

But this kind of gave me a lesson on being open to opportunities.

So I had a path. I thought I was going in this direction, but I wasn't afraid to deviate.

And that also happened as I thought I was going to stay at Ohio State as a, to go into the residency program.

But Diane and Elise both left when I was in my third year of vet school, and I thought, oh, no, what am I going to do now?

It ultimately turned out to be one of the best things that happened to me. So even though things don't always seem right, I've learned that, you know, sometimes if you just pay attention to what is going on, you're going to potentially end up in a better situation.

And that got me out of Ohio State.

So rather than having all of my degrees and information from one place, I ended up at the University of Illinois at Chicago for my residency program.

And this was a pretty established program. They were very clinically based.

They had monkeys. So I get to work with baboons, both, adult and baby baboons.

They had a breeding colony there. So the baby baboons were fantastic to work with.

Different macaques. The one on top there is a stump tailed macaque.

They look kind of like bald Buddhas. the one on the bottom was a recess.

We had centipedes. We had naked mole rats. One of the biggest naked mole rat colonies used in research is at UIC.

And then just lots and lots of other animals, of course, lots of mice and rats.

I also did research again as part of that.

As part of being a lab animal vet, you have to have a first author research paper.

And so they embedded me in a exercise physiology lab.

So I got to do a lot of molecular work. Way too much pipetting, too much PCR.

I got through it, but I realized that focusing in on one area of research was not something I was interested

in. Understanding and working with all types of research was where I really thrived.

I so am in awe of the people who are, have PhDs, and they dedicate their life to an area of research.

It was something I realized I wasn't going to be good at.

And so I really liked that clinical side. I liked working with lots and lots of different researchers in lots of different areas.

So this is where I learned that. I also had to take a management rotation in my third year of my residency, and I really liked it.

Most people don't. They just, you know, they really go into it for the medicine aspect.

But I had, we had just installed a new cage wash area, and because they were doing some remodeling in the building, and they did it wrong,

the engineers did the water amount coming to the cage wash wrong.

So I had to calculate the, how much throughput we could put through the different pieces of equipment,

and so that we could run two at a time until they could fix the issue.

And I thought that was great. I redid a whole bunch of policies and other things, and I'm like, this is this is an area I could be interested in.

Well, that brought me to the Cleveland Clinic, which was my first real position, and that this area,

there were a lot of issues where I got there, the person who hired me had only been there for nine months when I got there.

To the point where the program, just had so much work to do, the individuals, there was no consistency in their job titles, who they reported to.

And so I purposely picked this because a very established program, I was going to come in and not be able to do a lot. Coming in here,

I came in, yes, I could have come in and just been a clinical vet and helped to kind of oversee a few staff members,

but I really insisted on having a title of associate director because I wanted to learn.

I made sure I was involved in budget discussions. I took over a lot of the H.R aspects.

We constructed a new facility, we did remodels on facilities.

I wanted to be in the room when all of this happened, and this is where I gained the most experience early,

early on to really lead a program, like I lead now.

While I was there, they had a program called World Class Service.

And with that, we got to take two weeks of, full weeks, pulled us out of, management training. And this was huge.

Early in my career to be able to do this, and I really think it helps.

It helped me, move on. With that, I think there was a question, of what my Myers-Briggs was.

I'm an entj. I am an extrovert.

People who work with me, I have to think out loud. I'm always, like, talking through something.

That introspective introvert. I have to learn to work with introverts on that.

I'm between a s and an n, I'm kind of close, but I always I always score in an n.

And I've taken this multiple times. I get this same thing. I'm very analytical and I tend to be very organized and want to stick to plans.

So it makes so much sense for me.

But what this all taught me ultimately was never stop learning.

I always take advantage of training opportunities. here on this campus, I was in the lights program, when they had it.

And in team science, this is actually me. picture of me getting my certificate at the end from President Benson and then Lily Marks.

And then I just last year took the Excellence and Leadership Program, which is a CU wide program

to be able to keep learning, I highly encourage our staff.

We sent our managers through managers programs. This is my plug for learning and development in the 16 years I've been at this university.

This has really improved a lot ever since Debbie came.

They have so many classes. Most of them are now free.

You used to have to pay for them. Encourage you just always take advantage of these.

You can always learn more. And I'm always reading those little management articles or other things as well.

Just any little tidbit that I can to make myself better.

I also learned there fill the void.

There are so many times where people, that I have interacted with are afraid to like, step up and take on something.

And they're frustrated because nobody's doing it. Nobody's doing it.

What I learned at the Cleveland Clinic was we had so much to do that I stepped up to take on the HR stuff,

the reorganization and, or the budgets because my boss was trying to do other things.

And so I ended up gaining that valuable experience, which then led me to future jobs versus, hey, I'm a clinical vet.

Ooh, I don't know if anybody wants me to do that. And so I've always encouraged people to, if you see something that needs to be done, fill that void.

It's very important. This leads me back to how I ended up in Colorado, where my older brother went to the Air Force Academy.

We went to we came out here in 1988 when I was in, just about to enter high school and fell in love with Colorado.

Always wanted to get here.

It took me a long time, but I ended up getting recruited here in 2006 to work at National Jewish Health by this man, who is Dick Johnson.

He, was one of the best people at running a meeting because he let people talk, but he knew how to keep it short.

It was amazing. I also met this woman, Julia Grinnell, who was the facility manager.

So she was my direct report. And, she was tough as nails.

She was somebody who I knew, we could go in because there were a lot of issues in that program, and everybody reported up to her, 20 staff members.

She had all 20. So we needed again reorganized. This is where I found out that HR can be your friend as a leader.

They, if you can find a really good HR group to work with you, please take advantage of that.

I didn't have that at Cleveland Clinic.

I worked with them, but the HR group at National Jewish taught me a lot about how to work through individuals

who may have been having challenges within their position they weren't performing.

How do you work with them to try to either train them and get them along, or to move them on to a different area where they may do better?

Maybe it's not with you. I also wrote my first grant for replacing, bunch of equipment, at that time.

So that was a huge learning experience for me. All right.

Onto CU Anschutz. So many people probably don't know, but I actually applied to work at CU in 2004.

I came out here and interviewed, my my oldest daughter was born in 2005.

I think I was 4 or 6 weeks postpartum at that point. For a different vice chancellor ended up not getting the director role.

Probably a good thing. I still hadn't been.

I was at the Cleveland Clinic at the time. I didn't really have the experience.

But it was a really good learning experience for me and I, but it's still and thought, hey, I still want to move to Colorado.

That's actually how I got the contact for the national Jewish job.

So it wasn't a bad thing. bBut ultimately, in 2008, I, was, I ended up interviewing for the job at Dick Treisman,

which was my first day of interview is the first day we populated animals into the R2 building.

There were major issues at CU at the time. There was, parvovirus, mouse parvovirus, mites for mice, pin worms.

These are all diseases. When the campus had moved, they just populated.

They didn't clean up the colonies.

There was also some enhancements in testing. So as we've gone along, we find new things, all the time.

And this kind of happened here. So I was hired because a lot of people weren't happy, and a lot of investigators were downright angry.

So this, not that I didn't know about communication before,
but I really learned a lot about communication here because we ended up
depopulating all of the research
one animal facility and what we call rederiving.
So cleaning up the animals all into R2 before we completely cleaned up the
research one building.
This took a ton of meetings, a ton of emails.
To this day I am like obsessive about making sure I respond to people.
I think that, and I push this on our staff as well.
We really try to, I try to respond same day, if not within 2 to 3 days.
If I can't answer a question, I still try to put a response and say, I'll get back
to you.
I think this is a huge key and I hear it from a lot of people.
Now, this is one of the reasons probably why I've been asked to even be on
boards or,
be on, run for leadership because people know that they will get an answer
from me.
And, I do find that to be something that is exceptionally important.

The other thing I learned is that if you can talk to people face to face or nowadays on zoom,

it's better than email, but at a minimum an email and so whatever you can do, communicate with people.

So under personnel management when I started at CU.

Not only do we have those diseases, but we had a lot of equipment that wasn't working and a lot of people who were not being held to standards.

But it was hard to hold people to standards when you weren't sure if they could get the supplies and resources they needed.

So I spent a lot of time my first six months here working in the facility.

I spent a lot of time in our cage wash just understanding what was going on.

So we worked really hard to fix those issues.

And then we started to create and hold people to standards.

And that was challenging because individuals weren't used to it.

Now, there were a lot of people who thrived on it because they finally felt like they had a direction, and I think that's important for people.

But part of that was also doing staff training to make sure everybody was on the same page.

We also realized that our organizational structure wasn't good, in another place, but all of them have had different organizational structures.

We didn't have enough supervisors and managers to be able to ensure that people were getting the support they needed.

So we worked on that. So this gets me to my next lesson learned, which was culture change takes a lot of time.

It's not something that if you ever take over, that if you want to change culture, it's not going to change in even a couple months.

It usually takes years. I would say minimum 2 to 3 years.

And if you have a lot of consistent staff, it's probably going to take even longer.

It's something that you have to put a ton of effort in to correct issues. First is systemic problems.

So if there are, people don't have the right resources, they don't have the right expectations.

You can't really hold them to account.

So you have to put that framework in and let people really trust you before you can see those improvements.

This happened when I got called up to do University of Colorado Boulder.

So they were in, deep, deep trouble with olaw, which is the federal government that oversees whether or not you're following rules for NIH.

In 2013, we were their back up vets. They're a smaller program than us.

And we had a clause that said, yeah, you. Oh, hello.

Oh, so there was a, clause that said that we would back them up.

Well, they ended up terminating their veterinarian. I came in, and they were about ready to get shut down,

which meant about \$90 million in research grants because they weren't following the rules.

And, they hadn't, chosen to be accredited.

They hadn't chosen to do a lot of things over the years.

And I had to come in, each of the different departments ran their own animal facility, and it wasn't centralized like it is here.

Ultimately had to convince the upper administration to allow us to do that.

So we had to put a lot of effort in. We had to communicate a lot, but we had to work on culture change across the whole system.

And, I was up there for about ten months until they could hire a permanent director.

I did both jobs, which was quite taxing. But ultimately in 2018, so it took five years.

They became aalac accredited. And now they're a model program. So it can happen if you put the right resources and efforts in.

We hired some really experienced staff. Julia Bronowski, came in as manager, I moved her from National Jewish, recruited her and recruited some management people, some supervisors that kind of lived in the area.

And we populated that space to be able to really help them get on track.

And they have done a fantastic job now. All right.

Onto family. I met my husband in college.

This is us graduating from undergrad, and, while I was in vet school, he worked for Ohio State.

And then we moved in Chicago. He started working and volunteering.

He's always been in coaching as an exercise science major, and he started volunteering and coaching with triathlon and,

ended up on their regional boards and ultimately their national coaching commission.

This is also the power of volunteering, which then led to a job with triathlon, and working at the national level.

So moving out to Colorado was a key thing. We had our first child, our daughter Ella, in 2005.

It was in 2006 when we moved out here.

My husband actually had to move earlier than me, and we were prepared if I didn't get my job at National Jewish to live apart, until I could get a job in Colorado, which there's.

Anna was born in 2010.

So I'd been here at the university at the time, and when I learned about that, I get asked this question a lot about people, about work life balance.

And, I say it's achieved over time, not on a daily basis.

I think a lot of people think that every day I have to be balanced.

I go to my work and then I do my workout. With my husband being involved in the Olympics, he was on like a four year cycle.

So if you take the Olympic year, he was on the road all the time.

So I became a single mom. If you but then like the year after the Olympics, like this year, is a really light.

He's not traveling much at all.

So those are years that I tried to really increase what I really did at work, because then he could take over for things with children.

Now our kids are much older. I have my oldest is in college and my youngest is in, middle school and can walk to school.

So it's not as taxing, but it is really something that, you know,

I worked really hard, but I also knew I had to manage my family, manage other things.

So I really think it's over a daily basis.

And with that, you know, we've been able to go and I, you know, spend some time with my husband traveling, just the two of us, go to Olympics.

And this is us there at the Paris Olympics with my daughter.

We don't get to spend a lot of time with my husband when he's at the Olympics because he's actually working, but we go play.

The other thing I learned was take care of your body.

So I, like I said, I've always been an athlete, but, when my daughter was born, my youngest daughter was born.

Two days later, I was in the hospital because my heart rate was like 180.

And I ended up finding out, that I had an arrhythmia and went in and, they thought a lot of women end up with these ectopic beats,

and they but ultimately found out that I had atrial fibrillation and went in for an ablation in 2012 to have that taken care of.

But a lot of people, it comes back.

Well, in 2013, when I was working between Boulder and here I was sleeping like four hours a night, super stressful.

And, so I learned that I actually need to make sure, I was exercising, but I was sacrificing sleep to do that.

So I really have this balance between exercise and sleep now.

But I do make sure that I keep my sleep schedule because I found that as long as I can get sleep, I don't have, my AFib get refractory.

I haven't really had any issues since about 2015, because I have actually really tried to take care of my body, eat well.

It's harder as you get older, especially when you get into your 50s.

So it's a little bit, but I really had to take a step back.

The other thing is your preventative screenings.

One of our colleagues here got it diagnosed from breast cancer, and she's been hammering on everybody get your annual exams, get everything.

Because if you don't, you'll eventually hear about it, and you want to learn about it early.

And then finally we get into my last thing. So people are always interested in your mentors.

So I have had a lot of mentors in my life, so much so that I can't really point to anybody that I'm like, this has been my mentor.

I have really taken in just by learning from my coaches and my teammates, people who, kind of guided me and recruited me into the field.

These are my mentors from my residency program.

They drove into me the importance of really learning and knowing things like regulations and stuff by heart versus being able to.

Yes, we can all look it up on our phone now, but you know, you should know it chapter and verse.

These are all the people who have ever given me an evaluation in my work life.

You can notice that most of them are older white men.

I was when I started working here, I was 33, and, all of my bosses were in their 60s and 70s.

I learned that they, but they were the super supportive and respectful of what I brought to the table, and I realized I could be an expert.

These are just a smattering of my colleagues I learned from every single one of them.

There have been many times where, like when I was at the Cleveland Clinic,

some of my employees had been at the Cleveland Clinic longer than I had been alive.

And so learning from individuals and and appreciating their expertise that I wasn't always the most,

the person that knew the most, I listen to them, they changed my mind frequently.

And then these are just a smattering of the colleagues that I've met through volunteering and, and other things.

Some of them are now very high positions, in their respective organizations. They've just taught me so much about what you know, and I can reach out to them at any time if I need advice.

So my last lesson was learn from everyone.

And one of the biggest things that I tell people when they're like complaining about their boss or complaining about something, is learn from people who do things that you don't like how they lead.

I mentioned how some of my coaches were, you know, the traditional yell at you aggressive people, and I didn't like that.

And it's something that I've taken away that, you know,

that's probably not how I should act in a professional environment that's not appropriate and that's not how I want people to lead.

I would hope people would rather be upset and they didn't want to let me down, like with my coach Rick Thompson versus that.

So and that helps reframe if you're having a challenging time that you can learn from people,

even if they're not leading you in the right way, and how you can, refocus how you go forward.

So with that, I'm going to kind of stop at first. I took this on Tuesday.

These are the most up to date version of our staff.

We have 110 people. Oops. I'm sorry I went to my lessons learned.

So these are my ten lessons learned. So, you know, I can put those back up or send them to you, but I'm sorry.

These are my olar staff. This is, the most recent photo I took this Tuesday.

We have 110 people that work for us, doing everything from caring for the animals, doing the caging and logistics, administrative training.

They're fantastic people. I never thought I'd be at a place for 16 years, and,

I just love it here. I love the administration. I love the people I work with, and I can't thank them enough for going on this journey.

Being flexible, being willing to constantly change. and, they humble me every day.

So, thank you again. And with that, I have, I can take questions should I'm assuming I should

unshare my screen. And go from there.

That's perfect. Thank you, Jori. That was amazing. What a great top ten list.

It really is getting my day off to a fantastic start.

I'm going to open the room for questions.

What we would love for you to do. If you would like to ask a question, you certainly can, raise your hand or come off video,

put something in the chat.

We'd still like you to come off video if you are able, but of course, we want you to stay safe if you're still driving or,

doing other activities, trying to get kids out the door, as Jori and I both can understand.

We'd love to hear if anyone has a question about anything you heard today, with Jori's wonderful presentation.

Jori. It's Jennifer. Hey, I, um.

I really enjoyed your presentation.

Although I had trouble logging in, so I was a little bit late, but, I was thinking, when you were talking about your Briggs Myers as an entj.

It's funny, because I used to be always an INTj.

And then finally, now score as a entj because I think I had to, you know, force myself to be more extroverted.

But I guess what I was wanting to ask is, it sounds like you were.

You were kind of, a born leader, really and more extroverted than I am.

But did you ever. Other than the lights program, did you ever take other kinds of leadership coaching or,

did you ever feel like you were having to go against your nature?

It sounds like you're the type of person.

I agree that it's leadership where you're not, you know, coming down hard on people and forcing them to change.

But setting high expectations is is a.

I guess being true to your own nature and not having to force yourself to change too much in order to lead effectively.

Do you have any comments on that or if you ever felt you had to do that?

Yeah. So first I did, I've done three formal like major leadership classes,

and that was the one in Cleveland and then the lights and then the Excellence in Leadership program.

But I've been fortunate enough to take other smaller courses as well.

When it comes to changing my nature. One of the things I realize, like I am a strong e.

So for me, like talking all the time to talk things through, that's how my brain processes things.

It is hard and I have to remind myself all the time that not everybody is like that, and I have to let other people talk.

And so that's one of the things that I struggle with. And I know I am not successful every day.

In fact, I go home at the at night and I'm like, did I talk too much today?

Like, so that is one thing that I really I've really had to, like,

go against my nature and really, like, pull myself back to give other people an opportunity,

especially those Is, because those Is really need that time in their brain to think through things and understanding.

When they throw something out, they fully formed it.

Whereas I'm like, oh, well, this and I could go from over here to over here in the middle of a conversation,

you know, and, and that's fine in my brain because for me, it's whatever we end up with is where we're at.

And those Is come at it and they're like, wait a minute, that was my idea.

And they have to. It takes them time to go back. So that's that's been a challenge for me.

And I've, I'm still very much working on that.

I'm not I'm not very good at that, but I have to work.

Thanks. I really appreciate that that comment.

I can relate. Other questions.

I do have one if we're waiting. Oh, here we go. Lisette.

Would you like to come off mute? Or would you like me to

I'll see if you want to come off mute, I'll give you three seconds. Good morning.

Can you hear me? Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Hey, Jori.

Great presentation. I really enjoyed that. I was wondering, how did you know when to switch jobs or take those new opportunities?

So leaving Cleveland, you know, I really felt I was at a point where I wanted to take on some leadership.

And kind of move on.

There were not to get into other details. Some of the upper administration culture wasn't the best there, for me.

And, so at that point,

I was searching for something that was different and then had these opportunities that started showing up in Colorado,

which is where my husband and I wanted to move. but I probably would have moved from Cleveland around that time anyway.

So from, and in my position where I'm at now, I love my leadership.

I have so many colleagues where their leadership is not supportive.

They don't, appreciate their expertise.

They, I hate to say, undercut them. So, you know, we're in a highly regulated environment, and, you know,

they would come in and maybe do things and ask you to do things that maybe would compromise what you,

how you're running your program to be able to stay compliant.

So for me, those were those are kind of the situations. When I left National Jewish,

I loved National Jewish, but it was an opportunity to move to a program that was significantly bigger.

This campus was growing, and I was convinced that whoever took this job that I currently have was going to be there a long time.

And I was right. I mean, I've been here 16 years because it was just such a fantastic opportunity.

And, you know, I felt bad because I'd only been at National Jewish for two years when I applied two and a half years when I left.

But you kind of have to just take that leap of faith if it's really good for you.

And I've tried to impart that on my staff. So we have we have quite a bit of turnover in our field because we hire a lot of young people,

and I've never, ever held it against anyone for moving to a better job or a position that's better for them.

And we have tons of people who still work here at the university that work in different departments,

and I've been super supportive of them because I've had to make that decision.

So I think don't get hung up on, you know, you kind of got to look at what's best for you and what works best for your career.

Give people the respect of time. You know, don't just walk out the door, give them sufficient notice.

But somebody who really appreciates you and supports you will be supportive of you moving on to something that's better.

Love those comments. Thank you so much. And you may just see, Lizette, that also is giving her appreciation.

Well, we are already at the end of the hour. This time just always flies by so fast.

Jori, you have been just amazing. You are amazing.

I am so fortunate to be a colleague of yours and we are really, really grateful to have you on this campus.

I hope that you will have another fulfilling 16 years, although maybe maybe not.

We'll see. But we 16 might be a little much.

But I know you have a lot of people who leave in their, you know, 60s and mid 70s.

So yeah, I agree. Well, we are so grateful to have you.

Thank you so much. Jan, Debbie, I know we'll be posting the presentation. That will be posted after, in a few days here.

Is there anything else I need to let the audience know before we say goodbye for the morning?

The only thing I'll jump in and say is, thank you everyone for your support this year in attending these.

I know it's a highlight of my morning, so thank you, Jori.

We will be creating next year's, calendar of events.

So if you have suggestions ideas, please feel free to, send an email our way.

And we will also make that announcement, probably mid-summer of what the next year's series will be.

So thanks everyone for your support and Jori. What a beautiful morning.

Thanks for sharing the gift of your story. Really impactful. Thank you.

Thank you everyone. Thank you. Have a great day.

Thanks everyone.