

THE NEW FACE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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As a member of the Board of Trustees, a 1979 graduate, and an inductee into Omicron Delta Kappa on this campus, I welcome you to Florida Southern College. ODK has been an important part of Florida Southern's history for many years

I am proud to say that at Florida Southern College, we inducted into ODK our 38th President, Gerald Ford, Winston Churchill, III (the grandson of Sir Winston Churchill); Walter Cronkite (the former CBS anchor); and Bennett Cerf (one of the founders of Random House).

I believe college is the incubator for students who possessed the seeds of leadership in high school, but needed a place for those seeds of leadership to be fertilized and nurtured into men and women who we need in this country to bring out the best in us.

What is ODK about?

It's not just about 15 students and faculty on the campus of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia coming together to recognize leadership at the collegiate level.

ODK is about identifying, honoring and developing leaders and impressing upon them the values of scholarship, service, integrity, character, and fellowship.

ODK is about openness and inclusiveness among all people. It is about doing away with overt and covert discrimination, whether that discrimination is race, sex, religion, gender identity, disability, nationality or even age. It is about tackling implicit and explicit bias.

In this age of polarization, marginalization, anger, conflict, and frustration such that even our health and relationships are being significantly impacted, it is only natural that even in ODK we must look beyond the external results of leadership.

It is wonderful that our members get great grades, or take on community projects, or organize wonderful social events. To the public all is fine but what about the internal physical effect of our leadership decisions?

Do we have balance in our life? Are we holistically well? It's about being well.

It's about being physically well. Are we eating right; are we exercising? Are we resting?

It's about being emotionally well. Are we too hard on ourselves; are we able to communicate our feelings? If we need counseling do we get it?

It's about being intellectually well. Do we stimulate our mind; do we listen to other points of view?

It's about being socially well. Do we have healthy relationships; do we love someone or have someone love us unconditionally?

It's about being spiritually well. Do we have a faith system that works for us? Yours might be Judaism or Islam or Hinduism. Mine is Christianity.

It's about being financially well. Do we have a career that meets our financial responsibilities or are we willing to adapt our lives to our financial circumstances with content and not stress?

It's about being environmentally well. Do we try to minimize our own as well as our community impact on the environment, including recycling?

You may look at me, and I may look in the mirror, and say how can she talk to me about holistic wellness? She must not have great eating habits and she must not exercise very much. Others might look at me and say I feel you because I am struggling too and that struggle is impacting my ability to lead, my ability to take the initiative, my ability to feel good about myself.

Some in here may say how can I have balance when I have so many external obstacles in my life? I have family responsibilities; my life is one big crisis; I have a physical or mental ailment, I

have great financial challenges, my classes are too hard, my self-esteem is in the tank, I have lost my faith, and I feel so alone.

In the 21st Century it is not enough for ODK to encourage its members to get good grades, to provide service in the community, to maintain integrity, to be of good character, and to socialize together.

Without a feeling of self-worth, a sense of wellness in all aspects of our lives such that it is okay to go beyond our comfort zone, ODK members will not realize their full leadership potential. ODK members need to know it is okay to experience pain because it makes us stronger or to create new habits to afford balance in our lives because they make us better. ODK members need to know it is okay to give ourselves a break because perfection is not the goal. It does not exist in an imperfect society. Satisfaction is the goal.

As ODK members, we are leaders. Now, it is incumbent upon us to start that leadership from within. It is incumbent upon you to start this conference with an attitude of completeness; an attitude of wellness; an attitude of realness. We are the sum of our imperfect parts. Let's mold those parts into our best self, a self that we respect, that we love, and that we will radiate as the leaders that we are meant to be.

Thank you and God bless you all.