

## Women Leaders and their Stories

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: Welcome, everybody. It's really a pleasure to have all of you here. This is the first time that we're putting up this event. So it's really, you know, may I say this? Is it legal to say that we're virgins in a way? I don't know about that part.

But in any case, we're really, really happy to have you and to be joined to today by five wonderful women, one of whom is joining us from Tri-Cities. Because we do have colleagues in Tri-Cities and Spokane and Vancouver who have joined the association in participating in some of our activities through AMS. We also have the good luck to have our Global Campus here today facilitating the live stream of this event.

And we have 29 students registered online. And we'll be taking questions from those students as well. So, you know, I hope this will have a broad impact, which is really what we all hope for.

Again, we are going to be joined by five presenters tonight. And I'll present them in alphabetical order. And we'll start-- and then afterwards, they will each have a moment, you know, a few minutes to talk about themselves, a little bit about how they got to where they are and so forth. And then we'll have time for a hopefully lively dialogue and a lot of questions from the audience.

We hope that you students feel inspired by these women who have joined us today, but also, I don't know, challenged to ask them questions. You know, they are out there everyday living, you know, not la vida loca necessarily, but, you know, some kind of life that is challenging. And they can speak to that. We live in cocoon here in the university in some ways. And they are bringing the outside in.

So let me start with Johanna Bailey, who is the director of the Neill Public Library. And I made our two officers very happy. And I met Johanna and I was very impressed with what she had to offer in this committee that we were both in. And so I thought, oh, she has to be here. OK.

Then we have Kara Besst who is the president and CEO of Gritman Medical Center. Again, Kara represents a very dynamic field that is growing, which are the health professions in general. So we will be, you know, hearing more from her about that.

Then we have Colleen Kerr who perhaps some of your already know. She's part of WSU. She's the Vice President of External Affairs and Government Relations and our Chief Legislative Officers-- Officer. So she travels back and forth from Seattle, Olympia. I mean, she's on the road like every, every week. So we got lucky to have her here today and I'm very grateful for that as well.

Then we have Anna, Anna King who's joining us from Tri-Cities. And Anna is a news reporter at Northwest News Network. She's been awarded in the past with several women of the year kind

of things. And also, she's very interested in environmental issues. And I thought that would appeal to some of our students as well because this generation tends to be, I think, very interested in, you know, our world and so forth.

And then last but not least because she's a very good friend is Rebecca Van de Vord, who is the Assistant Vice President for Academic Outreach and Innovation, AOI. And she's the Director of Learning Innovations for Washington State University. But she also has a previous career.

And so we have a lot of opportunities to learn about them and to learn about pathways that you may follow as you pursue your life outside of WSU. And I hope you all enjoy it. So we'll start then with Johanna.

JOHANNA BAILEY: Well, thank you. Thank you, Ana-Maria for having me here today.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: You're more than welcome.

JOHANNA BAILEY: Thank you all for coming out and joining, joining this group. It's my privilege to be here. As Ana-Maria said, I'm the director at Neill Public Library.

I did not fall into-- sorry, I did not start out wanting to be a librarian, to be a library director. Actually, when my mother asked me as a child, what is it that you want to do? I said, I want to be a waitress. She said, OK, I'll ask you again later.

But what that really, what that really told me then and really throughout my adult life is I wanted to be in some kind of a service role. And I did pursue a career in food service. Being a waitress quickly became something that I knew I didn't want to be.

But my path took me into the office. And from the office, it took me to the library. And it took me specific, specifically to Neill Public Library. I started in the library in 2001. I actually joined the staff on Halloween of 2001. And--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

JOHANNA BAILEY: I did not. I don't if it was a trick or treat for staff, but I did not. But then took over as the interim library director in 2009. And then took over as full director in 2011.

So it has turned out to be a fabulous career. And again, it was one of those careers that I kind of fell into. And as I was thinking about this evening, the one thing I'd say is, to your question of how did I get to where I am, I got there by saying yes a lot. And I got there by saying, why not a lot. And so it led me in different directions and different paths. Thanks.

KARA BESST: OK. Well, thank you for having me. My story kind of started back in, when I was in high school. So I wanted to give back to the community at a very young age. At 15, I decided I wanted to volunteer at the hospital down there.

And at that age, you couldn't be in the hospital, but you could be in a nursing home. So I started in the nursing home and then moved into the hospital when I turned 16 and did that until I was almost 18. And part of that is I wanted to make sure I was making a difference.

So then I decided to go to the University of Idaho. I grew up in Idaho Falls, went to the University of Idaho, and decided to get a degree in accounting, which, for me, I also didn't want to focus on the bottom line. I had no desire to be a CPA. But I wanted to work for a company that made a difference.

And so during one of my tax classes, they talked about an internship at the hospital at Gritman. And so I applied. And I essentially did a semester internship there, came back that following spring semester to help out. And the controller and the staff accountant decided to leave at the same time. So I was offered a position right before I was going to graduate and took that position in March of '94 and have been there ever since.

So I started as an accountant, went into a director role a couple of years after that, became CFO for about 10 years. And then our CEO was actually killed in a car wreck. And so I ended up doing an interim CEO, CFO role and decided that it was a new direction that I wanted to be a part. I was on the financial side for about 17 years and decided that the CEO role was a new challenge for me.

And I liked it. And so I decided to put my name in the hat. And I've been in this position now seven years.

For me, I had a lot of great mentors. Our previous CEO was a great mentor, was able to teach me about the business and understand that. Our board chair when I became CFO was very much instrumental in helping me get into that role. And so for me, it's been a great journey. I never thought as an intern that I would become, 24 years later, in the CEO role. But I can tell you that it's been a great career path and very challenging.

COLLEEN KERR: Good evening. Hey everyone. So my name is Colleen Kerr. I'm Vice President for External Affairs and Government Relations at WSU. I also have the title of Chief Legislative Officer. So let me say at the outset, I'm happy, when we get the question time to answer any question. I feel like I probably had every strange situation as a woman in the workforce and woman in leadership that you can imagine. And I will, I wish I had someone who would answer all those questions when I was your age. And so I will do that.

I have had a number of different positions. And I have an academic background. So let me share a little bit of that with you. I was actually born and raised in Spokane. So in many respects, I have come full circle.

I don't have an undergraduate degree. I have a couple of graduate degrees from University of St. Andrews in Scotland. I was there for six years. I have a graduate degree from the University of Chicago and a law degree from the University of Washington.

I was-- I raise that because I really let my interest take me where it was going to. And I say that because at the time my mom, who said yes to everything I wanted to say yes to, I did, I did an internship in Gaza, I did all this crazy stuff. My mom, who was so great, she was like just go do it, go do it, go do it and we don't know where it will go.

And then it brought me back here. I worked on the Bloody Sunday inquiry in Belfast for a year. I lived in New Orleans for a period of time. I did all these wonderful things. My degree from the University of Washington, University Chicago is actually a joint degree that I negotiated myself.

So like our two previous speakers and I think probably like many of you, I find this, I do a lot of mentoring of young women, is I was interested in public service, right? So I graduated from law school and I went and worked for Preston, Gates & Ellis, which is the law firm that was founded by Bill Gates' dad, right? And I made pretty good money, actually.

And I wanted to like poke my eyes out. I was miserable and I didn't know what to do. And so, so after about six months, I quit. This is when I moved to New Orleans.

And I ended up going to Olympia. And this is a story that I tell a lot of young women. So I got this job in Olympia, Washington with the Department of Commerce as a Special Assistant for government accountability around economic development. And I made no money. I had to-- I literally-- I mean, I had no money. I had to borrow money from my parents every month just to get the gas to go back and forth.

And it was the best decision that I actually made. Because that was kind of what these turning points in setting my career. And I kind of-- and I ended up going back into law on the public side, ended up being the first tribal council for the State House of Representatives. I was also counsel for ag and natural resources.

I say that because I actually do a lot of ag policy now statewide and federal. Then I became-- the title is-- it was legislative director. But it's essentially chief of staff for the political office or the personal office of the Democratic Senate majority leader at the time who was Lisa Brown. She later became our chancellor for the Spokane campus. And I was deputy chief of staff for the Senate Democratic caucus.

I had never thought about working in higher education. I actually hadn't thought about working in politics, let's be honest. And Elson Floyd recruited me for about a year to come work for WSU.

And we had this interesting conversation about what it would look like to come to the WSU. And I had come far enough along in my career and enough people had kind of told me no that I started to think, wait a second, everyone's telling me no? Why not? This doesn't make any sense, right?

And I would see men around me. And they would be offered positions or opportunities. And every time a man is offered a position, they're like, yeah, I can do that. Yeah, I can do that.

And the women would say, I need to learn more or I need to get this credential. And it's a very different mindset. And I started to notice that.

And so I talked to Elson for a long time. And, you know, god bless him because he kept coming back to me even though I was saying no and saying I wasn't ready to do this. And I got the job at WSU. So I came to WSU in 2010.

And I remember I had said kind of as I was talking to my friends, I wanted to do two things. I wanted to build something. So I took a job that didn't exist, which was a really hard thing to do. And I think that's an important lesson. Because I had to pave my own way.

And I said I wanted to make more money. And I want to say that to you as a group of women. Because when I hear women talk, they don't talk about making money. And I think if we really want to affect change and have women in leadership, we have to look at what that looks like. And if having decision making and power and power looks like being able to make decisions that influence, which all of us are doing, and money also influences. And so don't be, don't be afraid of that.

In 2014, I became Vice President, which was a big deal. I was the only female vice president at WSU at the time. We now-- Kirk has been amazing. We've hired three other female vice presidents.

But I sat around a table for a long time at WSU that had basically zero diversity. And that was a really challenging thing to go through. In the midst of that, I ran the medical school campaign. I ran the campaign to have the Everett campus. We did a Center of Excellence for Aviation Biofuels. And in 2015, we ran the most successful state program in the nation for higher education funding. And so I was able to do some really cool things.

I will still say though, until Kirk came, I really didn't feel like I was part of WSU. Because it wasn't an environment that supported women in leadership. And then since Kirk has come on board, we've really diversified what our leadership team looks like. And I feel like it's a much more supportive place. And even the fact that we're doing things like this and having the opportunity to talk with all of you is a very different place. And so I'm delighted to participate.

ANNA KING: Can you hear me? OK, wow, this is a distinguished group of women to follow. I'm so honored to be here in front of you. And so I came to public radio, which is where I work now, after going through a lot of fits and starts in different jobs.

So for a while I was a horse breaker. I broke small, you know, young horses. And I grew up on a ranch. And so that's kind of what I did. I did any odd job I could get to get some money.

Then I went to WSU and I actually graduated from WSU with honors out of the Murrow College. And that was just a wonderful experience. And then I also studied abroad through WSU through the Honors College in Italy for about a year in two different trips, two interim trips. And that taught me a lot about the world and about bigger places.

I lived in Siena, Italy, which is outside of Florence. And my whole family is Italian and none of them speak English. So that was really important to me to start to learn Italian and to speak that well so I could communicate with my family. We still Skype now.

And then I started working for newspapers after I got of WSU. I started for the Nisqually Valley Herald, which is this tiny, tiny little newspaper. They had three reporters. I was one of them. And they let me do anything. And it was amazing.

And I had this truck. And I would just bomb around in this Ford 150 and I would just find news anywhere I could find it. My biggest story there was we had a meth bust on Fort Lewis. And that was right at the beginning of when meth camps were starting to pop up around the state and nobody knew about what people were doing. But I broke the story that there was all these camps on Fort Lewis and that they were having to clean up these toxic chemicals and stuff.

And so that launched me up to the Puyallup Herald, which had a total of five reporters. I was one. And I worked like heck there. And they let me cover anything.

And I bombed around in that truck. And then the truck broke down. I got a little Honda, bombed around in that on dirt roads. And so I just-- I reported the heck out of the Puyallup Valley and Sumner and I just loved it there.

But the agriculture kept shrinking and shrinking. And that's one of the specialties of what I cover. And so then I started looking around. And the News Tribune was like, hey, you want to write for us for a little while? And I was like, yeah.

So I went over to the Tacoma News Tribune. And I worked on that. But as I was doing that, I was starting to see the shuttering of my industry. I was starting to see, like, the press guys be let go and other reporters not being filled. And I was like, wow, this is kind of weird.

And then I started working for the Tri-City Herald as their top environmental and agricultural reporter. And then eventually, more and more, you know, people that were like 30 people in a newsroom shrunk, shrunk, shrunk. And I said, I have to get out of here.

And so I think that's one of the lessons that I will share with you in my career is that if something's not going well, just look around you. What else can you do? What other skill set do you have? And that's where I came up with radio.

So this is my trusty recorder. And this is how I roll. And it has tape on the back. I don't know if you can see that in Pullman. I've dropped it off of combines and horses and everything else. And this is my microphone.

And so I just run after anything that makes sounds to get really good stories. And I usually have a pen behind my ear and my notepad my back pocket. And I just, you know, just go after any kind of news for WSU and for the Northwest News Network.

We have 2 million listeners across Washington and Oregon. People often don't understand the impact that public radio at WSU has, but we have a much broader footprint across the region and the nation than most people understand. This week, I'm doing two national stories, one for NPR and one for Marketplace. So those are stories of our region, of our scientists, of our farmers that are going out to the whole nation. And sometimes we're on the world, so we go out to the world.

So anyways, the skills that you could bring is I have a real knack for crisis management now after many years of firefighting and hot things at Hanford that break often. And so knowing how to talk in front of a crowd on a dime is a really good skill to pick up. So going to a local club like Toastmasters or learning to do public speaking, I would highly advocate that. Any career you take, you're going to have to speak in front of people.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: So greetings. And especially I'm really excited about the 29 online students we have. I'm currently Assistant Vice President for Academic Outreach and Innovation, which houses the Global Campus. So very excited. The Global Campus is my passion.

Like Colleen, I'm here at WSU. I'm in what I would consider a very nontraditional academic type position. And I certainly did not work through academia to get here. In fact, so how many people have seen The Shape of Water? So I just love that line on the back of the calendar. Life is the shipwreck of your plans.

So if I-- I am not-- I never planned to be here. I actually planned not to be here. But here is where I am. So I left high school from the Tri-Cities and went to Central to get a degree in journalism. And that was at a time when, you know, right after Watergate, Woodward and Bernstein, journalism was a pretty popular field.

And I never intended to go to WSU. All of my friends and family went to WSU. I was never going to be here. So I now have three degrees from WSU and none from Central.

I came to WSU and got a degree in nutrition. Really, between you and me, it's a Bachelor of Science in Home Ec, which I hate because I never wanted to do anything so traditionally female. So I got a degree in nutrition.

I did the national exam to become a dietitian and took my first full time job at 22 as Assistant Food Service Manager at The Cub. I had 100 employees, most, all of whom were significantly

older than me. The rumor was I had slept with the manager to get the job, of course. Because, you know, nobody could be right out of high-- right out of college and take a leadership role.

So, you know, it's-- I've learned along the way. I had a friend once who said it's more important to be respected than to be liked. I think that is true, although that is and continues to be really hard for me. I like to be liked. I like people to like me.

So I did. I worked Cub Food Service for about five years. I had-- got married. In fact, the director of The Cub at the time when I got married said, you know, this job is really hard on marriages.

I mean, it wasn't like we'll help this job-- you know, this job should accommodate your marriage or your children. Nope, it's the job first and the job is hard on marriages. So after five years, I was married. I had a child and left there to find something that was less demanding and allowed more work-life balance.

I went to work for WSU Dining Services as a nutritionist, planned menus, gave nutritional advice to students, did that for about five years. That seemed to be my-- five years is my limit. Left there and I was a WIC nutritionist for a while and worked with pregnant moms and kids. And that was great.

And after about five years, I left there and went down and ran the school lunch program at the Lewiston School District. So in that situation, I had 50 women working for me across 10 different kitchens. That was a very interesting experience. That was definitely a leadership role.

But I found myself often in leadership roles in positions where I was like the only one. So for the women and infant children, for the WIC nutrition in the health department, everybody else was a nurse. And nurses were the people that climbed the ladder and actually could move into higher leadership positions.

In the school district, I ran the school lunch program. But I was never going to be superintendent. I was never going to move up the ranks there.

And apparently, without really even knowing it, that must have been a desire of mine, as was apparently the journalism. So in my 40s, I decided to come back and get my masters at WSU because I still lived here. So I went to the Murrow College to get my master's in communication and PR and really wanted to work in public relations and writing. While there, I found some fantastic mentors.

And one of the things I saw-- and she's not here, so I'll say-- and Erica Austin was one of the first women I saw who really, her family and her job were both her priorities. And she found out how to make that work. And I had always been in situations where I looked for jobs that would accommodate my family, maybe ended up doing things I didn't really enjoy or want to do.

But they were part time and so they worked out. But she-- I mean, and she is a woman so true to herself. Every interaction, every person I see her with, whether it's-- I've known her as a grad student, I've known her-- I've worked for her, I've worked with her as a peer and a colleague, she is who she is all the time. So I think a couple of other people have said finding mentors, people that really speak to you. One of the things I learned along the way taking some-- the title leadership course is to understand your own values and how important that is and to work from that point, to not feel like if I'm going to be a leader or I'm going to be a whatever that I have to fit this traditional description of it. You know, figure out who you are and how to work from that place. So those things are pretty important.

So I did my masters. While I was there, decided I loved school and wanted to do my PhD, which was another thing I had always had I would never do. So I did my PhD in communication.

And while I was doing that, I took a series of online courses taught by Dave Cillay. It was a graduate certificate in instructional design. And my goal really was to take my health background and the instructional design and the comm piece and work for a medical company, work for a hospital, create websites. Health communication was really my interest and that was my focus during my masters and my PhD.

I had an interesting experience taking Dave's courses. And I'm not going to say anything here I haven't said to him. He knows this. I found him, I really struggled with him as an instructor.

He was very ambiguous. I didn't understand what he expected of me. I was in his office in tears. What do you want? How do I complete this?

There were two people in my class who really aspired to work for Dave. And they were just about trying to impress him. And I said, never going to work for the man. So, sure enough, there was a job open as an instructional designer.

I applied for the job and got it. Dave's now been my boss for 11 years. And as he's been promoted, he has promoted me. And it's really been a very good relationship in some ways.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: He is. He is a great guy. We are very, very different, which makes us both a good team. And we frustrate the living daylights out of each other. You can ask him. So but it's been a good team.

So, you know, I would say, and other people have said it, be open to where life takes you. It's not necessarily going to be where you planned to go. Be open to saying yes, new experiences. Don't ever say you're never going to do something because you might have to eat your words. I think that's--

AUDIENCE: There's even a James Bond movie-- actually, no, it was not James Bond. It was Sean Connery [INAUDIBLE], Never Say Never.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Yeah, yeah, that's what I would say.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: Well, thank you, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: Let's get some questions in or comments.

AUDIENCE: So as being a woman in like the workforce and stuff, how did you guys all deal with people telling you you can do something or no, you shouldn't do that or that might be too hard for you, stuff like that?

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: So.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: My guess is for all of us, that's exactly what we need to hear because then we say, yes we can.

COLLEEN KERR: But not all women end up doing that.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: No.

COLLEEN KERR: And that's unfortunate. And I think that's the message that I would say. I mean, the reality is, is we are still going to hear no, I guess is the thing. And I don't know why I was different. I mean, I think about this a lot. Like, I don't know why I was different than so many of my peers along the way. But for sure I was and I am.

And I wish I had a better message for you now than when I was-- than 10 years ago. But it is, yeah, you're going to hear no, and who cares? I mean, there's a certain piece to me now that, like, I hear no and I don't even care. I mean, I think that's their problem and I'm going to go do whatever I want.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: Oh, OK. So we're good? OK.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I think it probably also comes down to, for me, I had very strong female role models growing up. My mom worked. And Johanna actually knew my mom. But she was a school principal. And, you know, just the women around me set those examples.

COLLEEN KERR: But even if you don't have those women examples, we can be those women examples.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Exactly, find your own mentors.

COLLEEN KERR: Totally.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: I think there's been an element of consistency that we need strong mentors and role models, still do.

And sometimes it's not what you-- to answer-- to go back to your question, sometimes it's not as overt as somebody saying you can't do that or no don't do that or no, you don't have permission to do that. I'll share a story from very early on in my library career.

JOHANNA BAILEY: So I had the good fortune of being able to work under some very great super-- bosses and the good fortune of being able to learn from some very bad bosses. And one of-- I had just taken the job, actually, as the administrative assistant at Neill Public Library. And I took that job because it was-- everything about it was going to be new and different and the challenge.

And so my second day on the job, I was sitting in the office. And my boss came in. And he said-- he said-- so do you have any experience with Excel? I said, well, a little bit, but I'm really open to learning.

And he said good because-- he opened the spreadsheet and he said, this is Excel. It's your job to make sure we never go over budget. Good luck. And he turned and left.

And so that was my first experience with him. But then the third day, he came to me and he said, you know, you weren't my first pick. And he said, and you could have negotiated for a higher salary. So I thought, OK, this is how it's going to be.

And I did what I still do which is, I called my mother. And I said, this is my experience. Is this normal? Because up until then, I had, in different areas of my life, I had really been mentored and had some great bosses.

And she said, actually, it's more normal than you might think. And she said, make sure-- and these are words of wisdom that I pass along to you because they still resonate with me even today. She said, make sure that you don't let your worth and your value be determined by somebody else, least of all your boss.

And so sometimes it's not as overt as saying you can't have a higher wage or you should have done a better job or you could have or should have. Sometimes it's the little, you know, those messages come shrouded in something else. But to kind of tag along with what some of the other panelists have said, it really is knowing your value. It's knowing your own worth.

And we don't all-- we're fortunate if we come out of the womb knowing that. But more often than not, we're learning it. We're learning our worth as we go. And we learn it from our

collective experiences, from the good experiences, from being supported and mentored and appreciated and nurtured.

We learn it from the bad experiences, from having bosses who say you weren't my first choice and you could've gotten a higher wage if you'd asked for it. But all of those are learning experiences. So I'd say be confident in yourselves. Know your worth. If you're still learning you're worth, keep learning it. It's a really valuable lesson.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: And did you negotiate a better salary next time?

JOHANNA BAILEY: Well, that was the irony of the whole thing. Because in the m in the municipal structure, you don't negotiate your starting point really. I mean, it's really kind of against protocol to do that. So to this day, I'm not exactly sure what message she was trying to give me, but the feeling that was left with me was I was so uncomfortable.

And I thought, boy, I'm going to start counting the days because I'm not going to be in this position, I don't want to be in this position. But then actually, we came over the years of working together, we-- kind of like what you were saying with Dave-- we really complemented each other very nicely. And we found that even though we were completely different individuals, had completely different value sets, we were able to work together and find that relationship that was an asset to the organization.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: OK, thank you.

AUDIENCE: So kind of in the vein of what you were just saying, knowing your own self worth, how have you guys dealt with situations where you were given an offer of, you know, pay that was obviously not what you were worth? So how have you guys kind of dealt with it? What advice would you give to somebody, say, to deal with it maybe?

JOHANNA BAILEY: I'd say starting off, do your research so that you come to the table with knowing what a reasonable offer is and knowing what a reasonable offer isn't. If you have done your homework and you know it's within this kind of a salary range, then that'll give you really good feedback. And then when they say to you, why do you think you're worth that much-- if they say that to you-- you can provide, you have the information in your back pocket.

COLLEEN KERR: What is your specific question?

AUDIENCE: Well, it's-- I feel like sometimes as women we're-- they'll give you an offer or something like that. And you almost feel guilty for challenging it. So how do you kind of overcome that mentality of, I guess, guilt saying, well, I should just--

COLLEEN KERR: I can tell you exactly. I've done that twice. And both times, they're not great stories. And so hopefully, I will be the lesson for you and you do it better.

The first time was when Elson offered me my first job. And he offered me less money than the person whose job I was not taking, because my position didn't exist, but kind of in the world. He offered me less money than that person. And so I took the offer back. And my boyfriend at the time said, you need to ask for a lot more money.

Now I look back at this, I'm like, I can't believe this is, this is my story. And so and he was hard on me. He was like, you need to go ask for more money. You need to ask for more money. And so I did. And Elson didn't blink, actually, did not blink. And I asked for a lot more money.

And I just say that because it's such a good lesson when I asked for that much more. But I would not have done it on my own. And then again, when I made Vice President, I asked for not enough money. And what happened was that after the medical school, then I renegotiated and at that point, asked for quite a bit more money. But it was not because of me.

Again, different boyfriend at the time-- my boyfriend's [? pushing me ?] me. I cannot, I mean, but that's the honest answer. So I will be your boyfriend. And go ask for more money. Like, to the point where you feel uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable asking for that much money. And then I was like, what's wrong with me? I should be asking for more money.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: Anna or anybody [INAUDIBLE]?

ANNA KING: Can you guys here me?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

ANNA KING: OK, so I have a similar story. You know, I was just working away. And it's always for me, it's been about the journalism and the work. And sometimes you can get so excited by what you're doing, you kind of forget about the money part a little bit.

And then you're like one day, wait a minute, like, I wonder how much all these guys are making that are doing the same job as me. And then you start looking. And it's all online because it's a state job. So if you take a state, a county, a city job, start looking and sleuthing like an investigative journalist.

If you don't know how to do it, you can call me. And you find out how much the guys are making. And then you at least make that much, but hopefully make more because you're probably smarter and working harder. So I think that you just have to be a good journalist for yourself when you're going out into the workforce. And there's Glassdoor. There's county, city, state of Washington sites that you can look on.

And if you're not sure where your salary should be, just look at people that are doing similar stuff or in a similar tier to you. And then just call the guy that had the job before you and ask them point blank, what did you make because I really like this job but I don't want to get underpaid? And half the time, they'll tell you, so.

AUDIENCE: So I kind of have a two-part question. So my first part is like, how do you guys-- or how did you deal with your friends when you, like, started to really get down in your careers or like and they weren't moving at the same pace as you? Did you have to cut them off or like verbally explain your situation to them?

And then the second part is like, how do you, like, check your significant other when they're not playing their role of being supportive or, like, understanding your perspective on why you want, why you take what you're doing so seriously or why you're so passionate about it? Or how did you even like walk away if necessary?

COLLEEN KERR: I can answer all these questions. With respect to friends, that is a real thing that really happens. And I don't know, at least for me, I don't know that there are these kind of dramatic break ups or anything. But certainly, there are people in the course of my life, women friends I've been very close to and that were the decision points.

And I don't know if it was because we disagreed. I almost actually feel like they were more uncomfortable with some of the decisions that I was making because they were choosing traditional roles and I was not. And it's like in anything else, you kind of find out who your friends are. And it's the same as asking for money or anything else. You have to have this internal strength and conviction. And you will find extraordinary women who are making different decisions, frankly.

And then you would still be friends with them. But that is a real thing that's going to happen. And I can think of very specific women, even within the past five years, especially as my career has grown. And frankly, my career will continue to grow. And I would assume I will continue to have changing relationships around that.

I think that the dynamic with boyfriends or significant others or girlfriends or whatever your life looks like is interesting. There is some great literature out there on this. There's a book that I love to recommend. It's called Get to Work. It's like a feminist manifesto or something. It's a little booklet.

But this woman says that actually the most important decision you make if you want to be a woman in the workforce and you want to be in a leadership role is, who's your partner? Because that decision, actually, is kind of the biggest thing that sets what your life looks like. And there's really interesting data out there that still women in the household, and that's if you're in an opposite sex relationship, women in the household are still taking on a majority of the household.

And you have to actually be with somebody who is willing to negotiate that. And so my partner, I mean, he picks up all the dry cleaning. He does all the dogs, like all of it. I mean, that is really what our life looks like. But you have to have somebody who can negotiate that with you. You kind of have to be up front.

And then if they're not-- and I mentor some young women. And I see that their partners are not. And I'm pretty direct. So I'll be direct about that. But it breaks my heart when I see young women who are in that place. If they're a partner, they're a partner kind of all the way.

KARA BESST: So for me, I had a lot of strong female friends in the business school at the U of I. And so some of them, I'm still really good friends with. And they also have-- are in the career ladder and have very successful careers. There are some that aren't. They've chosen to not do that. But we're still friends.

But I think, you know, I think as women, we need to make sure we're supporting each other. Women, unfortunately, can tear each other apart. And so really looking at that and making sure, you know, who your values and really making sure that you are friends with people that have similar values to you. So that's, I guess, on the friends side. As far as on the spouse, significant other, I can tell you, my husband and I, we've been married for 20 plus years.

And it's been somewhat of a challenge. Because he was not in a leadership role. He's in law enforcement. And so he is now in a leadership role. And it's very interesting to watch because he'll come home and want to talk about his day and now managing staff. And he's been doing it for about three years now.

I've been doing it for almost 20 plus years. So it's a very different environment. He goes, you know, you won't believe what happened today. Yes, I will.

So, you know, but it's learning and understanding that. And so really as far as the support piece, we have very, very much, we know what our roles are. We try to make sure we're supporting each other and making sure that, you know, it's not, well, these are your duties, these are my duties and really making sure you're supporting each other.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Don't really have anything different to add to that.

ANNA KING: I can say a couple of words. I think like one. Of the most important decisions of your life is finding that smart partner and you want to find the nerdiest, most awesome guy that loves women that you can. And if he doesn't love women and if he's not nerdy and he's not smart, run for the hills.

And I didn't learn that until later in life. But I just kept trying on different shoes. And I'd be like, oh, this isn't right. This doesn't feel great. This is, you know, this is just kind of stupid.

And then all of a sudden, I met a guy who woke up and read the New York Times before I could get at it at 5:00 AM. And I was like, you are my man. And he's an awesome scientist. And he's really gentle and kind. And you want to find a man that loves women, that loves you, and is proud of you when you make strides in your career. And if he's not doing that, get out.

AUDIENCE: So what-- so what have been your guys' experience with working with other women in the workplace? You talked briefly about how women can tear each other down. But so, not like mentors, not women above you, but sort of women at the same level. Do you think it's been harder to make friendships with those sorts of women because of competitiveness or, yeah, so?

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I think it all just depends. I've had some women in the workplace that it did not work well. I mean, it's just like any other aspect in your life. There are some people you click with and some people you don't. And, you know, I think of the workplace as sort of the dysfunctional family you don't get to pick.

I mean, you don't, you just have to learn how best to work with other people. And part of it is, again, understanding where people are coming from and their values and why they're maybe making the decisions they're making. I've had a couple of what I thought were friendships in the workplace that ended up being not, people-- women who really resented when I got promoted and they didn't.

And then you realized that they really weren't your friends because they didn't really care about what's best for you and what you want and your goals. But, you know, it can be the same with men. I mean, people are people. And we don't shed our personalities in the workplace.

COLLEEN KERR: I think you have to set the example too. It is easy-- and you see this with all kinds of different populations that have less power. So there's competitiveness that happens. And we forget what the system looks like. And so I go out of my way to empower and work with all of the women that I work with.

I mean, I really do. I'm very intentional about it. That's not always reciprocated. But I always live my values and don't let that bother. And then like with anything else, people will self-select in and out of your life for sure.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And it can be very difficult when you think that there is a friendship there and then you learn that really there isn't, it can be difficult to continue having a working relationship. One of the things-- I don't think that this characteristic is unique to women, but I like to be liked. You've said it as well. Women like to be liked. So I'll make that general statement.

And it's hard when things don't work out and you still have to have that professional working relationship. And so I think that, you know, that is a very common experience. That is the reality.

So what, what I tend to focus on more is not, how is it to build friendships, how do you ascertain whether it's a friendship but really more on, how can I make sure that both my relationships with women in the workforce are professional, first and then friendships, second. But then how can I support the other women in the library to also learn those skills and to be

able to make that distinction? And like a dysfunctional family, you really can't-- unless you leave the profession, this is the group that you work with. And so it can be very tricky.

But then kind of to a point earlier, there are so many times that you will have challenging situations and friction points that are just innate and organic. And so finding, self-selecting or finding your group that does support you, that does nurture you, that has the same value sets or that complements your value sets is really important. You're going to be-- you're going to be surrounded by people you don't like and that you don't get along with. So to the extent that you can self-select and choose to be with people where it feels good to you, and that they're nurturing relationships.

AUDIENCE: We have a question from the Global Campus. [? Griselle ?] asks if y'all have any books that you would recommend that you found very helpful in your own lives or in leadership?

KARA BESST: So I have a couple that I look at. So *Crucial Conversations*, that's one of the things that we've been doing with all of our leaders. And so I would recommend looking at that. It's really a book talking about, how do you have those difficult conversations and making everyone feel safe? So that's one.

And there's another one by a gentleman by the name of Quint Studer. And it's on-- it's really based on health care, but understanding the workforce and how-- and so I would look at some of those books that are out there, leadership books. So those are the two I would recommend.

COLLEEN KERR: I have a few. So, again, *Get to Work*. It's a great book. It's little. It's thin. It's definitely a feminist book, but it is kind of about moving into leadership and has wonderful, very practical advice. It has like four or five tenets.

I recommend *Lean In* to women all the time. I buy it for young women. I got-- it was fascinating to me. I had so many friends who hated it. And I'd be like, did you actually read it? And they would have just read criticisms of it. And I thought it was a really interesting exercise in women tearing another woman down who spoke out about something from a very learned place.

I like a book, actually, called *Fierce Conversations*, which is written by a woman. And she's in Seattle. And it is about-- it's a leadership book, but it's about being successful in leadership by actually having the very hard conversations.

And then there's another book I like which is written by this guy, Chet Holmes. It's called *Ultimate Sales Machine*. And it's a business book. And it is very male and masculine. But in reading it, it's fabulous business advice.

I also own a restaurant, I should say. So I think a lot about business and I run my program like a business in some respects. And it's a wonderful book. I highly recommend it. And I also don't

think that young women are reading books like that. It's tremendous insight into kind of what that world looks like.

JOHANNA BAILEY: So I'm glad you mentioned *Fierce Conversations* because that was on my list too. And actually, I just really re-read *Lean In*. And both of them are really good. And then the other one, the other author, actually, that I really like because there are take home lessons just from any of her books, Brene Brown, if any of you have read Brene Brown.

COLLEEN KERR: Oh my gosh, yes. And I have-- I recommend her TED Talks.

JOHANNA BAILEY: Yes. She's fabulous.

COLLEEN KERR: They're fabulous.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And she reminds-- why I love her is because she reminds me that as a leader, you have to tap into your-- this is going to sound weird, but you have to tap into the humanity as being a leader. And she is just, I mean, I get goosebumps. I have goosebumps right now even just thinking about her. She's that impactful.

The one thing about *Lean In*, the reason I reread it, is because I had been reading a lot about women of color and their experiences. And so I wanted to reread *Lean In*-- sorry, I don't know what's happening to my voice. I wanted to reread *Lean In* because what that the author does so well is really empower women. It's going back to knowing your value, not being afraid to be assertive, not aggressive, but assertive.

And she brings up lots of different examples and studies about the difference between the two. But what I found interesting is-- and this was actually from a review of a reader-- the reader said, what's missing in this book is the acknowledgment that for women of color, it's a difficult walk, it's a difficult journey to have. Because if you *Lean In* and if you are assertive and you're asking for a higher wage, it can be really, it could come off as, with the perception of, oh, well, you know, they're just doing the Asian thing or they're just a mad Black woman or-- and so your skin color can color that experience for you.

And so then in diving a little bit deeper into that book, readers were talking about, how do I embrace kind of the philosophies, you know, the lessons that are in that book, but still acknowledge my own reality as a woman of color? So I would love to get her in the room and actually have her talk about that.

COLLEEN KERR: Yeah, I just also the last question. So one of the things I think about with these panels-- so we're four white women. And I just, like, I am very sensitive to, for any of us that are women, we look for people who look like us or tell a story that's similar to ours. And we're still not in that place.

We need more women of color in leadership positions. We need more of them on panels. Whether you're trans or same sex, I'm very sensitive to that. And so I think it's important to acknowledge that we're not necessarily representative of what the population looks like.

AUDIENCE: Right.

COLLEEN KERR: But to the extent that I can tell a story that's helpful, I want to do that.

AUDIENCE: Thank you for [INAUDIBLE].

COLLEEN KERR: Absolutely.

AUDIENCE: I have another question from the Global Campus. Alejandra asks, do you have any advice for anyone that knows they specifically want to be into a leadership role as their end goal, is there any specific degrees that would help or anything else out there?

COLLEEN KERR: So I give this-- I give this advice a lot. And I say get credentialed. The two things that have mattered over the course of my career was that I have a law degree. As soon as I say I'm a lawyer, people listen. They take it seriously. I think a PhD, I think an MBA.

I have a public policy degree. I actually think it's a pretty worthless degree. I think academically, it was great. And I went to the University of Chicago, which people care a lot about that. But what I see is that women will gravitate to degrees that I don't think give the credentialing that men go to. And I think that is really unfortunate.

I cannot tell you how many young women want to go get like a master's in public management or nonprofit management. I'm like-- because Seattle U offers that and it just kills me. Like, go get an MBA. You can manage a nonprofit with an MBA.

Like, that type of credentialing does matter. And so if you want to be in a leadership role, we have not changed the world yet. We are changing the world. And so that credentialing matters. And I loved law school, actually. It's a great thing to do. And I would recommend it.

JOHANNA BAILEY: I'd also say, spend some time in whatever profession you're considering being a leader in. So shadow, shadow leader for a day and see what their job is like. It may not be everything that you think. Or it may be more than you-- I mean, you might find that you love it. But, you know, shadowing is important.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I would say that about any position you want to be in, whether it's a leader or not. And I've been thinking a lot about the questions about relationships. You can't tell from the outside what's happening with a person or in a job or in a position or, I mean, you need to get-- and what you learn in your classes day to day at the university can bear very little resemblance to what you actually do day to day in the workplace.

I mean, one of the things my mom talked about as a school principal is I should have had a class on how to fix eyeglasses and shoelaces and those kinds of things. You know, I mean, it's what you're going to do day to day. Talk to people who are doing the work that you think you might be interested in doing. Again, do your research.

ANNA KING: [INAUDIBLE] spend some time on it. I think that's a really good point. Like, I was trying to teach a young reporter that came on with us how to do everything right. And then I thought, oh right, you just have to make all the mistakes in the world. And then eventually when you've made those mistakes five times, you kind of get to the point where you know what you're doing on an interview in the field or in the back country.

And so sometimes you just need time on it. And you need to try a whole bunch of different things and try a whole bunch of fits to see what resonates with you and what you really care about. And I don't think I knew that until I was maybe five, 10 years into my career where I really started hitting my stride.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Good point, and I think you have to know that you will make mistakes and you will fail at times and that doesn't make you a failure. I think it's really hard, particularly for grad students. Generally, they've been very successful K through 20.

And they got into grad school. And they do really well. And then you go out to the workplace and the expectations are different. And there's no test to study for. There's no grade. And you're not quite sure how you're doing. You'll make mistakes, but that's how we learn. It's OK.

AUDIENCE: So I'm wondering if you guys have advice for someone who is leaving the world of academia and trying to, like, figure out what's next.

COLLEEN KERR: What do you want to do?

AUDIENCE: Good question. I wanted to be a professor of literature, but I have since changed my mind. So it's kind of like dealing with uncertainty and--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: So, yeah, is that a clear enough question?

KARA BESST: Well, I guess my answer would be, find what you're passionate about. Because then you will excel. Obviously, for me, it was that drive to make sure that-- I get bored very easily. I can tell you in health care, I am never bored because it's just such a very dynamic and challenging industry to be in. So my advice is to find that, what drives you as a person and then get into that industry.

And for me, it was pouring myself into it and seeing, you know, what, what worked. And what I didn't know I tried to make sure I had the mentors in there to understand that and really look at that industry and make sure I understood it. So that way I could challenge those out in other leadership roles.

COLLEEN KERR: I would say be humble. And so when I say be humble I mean, I don't know, there's maybe some job that you think, whether it's, I don't know, working in a bakery or being an executive assistant or whatever-- like that job I took in Olympia, whatever that job is that you might think is beneath you, that you are educated beyond or whatever, be humble. If it's interesting to you or you feel like there's an opportunity or something resonates, just do it.

The amount of people I see-- men and women, actually-- who will say, oh, I don't want to do that because basically they're saying it's beneath them, why? I don't know, just do it. Who cares? And if it resonates with you, you'll start to find your path if you are open to the possibilities. I really believe that.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: And don't look at it as a one and done decision.

COLLEEN KERR: Totally agree.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I'm not picking my career and this is all I'm ever going to do. If it doesn't resonate with you, you'll find something else.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And even the jobs that you find don't like, you'll learn a lot about yourself in those jobs.

COLLEEN KERR: Totally agree.

JOHANNA BAILEY: So the ones you don't like are as important as the ones you do like.

ANNA KING: And, like, the experiences that scare you to death, those are where you grow. When I was a young newspaper reporter at the Tacoma News Tribune, I had to kind of like yell over 30 people to, like, pitch my story that might make the paper that day in like the B5 way back in the back. And that experience taught me how to stand up and speak in front of a lot of people that-- even though I was super nervous. So, like, just making yourself uncomfortable and being willing to fail is part of that learning process.

AUDIENCE: So Ms. King, earlier you mentioned how there was a point in your career where you kind of saw the reporter room shrinking, and that's kind of a very clear external cue for perhaps maybe it's time to move on try something a little new. For you or for any of the other panelists, have you ever had a point in your career where this was something you wanted to do so much, you're so passionate about it, you really thought this was it, but it kind of like wasn't working out?

And not in the fact that it was hard or difficult or anything, but how do you kind of recognize cues that maybe perhaps it's time to take a step back, change paths, not give up, but maybe this is a good time to quit or put it on the back burner for now? And then how do you reconcile that kind of giving up your dream that you're thinking of?

ANNA KING: So when I was at WSU, I went to WSU specifically to be in the Veterinary Science program. And I was, you know, wrestling an emu at the Puyallup Fair and being drug around the crowd with this emu that we had to get a vaccine. And I was thinking in my head, I was like, I don't know if I'm like up for this. And then the llama spit on me. And then the pig pooped on me.

And I was like, you know, I don't know if I'm up for that dissection of the baby calf tonight. So, you know, it was really good for me just to go boots in to veterinary science and kind of get experience about what does a vet do. Because I had done ride alongs with vets in my county. And I had, you know, tended my horse. And I had tended our cattle that were hurt on the ranch.

And I thought I knew what I was going to do with large animal medicine. And then I really found out, no, I like to take notes and record horses. I don't really like to tend to their wounds and stitch up their legs. So I think it's OK to really go all in on something and then turn around and go, you know, this might not be my thing.

And what's really fun about it is I get to do a lot of the work that I do, that I wanted to do with vet science. I get to be around agriculture. I get to be in backwoods situations. I get to ride rodeo horses. But I don't have to tend them.

And I'm doing what I love, which is communicating. And so it kind of took me a minute to find out that I'm a talker. I'm not a stitcher. So just find-- you know, just go into whatever you think you're going to do and just wrestle around with an emu a little while and then figure out if that's for you or not.

[LAUGHTER]

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: And, again, you're allowed more than one dream. And if you feel like, I've accomplished that, I'm no longer, I'm no longer setting new goals, I'm no longer seeing new things I want to accomplish, then maybe it's time to find a new dream. If you feel like you're just not really in the right place, you know, then that might be a different answer. But you can have more than one dream.

COLLEEN KERR: This is the Brene Brown, she talks about this a lot. I highly recommend her TED Talks. She has the big TED Talk. But then there's like TEDx Kansas City and TEDx Houston. And I watched them all because they're all a little bit different but one of the things she talks about in her books is if you can let go of this attachment that, I am Colleen, I'm a lawyer, or I am Colleen, whatever.

But if you can let yourself have multiple definitions, then you will, then all of these paths will be open to you. And most people don't think like that. Most people get attached to this idea that they're an accountant or they're a librarian and that's who we are. And that's actually not who we are. So--

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Well said.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And then to go back to what we were saying earlier where you learn from the jobs that don't work for you, same thing there. Every job that you have, you will learn something about yourself. So whether you, you know, geek out and take a notepad and write these things down, you know, keep a running list or you just [? chalk ?] them away, you will learn-- the more you learn about yourself, the more you'll learn to recognize your own cues and clues as to when it's time to move on.

I've done a lot of different jobs. I've pumped gas I have managed and run restaurants. I have-- in fact, I loved food so much for a long, long period in my life, I thought I'm going to be a caterer.

So I decided I couldn't let go of my library job because it had, it gave me the health insurance and I needed to have a steady income. So I just decided, ah, I can just do this on the side. So I started the catering company. And really quickly learned and, quickly as in 3 and 1/2 years, learned that, yeah, there's limits to what I can do.

And timing plays a lot, it's a big factor in whether the job is the right fit. And so maybe I could have gone on and become this fabulous caterer. I had a pretty strong client list. But it wasn't the right time. My kids were young.

I realized-- one of the things I realized from this one was that I wanted to be home. I wanted to see my kids grow up. It was important to me to be their mom in the way that I conceptualize that. And I was giving that up by choosing to work full time and then be a caterer full time as well. And so every job that I've had, I've learned something new.

And one of the reasons, to take what Kara was saying, one of the reasons I love, love, love my library job, is because I hate being bored. And so it gives me-- there's always something to do. And I always go in thinking, oh, I'm going to X, Y, and Z, and it never is the case. And I love that. And so you learn as much about what you don't like as you do about what you do like.

AUDIENCE: Our next question is from [? Shay ?] and she asks, what advice would you give yourself, your college age self knowing what you do now about your life?

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

COLLEEN KERR: Yeah, I totally do. I mean, I was not-- so I don't know what you all are like and I feel like I was not an amazing student. I was an amazing student in those things that I was

interested in. I didn't feel that-- I felt that I was being directed, probably because of socioeconomic background and how I looked, to basically get an MRS degree.

I just didn't feel that I had that support network. So what I would say is, don't despair. Because I just was like, oh my gosh, I was miserable. And I felt like I couldn't get a-- the support to go where I wanted to go.

But-- and if you want to get your MRS degree, you should do that, too. But just don't abandon the other ones. That's what I would say, but, yeah, I was, it was, I was not happy-- I was happy in college intellectually in those things that I cared about. But I didn't feel like I knew what the world was going to look like. I didn't feel like I knew what my job was going to look like. I was like, where do I fit into this? And so--

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I don't know. I mean, I ended up getting a degree in what I found interesting to study. I didn't really give a lot of thought to what kind of work you would do. On the other hand, I'm really happy with where I've ended up. And I probably wouldn't have ended up here if I hadn't started there. So I'm not sure that I would give myself other advice.

JOHANNA BAILEY: I would say, be more in the moment and try a little bit harder. So I'm going to go out on a limb here and tell you that I was a terrible student. I was. I didn't care about being in the classroom. I didn't particularly enjoy the learning environment that I had. I was really shiftless. And I just-- I had gone to school on a piano scholarship and quickly realized probably month two that I didn't want to be a performance music major. What do I do now? And so it was, I just really kind of aimlessly drifted.

But like Rebecca is saying, it also led me to where I am now. And so I ended up-- I actually very really roundabout way ended up graduating from the University of Idaho with a bachelor's in Spanish and a minor in French. And it was a very circuitous path to take me there.

And I don't use those degrees in my current profession. So if I had been more in the moment, I might have taken in school more seriously. But, you know, hindsight is 20/20.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: I, too, was not a great student. So maybe that's-- you know, I don't know. Were you a great student?

ANNA KING: Sorry, I was honors. Sorry. I was really nerdy. I would just say, like, try to-- try to find your band of women that is going to support you through your life early. Try to find a diverse set of really kickass women that are going to go after life and that you can learn from. So, for example, I have this crew of women that I try to get up at like 4:45 in the morning with. And that's the only time we can usually find time to exercise. And one of them is sitting in the room here.

And so, basically, you go and you find like a lawyer, a city council woman, a computer scientist, and like any other powerful woman you can find it. You make them, make them be your

friends. And then they give you advice in the early morning hours on all facets of your life. Like, oh, no, my computer is melted down.

We got it. OK, you know, someone has got a lawsuit pending against the university. We got it. You know, and so you've got this, like, Geek Squad that's like got your back.

And it's really fun because then you have this mentorship with peers that are doing different things than you are. And throw in a scientist and a veterinarian, just scoop them all up. And try to get the squad. And then make them your Facebook friends.

They don't get to say no. And then just like hold onto them like a death grip. And don't let them out of your life. And they'll treat you well through your whole life.

COLLEEN KERR: WSU has five campuses. And I have found in every community that WSU is in, there is what I call the group of women who run the world. And they're always-- and she's giving fabulous, fabulous advice. They're always there. And they are-- they want to be a network. But they are, it's true. They're everywhere.

KARA BESST: I would say for me is don't get discouraged. Sometimes you try to force things to work because that was your goal. And sometimes stepping back and letting things happen, things happen for a reason. Sometimes if you push too hard, it doesn't work out and then new doors open. And that's what happened with me. I was able to kind of allow those doors to open and really kind of let other people's plans play in. I can tell you that similar, as far as the discussion about never saying never, I could tell you I never wanted to be the CFO .

And then after I said that all of a sudden, I'm in that role. I can tell you I never wanted to be the CEO. That was not my desire. But then when that opportunity came and I looked at it and decided, OK, yeah, I can do this job. So I would say, you know, really make sure that you don't try to press too hard in there. Because you might miss an opportunity that can change your whole life.

AUDIENCE: Our next question asks, what advice do you give to minority women who want to go into leadership and break those barriers you were discussing earlier?

JOHANNA BAILEY: Do it. I don't-- as a woman of color, I can't, I mean, my own story is my own story. I don't know that it's any more or less difficult to be a leader, be a woman, and be somebody of color. I think that there are some unique challenges, but I wouldn't say that the challenges that I've come across have been because I've been a leader.

They've been because I am a woman of color, but not because I'm a leader and a woman of color. So I'd say if you don't let your, don't let your skin color hold you back. If you want to go break boundaries, go break boundaries. If you want to be a leader, go be a leader.

COLLEEN KERR: Including from finding mentors. I've had two interns, both were young African-American women. They both came and found me. And were very clear that they wanted to work for me because they admired me as a woman leader. And I continue to mentor both of them. And they've gone on to do some really cool things.

One of them actually ended up going to graduate school at University of Chicago. The other now works for Patty Murray's office in DC. And so I thought that was an interesting lesson there. We have a tendency to gravitate to what looks like us or feels like us, right?

And both of these young women really inspired me to think outside. And then similarly, for me, I worked for Elson Floyd. I've worked with, I've worked with tribes a lot too. And so you have to step outside your boundaries. I mean, we all do, frankly.

AUDIENCE: OK, so I'm getting my masters in jazz composition. And my field is highly male-dominated. I've always been like the only girl in the band or whatever. And so I kind of want to hear about how you found your voice in a male-dominated field, how it's impacted your career if it's impacted your career or how it hasn't. As someone who's trying to go into education, trying to really figure out if I really want to do this and continue, like, having that struggle, you know, it's helpful to hear, like, other people's stories.

COLLEEN KERR: I mean, I can give personal stories. So there's one, there's a wonderful set of four things to do. It says, lean back, take up space, slow down your language, and I can't remember what the fourth thing is, but it's advice you give for women when you're in a male-dominated room. I've been in more meetings than I can tell you that I'm the only woman in the room. And so there's a lot of psychology in terms of how we hold our bodies, which is very different that commands attention. I actually do it. I think it works.

You will be in meetings. And you will say things. And people will say, it's a stupid idea. And then a few minutes later, some man will say it and they'll be like, that's a great idea.

And you have to speak up at that moment and say, that is a great idea and I just said that. You have to do it. And when you're in a room with maybe like six other guys or three other guys and only one other woman, if she says that and it happens to her, then you need to amplify what she's saying. I do think that we have that responsibility.

I wish that, I wish that it were different. It's not different yet. But if you are in a field that is male-dominated, then there are some things I think you have to be very strategic about. And you have to feel comfortable standing up for yourself. It will become more comfortable over time. I noticed too that women-- and I see this in myself-- sometimes we want to take things personally, depersonalize, and have a less emotional reaction.

We're women. We're different. We do have emotional reactions. To the extent you can learn to manage that and there are ways to do that, learn it and learn now and kind of start to mentally prep yourself.

The story that I love, which is just by analogy, is Muhammad Ali where he says, everybody has a plan till you get punched in the face. The whole point of that story is not you're going to get punched in the face. The point of the story is that you are going to get punched in the face, so make that part of your plan. And that means that, prepare yourself mentally that that is going to happen and then how do you, how do you get back up, right, after you've been punched in the face, how do you get back up from something that feels really defeating?

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Yeah, I mean for me, the depersonalize things has been late in coming and has really helped me in my current position, and something I learned from my current boss who is male. I mean, sometimes I think-- I don't think we need to approach leadership in the same way that a man might. But I think we can learn from men and how they navigate various situations. And I've learned a lot from my current boss whom Colleen loves.

COLLEEN KERR: He is great to work with, but, I mean--

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: No, he is great, yeah. Yeah, and I've learned a lot from him. So, again, you know, mentors. And not assuming that all men are going to be your enemy. They will-- if you do good work, they will respect that.

ANNA KING: I think that's a really good point about your body language and how to hold your body and how to present yourself. And also, I'd say, don't discount the clothing. Like, if you're wearing a power outfit and some high heels at a business meeting in downtown Seattle, you know, you look like you're going for it. And if you're out in the backwoods on a fire, you know, you better be wearing the right kind of the boots and the right kind of pants that, you know, fire pants and look like you could handle the job out there. I think being prepared for whatever you're walking into is really helpful.

Because even in your own self, if you don't have to use all that preparation and the homework that you did before you go to a meeting, that's fine. But if you are prepared, you know you're prepared and you carry yourself differently. And so just doing your homework before you show up to a meeting, who's going to be at that meeting?

What are those bios? What is their LinkedIn page look like? What are they after? What is their goal? What is your goal?

Just like analyzing all of that before you walk in a room makes you doubly prepared than probably most of the people that walk in the room and you can go further that way. And I think that's really an important point where she said amplify other women's voices within a meeting or within a room. And simple ways you can do that is to say, wow, that's a really good point that Jennifer just brought up. Did you guys hear what she said? And, like, let people know that you're listening to the other woman in the room so they should also be listening to that woman.

And if you have to have a conversation in the ladies bathrooms so she does that back for you, do that. Ladies bathroom is like secret sauce. Like there's-- it's like where stuff gets done sometimes. And you just say, hey, you know, when I'm talking in this meeting, nobody's listening to me. Could you kind of help amplify me a little bit?

And then she's like, oh, I didn't even realize. Of course, I'll totally do that. And so just having the camaraderie with your fellow females, even if they're few.

COLLEEN KERR: Don't feel like you have to be a man either. I will say that. Because I definitely noticed myself in my career. And I also felt like-- because it's a little generational-- there were women who were older than me who were so male-dominated-- in such male dominated environments. I would watch them change how they dressed or their demeanor or how they spoke in meetings. And I felt it was so unfortunate. And so I have really made a very conscious effort myself to not, to not lose that, to just still be me.

And I am very feminine. But sometimes that has been a conscious decision. Because you want to conform, right? That is what we all have a tendency to do is to conform. And I think that we want to also be very mindful and pushing against that, just be yourself and be a leader. You can be a leader as yourself.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And I was one of the conformists. And so when I became, when I became interim director, I was trying to figure out, so I was-- this, I was trying to figure out my place in a very male-dominated environment. Most municipalities have-- the female representation is around 15% of the workforce. So it's low.

At the city of Pullman's executive team, there's two other women besides myself. So it's low. But early on, I thought, OK, everybody's wearing suits. I'm going to start wearing a suit.

So I went out and I bought suits. And I was really-- I mean, suits are not comfortable. But that was me conforming. And so for close to two years every time I had the department head meeting, I was in a suit. Every time I had to go to city council, didn't matter if I was presenting, I was in a suit. And so slowly over time, I realized, where am I?

Where am I in this suit? And if the suit isn't me, then I'm more than the suit. And so it was this conscious decision to break from that, and to really let who I am come forward.

The other thing I wanted to say is, look around the room that you're in. Look at your fellow colleagues, participants, members. And be good at reading people. Because there may be a man-- you know, sticking with your question-- there may be a man in that room who is a friend, could be a friend, could be an ally for you. And I've said this to him to his face and so I'll say it in this meeting. We have a fabulous city supervisor, new city supervisor.

COLLEEN KERR: Adam--

JOHANNA BAILEY: Adam Lincoln.

COLLEEN KERR: --was my intern, yes, he was.

JOHANNA BAILEY: Really?

COLLEEN KERR: I'm that old.

JOHANNA BAILEY: Well, he's-- he's fabulous.

COLLEEN KERR: He is fabulous.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And one of the things that is so fabulous about him-- and this is a brand new experience that I just, I love. He is all about female empowerment.

COLLEEN KERR: He's worked for a bunch of women. I mean, he's awesome.

JOHANNA BAILEY: He's awesome.

COLLEEN KERR: He's fantastic.

JOHANNA BAILEY: He's awesome, yes. And so, so day-- might have been half, day half when I got some talk time with him, I said, let me share with you some experiences that I've had because I don't ever want to have them again. And he has been so fabulous in saying, absolutely. Let's work on getting that fixed. And he has been-- he has become a friend and an ally in very male-dominated scenarios. So find that person. I'll bet you that they're there. You just don't know it yet.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] when you guys were-- so when you guys met your mentors, how much time did you spend with them and what-- how did you, like, work through your relationship in keeping in contact or-- or them trying to get you where they saw you or how they wanted you to see yourself how they saw you?

COLLEEN KERR: Have you read Lean In?

AUDIENCE: No.

COLLEEN KERR: So she has a chapter on mentoring, which I think is really well-written. Because what she talks about is that mentoring, mentoring in its truest form is not formal. Mentoring relationships can happen and should happen through the course of your life. And there should be a fluidity to them. And so if you can kind of, I believe, free your framework, free your mind of the framework of what a mentor should look like, then the relationship will evolve organically to a certain extent.

I think that as you seek out people to mentor, it's kind of like dating. I say that everything is like dating. But you might have like-- you might approach 10 people. And out of the 10 people you approach, maybe one or two of them you feel like you establish a relationship. And maybe one of those mentors, you guys will talk and really be in touch and another will be more sporadic.

But you can have multiple mentors at any time and they will change-- exactly like dating-- over the course of your life. And you will have the right people at the right time. And I still look and find mentors in my life all the time. And my mentors-- and I, again, I've been very purposeful in that public I've had male, you know, African-American boss, female bosses, et cetera. And so now I really look for mentors who are different from me and what can I learn and what does that look like?

KARA BESST: So my mentors have been more informal. They've met me through-- so one was our board chair when I was the director of fiscal services. And she was really wanting to see on the business side. She had some concerns. So she came and spoke to me.

And her and I were able to bond a relationship then. I was attending the meetings, the finance committee meetings and presenting to our board at the time. And I could tell you that I was in my 20s doing that. So for me, the mentors, it has been informal.

But really trying to understand where they're coming from and what you can glean from them and then really making sure that you're prepared as you're going in and meeting with individuals and having discussions, that you're able to really be open to what they're saying and even on the criticism side, which that is always a challenge is, you know, you think you did a really good job presenting something. And they might come down and criticize you. But taking that and learning from that side.

AUDIENCE: Hi. So I'm currently a psych major at WSU Tri-Cities. And I get my bachelor's in the spring. And I'm interested in working with juvenile delinquents. And a lot of the time I get like, people will tell me, they're like, well, you might not be taken as serious because you're young and you're also female. So I just wanted to know, like, how you, like what you would suggest like how to cope with those comments or like, yeah, that's my question.

COLLEEN KERR: At the state Department of Commerce, I was told I was too pretty and too friendly to ever get very far. That was my actual job review. It blew my mind. And I was devastated. And I went to my mom. And she was like, this-- she was so disappointed because she couldn't believe the world hadn't changed.

And actually, at my job interview not with my current boss, with my previous boss who was the interim president, I had some language in there which I actually wrote a formal piece about because I believed it was sexist and there's a lot of data. I actually went to the Harvard Business Review. And I had a formal response back.

But I think that you have to-- I mean, as someone who has been through this a lot and still has comments about appearance or my personality or whatever, I think you just kind of have to develop a certain amount of armor and internal strength to push back on that. I would-- again, this is one of those times, I wish I had a better answer. It will happen. But you're as tough as you want to be, right? Like, that has nothing to do with how people perceive you necessarily. That's their issue, not yours. You can do it. Yeah, totally.

AUDIENCE: Do you have a question-- [INAUDIBLE]?

COLLEEN KERR: If anyone-- I mean, [INAUDIBLE]

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: No, I think that was good. Go ahead, Grace.

AUDIENCE: So currently at my workplace, I work at the office of Multicultural Student Services. And there is just-- every time we walk into a resume workshop, there's always that demand of, like, more technical skills. And there has been just a very glaring number of more male workers having those technical skills. And so how do you balance being good at your job and balancing your education but also learning those new skills in order to kind of just be at the same level as other coworkers?

JOHANNA BAILEY: I'm not sure I understand the question.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Yeah, I'm not sure I understand the question.

AUDIENCE: Technical skills as in-- so I'm on the marketing team. And I already know Photoshop and like Canva and just like basic, like, basic technological skills, like, in certain applications. But I do know in many careers, there is that need for just keeping up with that increased technology that comes into the workplace. And so how do you learn those new skills but also just maintain being good at your job at the same time having that balance?

JOHANNA BAILEY: Do you--

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Well, learn--

JOHANNA BAILEY: Go ahead.

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Learning those new skills is part of being good at your job. So if it's being committed to continuing to learn. I can tell you in my job, understanding new technology is sort of expected. And people tend to think that I know a lot about technology. And I think several of the people in the room who have worked for me know that that might not actually be the case. But, you know, I ask questions.

And I explore. And I, again, I'm willing to let other people know what I don't know so that they can help me. You know, I don't pretend that I can do this. I go and ask questions and I figure it out.

JOHANNA BAILEY: You had mentioned-- oh, I'm sorry. You had mentioned that I thought I heard you mention that there were men who had those technical skills. Is it a gender issue for you?

AUDIENCE: It's just hard to explain, but I guess like a lot of the times, like, our guys have the more, like, technological skills than women.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

REBECCA VAN DE VORD: Right.

AUDIENCE: I would just say that is it possible that they put those things on their resume and you don't? Oh, you do. Because that's something that I definitely notice is that sometimes you just assume that people expect you to have sort of a basic skill level. And some people will put every little thing on their resume, every little thing that they know how to do. And other people are like, well, I don't need to put that or I don't need to put that or I don't have the confidence that I have that, whereas the person the other person might put every little thing whether they have the confidence or not. So I was wondering if it was that.

JOHANNA BAILEY: I think everybody, regardless of gender, has a responsibility to market themselves and to, definitely, if you know it and you can do it, put it on your resume. But the other-- if you're-- you sound like a very aware person. And so if you are aware that other people have skills that you don't possess or that you do but they're somehow getting the task assigned to them or if they're getting picked for the tasks, then it might be time-- if you don't have the skill, it might be time to, yeah, to look into getting that. How do I acquire that knowledge? If you have the skill and you feel you're being passed up or passed over, then maybe it's time to take that concern to somebody and say, hey, this is what I'm seeing. Am I missing something? Are you seeing this too? And just spark that awareness.

ANNA KING: You can sleuth around on LinkedIn and look at other people's resumes, for examples, in your field that you would like to enter into. So be your own journalist. Be a researcher. And look for examples of what you're trying to write. And edit yourself well by bringing it to more experienced people that can help you edit and shape your resume into something that is really powerful. Am I hearing the right question? I hope I'm hearing the right question.

AUDIENCE: So we have time for one more question.

AUDIENCE: Our final question is from Heather from the Global Campus. And she asks, do you find that you have to fake confidence when you don't feel it, like the expression fake it till you make it? And how do you deal with that?

COLLEEN KERR: Yes, there's a TED Talk, Amy Cuddy. Watch the TED Talk. It's so good. I'm serious. I'll email it to all of you. But, yes, lots of times. Totally fake it till you make. Yes, short answer.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And you find that as you're faking it, your confidence grows.

COLLEEN KERR: Yes.

JOHANNA BAILEY: So it's like you-- if you're-- and I think this is either in the Lean In book or one of Brene Brown's books, but if you are feeling really sad, smile.

COLLEEN KERR: Yes.

JOHANNA BAILEY: And the more, the longer you hold that smile, the more all of a sudden, you're not going to feel so sad. So, yeah, there is-- your mood raises to the action that you're doing.

COLLEEN KERR: There is that. So the Amy Cuddy video, she's the one who does the power poses. So it's fantastic. But there's another one. And I just watched it. And I can't remember. But it's I am excited. And I actually have the email in my inbox still. And it says it all caps in the subject line just a reminder to myself. And I put notes on my phone. Like I'll have these reminders. But the one is, you're supposed to say when you feel nervous or you don't feel like you belong, if you tell yourself that you're excited, that that feeling is excitement, you actually change how you do it. And so I've done some pretty big presenting recently. I mean, I'm still doing this. I will tell myself, I'm excited. I'm excited. I do smile and you start to believe it.

And here's the best example of faking it till you make it, going to sleep. You lie there with your eyes closed and you will go to sleep. And then you are actually asleep. So it's exactly the same. You will become excited. You'll become confident. You will become these things, right?

ANNA KING: And I'd say, do your homework. If you come into a room prepared and you know what you're talking about and you know, you know that you've prepared for a meeting, even if you don't use any of that information, like, it gives you a secret power that you know everything going in the room and the things that you don't know, you can negotiate through because you've done that preparation and that you're ready. When I go live on national radio, I often talk through what I'm going to say before I get on the radio and try to kind of phrase it and see how it sounds to myself. And then when I'm on the national radio live, it's not quite as hard. So talk to yourself in your bathroom mirror and say, yeah, I'm excited and this is what I have to say. I think that's a great-- that's a great piece of advice.

COLLEEN KERR: She's brought up several times working hard. And I feel like I'm taking that for granted. I work harder than anybody else. I mean, I really do. I mean, I will work harder than any of my peers-- partly because I've learned that you kind of have to. And I see it all the time around the tables that I sit at. But I-- I mean, and I say to Kirk, I'm like, you're going to do it,

grade me on a curve. Because I will compete, I will work harder. And if you are doing something that you love, then it won't feel like work, which is why I think we're all saying find something that you love. But you do have to do all the work. And I do think as a woman walking into a room that's male-dominated, you are going to have to have done more work and you are going to have to compete. But if you're doing something that you love, it's really rewarding. And it's super rewarding as you move ahead. And you will, even through periods of stasis, you will.

ANA-MARIA RODRIGUEZ-VIVALDI: I think we all agree that we've learned a lot tonight. And I hope you can join me in thanking all our presenters.