

Diana Chapman Walsh

Trustworthy Leadership

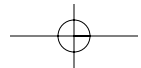
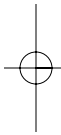
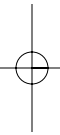
Can We Be the Leaders
We Need Our Students to Become?



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Diana Chapman Walsh

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Spring 2006

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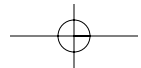
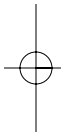
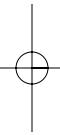
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In our attempt to welcome as many authentic voices to this conversation as possible, we remain committed to an ongoing dialogue of ideas. As this meaningful discussion unfolds, we responsibly note that the interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication represent the views of the author or authors and not necessarily those of the John E. Fetzer Institute, its trustees, or officers.

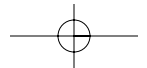
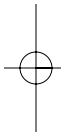
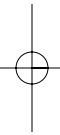
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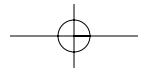
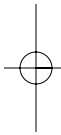
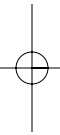
FROM TIME TO TIME, the Fetzer Institute publishes an occasional paper that has bearing on the fundamental values that guide the Institute. Much of the work of the Institute arises from dialogue among various thought leaders from around the world. These papers are offered as expressions of inquiry to further that dialogue more fully in the world. The Institute has a long history of serving the field of education. This paper comes from one of our longtime partners.

As president of Wellesley College, Diana Chapman Walsh has proven to be one of the visionary leaders in higher education. In this essay, *Trustworthy Leadership: Can We Be the Leaders We Need Our Students to Become?*, she traces a career of insight that speaks to the honest development of authentic and integral students, educators, leaders, and diverse communities. As well, she unfolds the lessons and challenges that inevitable conflict brings to such educational communities. Rarely do educators weave such vast experience with such a deep mind.



Trustworthy Leadership





Trustworthy Leadership

Can We Be the Leaders We Need Our Students to Become?

Diana Chapman Walsh

In my career, I have been privileged to learn from many who are building the bridges and the alliances that recognize students as whole human beings: mind, body, heart, and spirit evolving and growing through the life-shaping and (we hope) life-transforming period of late adolescence and early adulthood. I am not alone in understanding how vital—and how improbable—it has become in our wired, transactional, and competitive consumer culture to convince today’s young people that it is worth their while to dwell for a time with the “big questions” and to entertain the “worthy dreams” captured by Sharon Daloz Parks in her landmark study of how we might mentor young adults for lives of meaning, purpose, and faith.¹

As our nation becomes increasingly polarized and our world increasingly dangerous, it seems ever more important that we, as educators, parents, and citizens, work to help young people move beyond tolerance of difference to true and deep empathy with that

This essay originated as a keynote address at “Leadership with Spirit: How Colleges Prepare Students to Lead with Moral Purpose and Commitment,” a conference sponsored by the Institute on College Student Values at Florida State University on February 4, 2005. Parts of it had previously been presented in a keynote address at the College Board Colloquium on January 17, 2003. It draws as well on over a decade of collaborative work with organizational consultant Richard S. Nodell.

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As our nation becomes increasingly polarized and our world increasingly dangerous, it seems ever more important that we work to help young people move beyond tolerance of difference to true and deep empathy with that which is “other” and “alien.”

which is “other” and “alien.” This task is surely one of the most pressing imperatives of our time.

A few days after the turn of the millennium, I participated in a televised roundtable discussion with James Billington, the librarian of Congress, an insightful scholar and a thoughtful man, who a few weeks later delivered a prophetic speech. It was nine months before 9/11, when he said:

“We [Americans] have . . . a profound special need to understand better the three great cultural belts of Asia—each of which is now aggressively asserting itself on the world scene: the Confucian- and Buddhist-based cultures of East Asia, the Hindu-based cultures of South Asia, and the long corridor of Islamic nations stretching from Indonesia through Central and West Asia to North Africa. Each of these worlds contains more than one billion people who speak languages and profess beliefs that few of us have even begun to understand. But if you do not learn to listen to people when they are whispering their prayers, you increase the risk of meeting them later when they are howling their war cries.”²

A similar message has accompanied reports from the United Nations on progress toward meeting the “Millennium Development Goals.” Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs projects that we could halve extreme poverty around the world by 2015 and eliminate it by 2025 if we could mobilize the world’s richest countries (including the United States, Japan, and Germany) to more than double their international aid. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has said that the goals of the project—which some characterize as unattainable—are “not utopian but eminently achievable.” Sachs has been arguing for years that the necessary resources are available, if the richest nations would make this goal a priority.³

And in Davos, Switzerland, at the 2005 World Economic Forum, former U.S. President Bill Clinton and Microsoft founder Bill Gates discussed the worsening AIDS crisis in Africa. Dismissing claims that Third World governments cannot be trusted to manage international aid monies and distribute antiretroviral medicines, Clinton said bluntly: “You want to go save four million lives? Give them the medicine. It’s not rocket science. And it’s cheap, so cheap. Let’s get the money. . . . It’s peanuts compared to everything else all these rich countries do.”⁴

If addressing the world’s most pressing problems is not rocket science and not simply resources, what is it? It is our ability as leaders to discover our solid ground, to truly hear the quiet prayers that are building to war cries, to sense that time is short, and to trust that our lives can matter. It is summoning the discipline to focus attention in directions that cause discomfort, facing moral dilemmas in all their complexity. It is seeing past the self-interest of short-term electoral and business cycles and cultivating the imagination and the generosity of spirit—in ourselves and those we touch—to focus on wrenching problems and yet not to lose heart, to open our hearts to sorrow without being paralyzed, to find in the world’s suffering our bonds of humanity.

The tragedy of the devastating tsunami on Christmas Eve 2004, as awful as it was, brought into bold relief an even deeper, more systemic, and more portentous test of our collective will. For a few weeks after that calamity, the world’s attention was riveted on the yawning gap between

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rich and poor, North and South (the fact that 3 billion of the earth's 6.4 billion people subsist on the equivalent of less than \$2 a day), and the degree to which we privileged few on the planet are ignoring and exacerbating the misery of the billions who are innocent victims of war, genocide, starvation, and preventable disease and death around the globe. And then, while survivors in the stricken areas were still digging out from under the rubble, we comfortable ones moved on to our more immediate concerns, leaving the rich-poor gap to widen—a moral catastrophe and a menacing threat. We look the other way and go about our lives, wishing we weren't so busy, distracted, and starved for time. Or at least that's what I do; I'll speak for myself.

Can there be any doubt, then, that we need our graduates—this new American generation of such great privilege and promise—to become active participants in the world, potent advocates for human rights, confident leaders willing to take risks in the pursuit of intellectual honesty, of freedom to disagree, of justice and fairness, global citizenship, and mutual responsibility? And so the question arises then: How we can support our students in becoming passionate and powerful moral leaders?

How Do We Integrate Knowledge?

The urgency of our need for better leadership explains in part, I think, a fragmented array of programs and initiatives that are appearing today in colleges and universities under a variety of rubrics, including citizenship, service, ethical conduct, moral choices, values and vision, and spiritual leadership. We know very little, however, about which programs are effective and toward what ends, less still about how to integrate them more usefully into a unified learning experience. Part of what remains daunting about the question of how to prepare students to lead effectively in a changing world is that there are so many disparate entry points, so many disconnected corners within the academy in which aspects of the task are being pursued, or could be. For example, interest is growing in a wide

range of programs that seek to address questions about the following topics:

- The role of religion and spirituality in higher education (and corollary questions about the role of spirituality in leadership)
- How to teach today's students to become engaged, responsible, and effective citizens of their nation and the world
- How to educate young people to think well about their values, to make moral choices, and to be moral agents
- How to prepare young adults for healthy and fulfilling lives, lives for which they assume personal responsibility, lives of focus and purpose, imbued with meaning and hope

At the most fundamental and intriguing level are the epistemological questions that define how we teach and what students learn. Parker Palmer has argued that the “myth of objectivism,” which has dominated Western thinking and structured our consciousness, distances the knower from what is known, separates our inner lives from the objects of our study, deforms us morally, and distorts our understanding by denying us the opportunity to connect our small stories to the large stories of the disciplines.⁵

As the established disciplines have been challenged by alternative epistemologies—feminism, multiculturalism, the new physics, Eastern and indigenous wisdom traditions and philosophies—the duality between objectivism and subjectivism (between truth and reason on one hand and art and imagination on the other) has been undermined. New syntheses are emerging that need not send us back to hopelessly radical subjectivity (where everyone's opinion is always equally valid and true). At their best, these new integrations bring the knowing and feeling and sensing self back into the intellectual project as one important touchstone.

We are not going to learn how to engage “the other”—that is, understand and bridge the profound differences that divide and define us—unless we are willing to bring our curiosity and our full selves into an unfamiliar meaning system—an alternative epistemology—and

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try as best we can to make our own sense of it. If we can expose our students to alternative methodologies for making sense of empirical observation, we can perhaps help them stay connected to a world “out there” that is also “in here,” a world of which they are an integral part, a world to which they have legitimate emotional connections and enduring moral obligations, a world they can love.

For, as Parker Palmer has written, “a knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call us to involvement, mutuality, accountability.”⁶ The contemplative practices from Eastern wisdom traditions are part of this epistemological expansion that offers students a way to reconnect to their inner lives and to find the reliable sources that animate their sense of social engagement. The work on mindfulness meditation being advanced by Jon Kabat-Zinn⁷ and others, Ellen Langer’s work on “mindful learning,”⁸ the support of the Fetzer Institute for bringing contemplative practice into classrooms and course syllabi, and other such initiatives all speak to the questions we’re exploring here about how to educate today’s students to be effective moral leaders.

A second portal into our topic is through the curriculum and in the classroom. It is undeniable that the problem of specialization and fragmentation of knowledge is straining the orthodox structures and procedures of the academy. Many colleges and universities have been reassessing the role of general education at the undergraduate level. Many faculty are wondering where the proliferation of interdisciplinary studies will ultimately lead. More than a decade ago, Gerald Graff argued that we ought to “teach the conflicts” between the disciplines, rather than leaving to students the task of trying to work out for themselves how to integrate knowledge across wide and mysterious disciplinary divides.⁹ Even as many of us work to strengthen our academic advising systems, we worry that ballooning course catalogues are leaving students too little guidance about what knowledge their faculty believe truly matters.

When we're honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we find it difficult or impossible to agree on an irreducible core of knowledge that we would say every educated person ought to possess.

From here it is a short step to questions about pedagogy, questions such as those being advanced by Pat Hutchings and colleagues at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, about how we can instill in our students what she calls "pedagogical intelligence." If we can draw on the great strides being made in our understanding of the brain and how humans learn in order to guide students systematically to "reflect on and assess their own experiences as learners," Hutchings suggests, perhaps we can help them develop the ability to be informed, discerning, and "active agents of their own learning."¹⁰ Her book *The Advancement of Learning*, written with Mary Taylor Huber, traces, defines, and explores the "unprecedented waves of innovation and experimentation" in the "scholarship of teaching and learning . . . as a response to shifting conditions." The authors call for further development of "the teaching commons," a place "for pedagogical knowledge to circulate, deepen through debate, and critique and inform the kinds of innovation so important to higher education today."¹¹ All of this is in service of what is surely the sine qua non of a liberal education—providing students with the intellectual thirst and the wherewithal to become lifelong learners.

The hope of overcoming fragmentation, specialization, and isolation by transforming higher education through "integrative" approaches, is, as David Scott has often argued, a "powerful movement."¹² This growing concern is being driven by an increasingly widespread and uncompromising search that many in the academy are pursuing for "greater meaning and wholeness" in their own personal lives. The question of how to ensure that every college student has a taste of what it might mean to live a less divided life—through first-year seminars, case method teaching, capstone experiences, courses in contemplation, or much more radical departures that would make the "scholarship of teaching and learning" a central concern of the faculty—is intimately related to our question

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of how to educate tomorrow's leaders. Such questions are reflected in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Greater Expectations project, which articulates a vision for a twenty-first-century liberal education that stresses "clear and coherent expectations of achievement, aligned throughout educational levels."¹³

A third entry point into our conversation about morally animated leadership is the expansion of student activities and social engagement away from campus: community service, experiential learning, study abroad, and internship programs. Many colleges and universities are being pushed by their students to recall that their mission statements imply in one way or another, and often explicitly state, that they exist to prepare their graduates, as Wellesley's founder quaintly said, "for lives of noblest usefulness."¹⁴

Over the past decade or two, many institutions of higher learning have been strengthening support systems for internships, volunteerism, and service learning. Faculty have taken seriously the possibility that their students are not wrong when they insist that much of their most profound learning is happening outside the classroom. Campus Compact (<http://www.compact.org>) is a national collaborative that has done much to advance the cause of "service-based learning." Principals at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, too, have persistently "been asking questions about the ways education can contribute to preparing people for lives of moral and civic responsibility." *Educating Citizens*, one product of this focus, documents the "kinds of influence undergraduate education can have on students' development as ethical, committed, and engaged human beings and citizens."¹⁵

At Wellesley, we created a new tradition, an annual daylong celebration called the Tanner Conference, dedicated to exploring the relationships between the liberal arts classroom and student involvement in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world. We suspend classes for a full day in the fall so that all of us—students, faculty, staff, alumnae, and trustees—are free to attend dozens of concurrent panels, roundtable discussions, performances, and presentations by students who have prepared thoughtful reflections

on their off-campus learning experiences. Each student presenter has a faculty sponsor who has helped her think through how best to represent what she has drawn from her experiences, how she has been changed by them, how she affected the setting in which she worked, and how she can integrate those experiences with her classroom learning. Our students astonish us with the depth and sophistication of their insights.

And when we hear students describe their commitments to a wider community, it is evident that their motivations go far beyond a sense of obligation or a desire to garner practical experience and build a résumé. Deeper yearnings are percolating in the student culture, and there is far more we could be doing to understand those yearnings more fully and to encourage them more creatively.

The fourth entry point is the busy and hectic world of on-campus life outside the classroom. Student life professionals have long advocated and sought collaborations with “the academic side of the house” on grounds that educating the whole student requires integration of all aspects of his or her learning, extending from the classroom to the campus to the community and back. In a document titled *Learning Reconsidered*, two leading student affairs organizations lay out a practical and theoretical rationale and a blueprint for a more unified approach to higher education that gives students opportunities “to learn through action, contemplation, reflection, and emotional engagement, as well as information acquisition.”¹⁶

Religious and spiritual life programs offer particularly rich possibilities for student encounters that tap into these multiple ways of knowing. Interest in these programs has grown substantially in the years since Wellesley College hosted a national gathering in 1998 that, to our surprise, attracted over eight hundred participants from across the country. Out of that meeting we developed a program, called “EDUCATION as *Transformation*” (EasT), which has worked to deepen the engagement with issues of religious pluralism and diversity on college and university campuses and to support various efforts to respond to the growing hunger for a spiritual dimension of education. The overarching goal of these programs, as of so many

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others, is to prepare students for moral and meaningful lives in an increasingly interdependent world.

One of the critical principles that guide this work is to offer students opportunities to explore their own religious and faith traditions in a deeper way, while at the same time communicating an expectation that they make a serious commitment to understand in greater detail the perspectives of other traditions. Students are encouraged to probe the concrete differences between religious and faith traditions, to identify the stereotypes that tend to divide them, and to search for deeper sources of connection. The hope is to open conversations that can lay the groundwork for a religious pluralism that goes beyond grudging or willed “tolerance” to a true and appreciative encounter with the underlying value of vastly different beliefs and traditions.

These experiences and others in the ever-shifting domain of student life have convinced me, paradoxically, that what students most need from us as we do our improvisational work of managing the complex force fields in which they are learning and growing is an awareness that it is often in the hot and tense—even

What I would argue students most need from us as we do our improvisational work of managing the complex force fields in which they are learning and growing is an awareness that it is often in the hot and tense—even painful—moments of sharp-elbowed conflict or heartbreaking grief that something that feels like inspiration quietly enters us for a time while we find our bearings.

painful—moments of sharp-elbowed conflict or heartbreaking grief that something that feels like inspiration quietly enters us for a time while we find our bearings.

The most unlikely moment—when people are confused and frightened or angry and at each others’ throats—is often the time when a spark of true meaning can ignite. I’m not entirely sure why this is so, but I suspect it is partly because these are the circumstances that push us up against the painful growing edges that we can studiously protect until we find ourselves under duress. These are the

moments in which we discover our *differences* and, through that discovery, learn more about who we actually are and how we are changing, as individuals and as a community yearning for deeper connections.

Crucibles for Learning

So I want to offer a few principles of leadership and a few practices that we have been evolving informally at Wellesley, strategies for taking up our conflicts in a way that seeks to turn them into crucibles for learning. When we are resolute and lucky, I think we do create a container in which our students can safely and genuinely experience confusion and conflict in all its complexity and can grow through and with it to greater wisdom and maturity. At least I hope that's what we have been doing, at least some of the time. But uncertainty is part of the process, and we are not answering questions but *living* them—living questions in Rilke's sense, as a spiritual discipline.¹⁷

That these are perilous times to be making claims about one's proficiency as a leader is evident all around us: in the steady procession of images of leaders being carted off in handcuffs or otherwise toppled from power, leaders who lost their moral bearings, took shortcuts, broke or bent the rules, violated their followers' trust. This includes powerful, successful leaders from virtually every sector of society: the clergy, corporations, politics, athletics, broadcast and print journalism, entertainment, publishing, the law, and education. Jean Lipman-Blumen, a Wellesley alumna who wrote an upbeat book some years ago on "connective leadership," has a new one out called *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*,¹⁸ a sign of the times.

And so we need to ask ourselves what we can do to prepare the members of the next generation to bring moral purpose and commitment to their leadership when it is their turn, which will be soon. For starters, we can do our best, on our campuses, to offer students leadership that is worthy of their trust. We should not delude ourselves into thinking it is easy, but neither should we imagine that

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the burdens of leadership are dauntingly new. For example, Shakespeare puts our struggles in perspective in *Richard II* (3.2, 155–160):

*For God's sake let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed,
All murdered.*

Surely today's challenges are not quite as grim as that litany of horrors, even if we do have to contend with growing complexity. Contemporary leadership is complicated by “two contradictory forces,” Lipman-Blumen observes: “interdependence and diversity, pulling in opposite directions. The tensions from these twin forces,” she says “are rapidly rendering traditional leadership behaviors obsolete.”¹⁹

In the old industrial style of patriarchal management, the leader patrolled the borders of the organization and absorbed or managed uncertainty, buffering others from sources of turbulence so that they could produce the technical work. In the postindustrial workplace of today's fast-paced global economy, ambiguity, uncertainty, and contradiction are ubiquitous facts of organizational life. Effective leaders have to guide their organizations toward an understanding of their opportunities, bringing people into awareness of their resourcefulness and engaging differences and conflicts as a necessary resource for learning.

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So we begin our exploration of leadership not by gathering around a fire to speak of our despair, because, as the poet Mary Oliver reminds us, “meanwhile the world goes on.”²⁰ But we do approach this topic with humility and perhaps even awe, conscious of how important, and how rare, inspired leadership is. We know,

as Parker Palmer has written, that leaders, by virtue of their positions, have an unusual degree of power to create worlds for others that are filled with opportunities or obstacles, with hope or despair.²¹ And we see leaders all around us setting their hair on fire and trying to put the fire out with a hammer.

Still it is an exciting prospect, this business of trying to lead, offering unparalleled chances to learn and to stretch. Leaders have great freedom to try, over time, to craft for themselves something approaching a complete life. Such leaders can draw deeply on and expand their own potentials—body, mind, heart, and spirit—to hone the sustained and purposeful self-management practices that can foster exciting discoveries and dramatic growth, both their own and that of partners in their work. Ultimately, if they are successful, they can foster the collective growth of their organization.

A few years ago, when my husband was recovering from surgery, a wise friend sent him an unlikely book by Gary Paulsen called *Winterdance: The Fine Madness of Running the Iditarod*.²² It turned out to be just the right story for a recovering heart patient, conveying remarkable lessons in enduring adversity. It also nicely captures the realities of leadership.

First, the race is impossible. It takes seventeen days to drive a sled pulled by a team of twenty headstrong dogs from downtown Anchorage to downtown Nome, covering nearly two thousand miles and stopping briefly for food (but precious little sleep) at eighteen checkpoints across Alaska. The race is run in unpredictable conditions of unimaginable danger and hardship: starving, freezing, hallucinating, and repeated brushes with death (in canyons, storms, blizzards, and moose attacks and on thin ice, miles of it, literally and figuratively).

Second, everyone is eager to offer advice, most of it wrong. The predominant stories and stereotypes about the race are romantic drivel. Only those who have already run the race can possibly know how impossible it is. But no one who has run the race is ever the same again, can ever imagine returning to that state of wide-eyed innocence from which he or she began.

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Much the same can be said of the experience of leading a complex organization through its own stormy race with itself, through blizzards, through moose attacks, and across thin ice. Every leader arrives at the starting line with different equipment. I was fortunate to have had a Kellogg National Fellowship from 1987 to 1990, an intensive three-year immersion in the art and practice of leadership. So I have delved into the leadership literature quite extensively over the years, and I want to open this exploration of how we can be trustworthy leaders for our students by drawing on a few published works on leadership that have been especially meaningful to me. This is not, I emphasize, a scholarly review of the literature on leadership. Those are available, of course, but here I am offering a more discursive and more personal journey through a few writings on leadership that call me back to myself when I need help making sense of my work.

Burns on Transforming Leadership: A Moral Relationship

Leadership, almost everyone would agree, is about making significant things happen, so my first offering is a work that still stands as a classic, James MacGregor Burns's 1978 book *Leadership*.²³ It was Burns who drew the now widely accepted distinction between "transactional" and "transforming" leadership, the former a kind of win-win barter system in which the leader provides the followers with something they want in exchange for something he wants of them—salary for work, jobs for votes, grades for coursework, admission to college for a successful high school career. This is management more than it is leadership, a distinction frequently (and usefully) made.

For Burns, transforming leadership is "more complex" and "more potent." It occurs when the "transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower" and creates "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents."²⁴

In keeping with the understanding captured in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs,²⁵ the transforming leader taps higher-order needs—for affiliation, belonging, esteem, efficacy—rather than mere survival or comfort. “Transforming leadership,” Burns writes, “raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both.”²⁶

There is much richness, clearly, in this definition (and still more in Burns), but for now, let's take away the insight that leaders initiate and maintain effective relationships with others toward the pursuit of a goal that is motivating because it is elevating in some palpable way. Leadership is a moral activity, one conducted in relationship.

Socrates and the Critical Spirit: The Leader as Teacher

Burns's emphasis on moral leadership has roots in the fourth century B.C.E., where the foundation for a Western philosophy of leadership resides in the Socratic dialogues. These are codified by Plato, principally in the *Republic* and in the example of Socrates' life and death. Again, we're going to do the unpardonable and extract a few simple ideas from this profound and subtle body of work.

For Socrates, a critical spirit was the moral grounding of all human endeavor (hence the famous dictum that the unexamined life is not worth living). And the leader, the philosopher-king, bore a special responsibility to open himself and his behavior to a constant process of scrutiny and critique. This exercise of humility and self-scrutiny implies a particular interplay between leadership and power.

Leaders who fool themselves into thinking that they have superior knowledge—who suspend their critical questioning—“become identified with their purposes” and these purposes “inevitably congeal into fixed doctrines or dogma” and ultimately become “the mere wielding of power on behalf of static ideals.”²⁷ And this absence of the critical dialogue designed to challenge complacency

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and untested assumptions seems a fair description of what derailed Enron, Arthur Andersen, Tyco, Warnaco, WorldCom, and the Roman Catholic Church in recent years. All for the lack of Socratic humility.

From Socrates, then, we can take away the concept of the leader as teacher, but a particular kind of teacher, one who truly believes that he or she has as much to learn as to impart in a sincere, thoughtful, and open-minded exchange with others.

Warren Bennis on Becoming: The Leader as Learner

So our leader is a teacher of a certain sort and also a lifelong learner, as Plato and many of the best contemporary writers on leadership emphasize. For my third selection, then, I turn to Warren Bennis's work, over many years, and particularly his 1989 book, *On Becoming a Leader*.²⁸ Its premise, he writes, is that "leaders are people who are able to express themselves fully." By this, he means "that they know who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how to fully deploy their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses. They also know what they want, why they want it, and how to communicate what they want to others, in order to gain their cooperation and support. Finally, they know how to achieve their goals."²⁹

If that sounds like a tall order, it is reassuring to understand this as a process, not an end state, not an inventory of innate or fixed assets or attributes. Because "the key to full self-expression," Bennis continues, "is understanding one's self and the world, and the key to understanding is learning—from one's own life and experience." In sum, "becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It's precisely that simple, and . . . that difficult."³⁰ We're back on the perilous ice floes racing to Nome.

And this man knows the terrain. As a former provost and executive vice-president of the State University of New York at Buffalo and previously president of the University of Cincinnati, Warren Bennis developed a unique perspective on the gaps between the-

ory and practice in applying principles of leadership within the academy. Viscerally, he knows how exhausting it can be to balance the conflicting demands of diverse constituencies, to fight entrenched bureaucracy, and to deflect the diversionary impact of unrelenting routine.

Bennis opens another of his books, *Why Leaders Can't Lead*, with the disturbing story of a good man, Charles Johnson, who ended a dispiriting academic year as an acting university president in a fatal automobile crash that smacked of a suicide.³¹ It was 1969, and the pressures were intense. Bennis analyzes factors that led to Johnson's "battle fatigue," including a colleague's suggestion that he "cared too much." Bennis writes:

I don't think it's "caring too much" when one identifies his own self-esteem with the success of the institution . . . so much . . . [as to] become indivisible from it. . . .

To care about an institution means to create a self-activating life, a life of its own, where there is a possibility for others to understand it and care for it in the face of difficult odds, to make [one's] work have meaning in a humane and democratic manner.

There's more to Bennis, naturally, much more, than that leaders must be learners, self-actualizers, and motivators of others, but this one connection signals how closely our opportunities for leadership dovetail with our understanding of the essential purposes of a liberal education. Our leadership challenges are mirrored in the educational missions of the institutions we serve.

An Aside on Liberal Education

To sharpen that reflection, I'd like to draw on Martha Nussbaum's *Cultivating Humanity*. She describes a liberal education—"the preparation of a whole human being for the functions of citizenship and life"—as entailing the "cultivation of three essential capacities":³²

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1. “A capacity for critical examination of oneself and one’s traditions.” We’re back to Socrates’ examined life, a life that “accepts only those [beliefs] that survive reason’s demand for consistency and for justification. . . . Democracy needs citizens who can think for themselves rather than simply deferring to authority, who can reason together about their choices rather than just trading claims and counterclaims.”

2. “An ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern.” These are some of the higher-order goals that catalyze Burns’s transforming leadership.

3. “The narrative imagination,” which is “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have,” means “learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination.” Here we hark back to Bennis’s self-activating life.

John Dewey reasoned that education for democracy ought to be conducted democratically.³³ We can push that one step further now and posit that institutions aspiring to provide education for effective leadership in a complex postmodern world can and should be led effectively in ways that reinforce the ideals of a liberal education. What if the quality of our leadership had as great an impact on student learning as the content and structure of our formal curricula and the excellence of our faculty? I watch our students watching us, and I sometimes think it may. There’s a humbling thought.

Goleman’s Emotionally Intelligent Leaders and Teams

This brings us to the fourth and most recently published book on my list. Daniel Goleman—a journalist and a psychologist whose best-selling 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence* is widely read and

cited—has defined emotionally intelligent qualities of leadership in a new book with two coauthors bearing the somewhat awkward title *Primal Leadership*—“primal” because effective leaders “prime good feelings in those they lead” and because, as a corollary, “the primal job of leadership is emotional.”³⁴

The book synthesizes distinct leadership styles, a question that comes up frequently in the literature and in commonsense experience as well. We know from our own observations that there are many types of leaders producing many kinds of results. And as much as we might have a valence or value preference for one style over another, convincing evidence to support a particular bias is not so easily found.

Goleman and his coauthors argue, as contingency theorists before them have often done, that the appropriateness of a particular style—visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic—depends on the circumstances and that the most effective leaders have a flexible repertoire, adapting style to situation. This is true, to an extent, but it’s equally true that (as Bennis emphasizes) the most inspiring leaders have an authenticity and integrity that comes from a style that is deeply rooted in who they truly are.

Two additional styles—pace-setting and commanding—are rarely effective, these authors argue, pointing to damage they too often inflict on the emotional climate of the organization. In contrast, “resonant” (inspiring) leadership is possible in the right circumstances in all four of the styles they term “emotionally intelligent.” This type of leadership can extend from individuals to self-aware and self-managing teams that can inspire an effective change process by bringing a high degree of emotional intelligence to work environments.

Workplaces led in this more resonant way, the book concludes, are more values-driven, more flexible and informal, better connected to people and networks, and more open and frank. They foster far greater innovation and participation than the old-style industrial organizations headed by authority figures who led by virtue of the power of their positions. As appealing as this is, it’s not so easy to execute well.

Heifetz and the Holding Environment

But there is one more card to play. The fifth book I want to cite is called *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, by Ronald Heifetz, and I want to extract just one concept from it for our purposes.³⁵ Heifetz, a psychiatrist and a scholar and teacher of leadership, has an unusual perspective on “applying power,” which he illustrates with two compelling stories, one about a clinical oncologist leading a family through the fourteen-month ordeal of the husband’s cancer diagnosis and death and the other about the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, managing a heated environmental struggle in Tacoma, Washington. From these two cases (and others), he deduces that “constructing and managing holding environments for transforming stress into work is a central task of leadership from positions of authority.”³⁶

The concept of a “holding environment,” borrowed from psychotherapeutic practice, resonates for modern leadership because so many of the problems we face are what Heifetz describes as “adaptive challenges.” They don’t lend themselves to the application of existing technology because they involve the unknown and require multiple vantage points from which to see and assess reality. Heifetz writes, “Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior.”³⁷

These value-laden adaptive problems cannot be solved without mining multiple viewpoints. By creating a holding environment for the organization to engage its conflict (akin to the containing vessel parents create for their child’s developmental steps), a skilled and resourceful leader can regulate the level of stress generated by the adaptive work so that it continues to be motivating without becoming overwhelming.

Once we start thinking about the possibility that leadership originates in the creation of a holding environment, it can take us in many directions. Surely, a well-crafted space for a special kind of

learning encounter is what inspiring teachers make of their classrooms. Ritual and ceremony in academia (inaugurations, convocations, commencement, reunions) are containers for holding the community, its past and its future, its best hopes and highest aspirations. Strategic planning processes, when they are creative, and retreats for thinking ahead can be vessels for containing tensions between current reality and a desired future, tensions that can be catalysts for conceptual leaps.

From Heifetz, then, we can take away the notion that leadership consists in part of shaping and maintaining very intentional and specific holding spaces where people can get on with doing difficult “adaptive” work that the organization needs them to do. This work is often fraught with ambiguity, risk, and conflict that without such leadership can pressure individuals to avoid taking it up.

Five Irreducible Elements of Trustworthy Leadership

All this leads back to our question of what it might mean to be leaders who are worthy of our students’ trust. I have come to believe that we can distill from the insights of these and other writings on effective leadership—and from our own experiences—the following five commitments that might form the essential core of trustworthy leadership.

First and foremost, we should question ourselves. Effective leadership comes from an inner core of integrity and yet is not fixed, stubborn, or implacable. Leaders we trust are open to our thoughtful influence. They are aware that they cannot possess the answers because they can have only one perspective. They are eager to hear responsible critiques and the viewpoints of others.

When leaders inspire us, we experience them as consistently themselves. We sense in them a solid self-confidence, but not one that walls others out. Clear about who they are, they can open themselves to others. They stay attuned to their inner truth through disciplines that keep them honest, knowing, as the ancients did,

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that the first and most demanding obligation of a leader is the Socratic injunction to “know thyself.” Yeats wrote that “we make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.”³⁸ Trustworthy leaders are poets; they quarrel with themselves.

Second, even if we know ourselves, we can’t know all we need to know from our own limited perspective. And so we need to establish partnerships as the basic units for accomplishing work. And they have to be reliable partnerships, which means investing time and energy in preserving their integrity. Reliable partnerships help prevent the distortions of information that often result from perceived or real imbalances of power—distortions produced by projections onto the leader or the tendency to shield the leader from bad news. Trustworthy leaders choose their partners wisely, for a range of perspectives and for a sense of shared core values. They negotiate the common understandings at the heart of these partnerships, which they attend to regularly, in order to integrate the goals they are pursuing into a larger understanding.

To be trustworthy leaders, then, we need to make a serious commitment to a network of partnerships—including with our students—that are honest and effective, are solid and sophisticated, and above all remain capable of receiving candid criticism. Enlisting others—and not just loyal insiders—in these mutual relationships becomes a

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major part of the leader’s task: inviting a mutual exploration of what happens when things go awry, coming together to assess behaviors that may be undermining the alliance, taking explicit steps to reinforce shared commitments, and revisiting the inspiration from which the collaboration draws its meaning. If we can strive to be such leaders, we can earn our colleagues’ and our students’ trust.

Third, I believe that trustworthy leaders consciously resist the use of force except as a last resort. Leadership is by definition the exercise of power, and leaders are constantly called on to deploy their power on one side or another of high-stakes disputes. As tempting as it is to wade in with what looks like decisiveness, in our hearts we really know that interventions imposed from on high seldom yield enduring peace.

Refusing to resort to force is never easy. It is painful to appear hesitant or weak, a judgment our culture is quick to apply. But it is more painful still to watch disputes smolder and reignite in debilitating cycles of repetition and escalation. Avoiding the use of force reflects a conception of leadership as nonpartisan and of the leader as the person whose effectiveness depends on hearing all sides of a dispute—in essence taking in the many perspectives that comprise the whole. If we become captive of one or more of these voices, soon we are waging a war within ourselves. As leaders, our task is to create conditions within which disputes can be explored and transformed at the most local level, where those most directly affected can assume responsibility and discover their own resourcefulness.

Fourth, knowing that differences of opinion, perspective, and worldview are a crucial part of life and learning, we will be trustworthy leaders if we truly value differences, not only as an ethical imperative and a measure of respect for others (although surely for these reasons) but also as a unique creative resource. In any group, organization, or system, the voices from the margins hold the buried wisdom that can alert us to our self-deceptions.

There are aspects of any campus culture to which resistance is a healthy response. We need a new language, then, about how we understand differences and a new kind of leadership that will engage identity struggles in

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diverse communities by appreciating their complexity and messiness, digging beneath the power dimensions, and opening more profound meanings and deeper human connections. Only when we have leaders who understand healthy conflict in its inevitability and its productivity will we begin to develop the skills to mine it well. We ourselves need to hone those skills—and that tolerance for complexity—so that our students can. And it's never easy.

That's why, fifth and finally, in our effort to be leaders our students can trust, we need to create communities that can function as sustaining circles of mutual support. Leaders need places to which they can retreat to grapple with pressures and doubts and the assaults on confidence no one should have to endure alone. I know from years of experience how isolating leadership can be, how sudden, wide, and unnerving sometimes the swings can be from light to

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If we can practice our leadership within supportive communities—if we can build and bind those communities—then we can begin to define and experience leadership as a collective project that derives its power and authority from a cooperative attachment to mutually defined commitments and values. Having done so, we can perhaps free our student leaders from the illusion that they could or should try to accomplish their goals alone—to trust that they

don't have to carry the whole load, that they can share the task with others, that they need do only what they are able to do well and bring only what is theirs to give.

The Authenticity of Charged Domains

Student leaders, I have discovered over the years, are particularly articulate about the communal aspect of their leadership. For example, in preparing a talk on which this essay draws for a conference on students' values, I wanted to consult the experts, so I convened a small group of Wellesley's student leaders to spend some time with me discussing the values they try to embody in their leadership. We had a lively discussion that could have gone on for days. About twenty students participated, mostly house presidents and members of the student multifaith council. They talked passionately about building community, respecting differences, modeling integrity, and the gratification of serving a cause larger than themselves; about pressures they face, especially in times of conflict; inspiration they draw from one another; and the comfort they find in the "support networks" and advisers to whom they know they can turn, as well as the knowledge that "people have been through this before and we can get through it too."

About halfway through our conversation, one student from the multifaith council looked intently at me and said, "You have to know that there are lots of people on this campus who don't feel as we do—in fact, who feel the opposite." She said the first-year students "arrive with enthusiasm and a deep desire to become part of the community. We watch them come bounding up the hallway in the dorm," she said, "and see them run head-on into the cynicism and alienation of upper-class students." She's right, of course, and as sure as I am that we are providing our students with a great education, I'm equally sure that we are letting them down in important ways—not feeding their yearning to be living the deepest ontological questions they see unfolding around them

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and within them, which they don't know quite how to embrace, but attending chiefly to their minds when their hearts (and ours) are being broken by events in the world.

I was as encouraged by this abrupt shift in our conversation as by anything that preceded it. We need to keep reminding ourselves how vital it is to maintain that habit of skepticism—as perhaps the ultimate test of whether our leadership should be trusted, indeed of how fully we can trust ourselves. It's when we let our guard down and allow our differences and doubts to surface and interact that something authentic and original can begin to emerge, tentatively, in the spaces between us. And I've found that it's often in these fleeting and complicated moments that the heart and mind can come into synchrony, pointing to altogether novel educational possibilities. The key is to remain alert to those moments and to move with them when they arise.

On our campus, those openings tend to happen, typically, in various charged domains: in disagreements over money and resources; in moments of failure, grief, and loss; in struggles over race and difference, over religion and spirituality, over sexuality and gender, over the law and public image; in power and identity struggles of all sorts.

Our charged domains are precipitated sometimes by internal forces and sometimes by external events. Often they arise as a local campus echo of something that is brewing in the larger world. When Rodney King was beaten, racial tensions flared on campuses

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everywhere. Ever since 9/11 and the USA PATRIOT Act, our students and faculty have been testing the limits of free speech with a bizarre parade of controversial speakers. The Iraq war and the 2004 presidential election split us along political lines. When Massachusetts led the way in legalizing same-sex marriage, the lesbian,

gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities on campuses across the commonwealth felt new pressure to be active and visible.

These conflicts tend to escalate quickly and to attach to institutional values. They rekindle unresolved issues about who is in and who is out. They arouse reactions throughout the college community, in many interconnected subcommunities across the institution, and in cyberspace, where they move so quickly it takes our breath away. The multiplicity of voices triggers all sorts of untoward interactions. Groups and individuals begin to orient and coalesce around the incident, and this creates many diffuse centers of power and much confusion and ardent opinion about who should be doing what. Authority is contested, and leadership tested, throughout the system. Everything feels as though it is speeding up, adrenaline is rushing, and the stakes can feel very high.

The most important informal principle we have evolved when this occurs is to stop and ask questions, which is harder than it might sound, given the intensity of the pressure from many fearful quarters to do something, anything—and fast. The questions we ask are mostly straightforward, but the answers are anything but: Where are we? What is this? Where have we seen this before? How is this new? What are the meanings evoked in various parts of the college? Is this significant in terms of the opportunities it presents, the risks it entails, the meanings it reveals—past, present, and future?

We assume that the meanings are specific to the moment. They are multiple and contested, always, depending on whose perspective one takes. We assume that every incident like this contains all of its history and all of its future possibility, even if these perspectives are blocked from view in the heat of the moment. We pause to wonder where it fits in the stream of time. We've learned also that the process of probing for meanings can be very rich if we allow ourselves to draw on multiple ways of knowing—thinking, analyzing, feeling, sensing, remembering, imagining, and grieving. The work is not purely analytical, although analysis has a clear place, and the more

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we can remain open to our intuitive and creative faculties and can listen for metaphors, the more we will see and comprehend.

We know that the most effective process for discovering these layers of meaning is through interactive and iterative dialogues and that if we undertake them sincerely and openly—and patiently—we can sometimes find our way to something utterly new. We assume that individual voices speak and act for the system as a whole, and we listen carefully for a variety of voices and the competing values they represent. In our key partnerships, we check in with each other frequently so that we can align our values and define and allocate specific tasks and roles. We begin (but never end) with the local site and the precipitating incident where the conflict initially appeared.

An indispensable part of organizing any process around a charged community conflict is a leader's own internal alignments. It's easy to be blown off course during what feels like a stormy conflict. We see this internal check-in as essential work, and we invest time and institutional resources in enabling it to happen. When we're in the vortex of one of these situations, we convene our leadership as a group regularly, and a number of us stay in close touch with an outside organizational consultant with whom we've been working for many years.

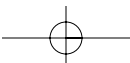
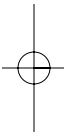
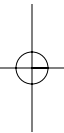
The leadership team fans out into the wider system, listening for insights and encouraging others (faculty, students, staff, and trustees) to take up their particular roles and responsibilities, not as stakeholders to be managed but as fellow stewards of the community who can help mine the learning opportunities embedded in the conflict or crisis. This step recapitulates the earlier meaning-making that arises during the initial discovery process and deepens our understanding through expanded dialogue.

As the pressure begins to dissipate, we try to remember to stop and take stock, hoping to capture and crystallize the retained meaning of the incident. Our goal is not to “move on” (with resentments still simmering) but to “carry forward,” with institutional history

claimed and retained. We take time to check in with those who were most actively involved, to unpack the incident, digest its full meaning, and examine, as grist for learning, the mistakes we made. When we stand in the middle of the chaos, we don't expect to know or control very much.

After any incident of charged community conflict, I invariably find myself filled with admiration and gratitude for my colleagues—and for our student leaders—who bring such energy, wisdom, and heart to our work of community building. And, after the fact, I frequently have the impression that our partnerships have deepened and our possibilities for growth—our own and that of the college as a whole—have taken a quantum leap forward toward understanding basic differences that make us human.

In these uncertain times, there is little doubt that the task of discovering, nurturing, and practicing trustworthy leadership will require all the wisdom and all the patience we as an educated and advanced democratic society can muster. At a minimum, it will necessitate the ability to collaborate and communicate with fluency across a wide range of cultures, races, religions, and socioeconomic groups. It will require that we learn to appreciate and skillfully use conflict as a creative intellectual force for mining what we know from our disagreements and differences, across the country and around the world. It will demand the grace and the generosity of spirit to design and sustain communities of meaning and hope, communities that will offer all their members opportunities to learn and grow, to make contributions, and to be seen and recognized for who they are and what they bring. Most of all, it will call for men and women of goodwill and of subtle skill to build such communities, here and around the world, with all deliberate speed. The hour is late, the work is hard, and the stakes are high, but few institutions are better positioned to take up this work than our nation's colleges and universities.



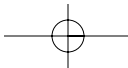
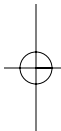
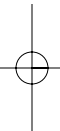
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The Author

DIANA CHAPMAN WALSH is the twelfth president of Wellesley College, a position she assumed on October 1, 1993. She is the fourth alumna to head Wellesley, the nation's leading college for women. During her tenure, the college has undertaken a number of new initiatives, including a revision of the curriculum and expanded programs in global education, experiential and service learning, and technology-assisted teaching and learning.

Other important innovations during this period include the opening of the Davis Museum and Cultural Center and the establishment of the Religious and Spiritual Life Program, the Center for Work and Service, the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center, the Knapp Media and Technology Center, the Knapp Social Science Center, the Wang Campus Center, and the Newhouse Center for the Humanities. The annual Ruhlman and Tanner Conferences on student research and learning have been established, and new programs in environmental studies and neurosciences have been launched. Major sectors of the campus landscape have been restored, and other initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen the quality of campus intellectual life.

During Walsh's tenure, the management of the endowment has been strengthened, as have many of the college's administrative structures. In 2000–2001, Wellesley marked its 125th anniversary

36 The Author

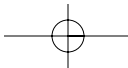
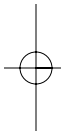
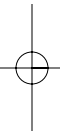
and launched a five-year comprehensive fundraising campaign to support the institution's major priorities, including increased endowment for financial aid and strengthening of Wellesley's academic programs. When the Wellesley Campaign ended in June 2005, the college had set a record for fundraising by a liberal arts college, with gifts and pledges totaling \$472.3 million.

Before assuming the Wellesley presidency, Walsh was Florence Sprague Norman and Laura Smart Norman Professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, where she chaired the Department of Health and Social Behavior. Prior to joining the Harvard faculty, she was at Boston University, as a University Professor and professor of social and behavioral sciences in the School of Public Health.

Walsh is a 1966 graduate of Wellesley College, where she majored in English. At Boston University, she earned an M.S. degree in journalism (1971) and a Ph.D. in health policy from the University Professors Program (1983). In 1994, she was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Boston University. She received the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters, *honoris causa*, from Deree College, the postsecondary division of the American College of Greece, in 1995; from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1999; and from Northeastern University in 2003. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

As a Kellogg National Fellow from 1987 to 1990, Walsh traveled throughout the United States and abroad studying workplace democracy and principles of leadership and writing poetry. She has written and edited numerous articles and fourteen books, including a study of the practice of medicine within corporations, titled *Corporate Physicians: Between Medicine and Management* (Yale University Press, 1987). Walsh is a coeditor of *Society and Health* (Oxford University Press, 1995), an analysis of social and cultural determinants of health and illness. She currently serves on the boards of Amherst College and the State Street Corporation.

Diana Chapman Walsh was born and raised in Philadelphia and graduated from the Springside School in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania. Her husband, Christopher T. Walsh, is the Hamilton Kuhn Professor in the Department of Molecular Pharmacology and Biological Chemistry at the Harvard Medical School. Their daughter, Allison Walsh Kurian, is a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Medical School and a practicing physician in California.



The Fetzer Institute

THE FETZER INSTITUTE is a private operating foundation whose mission is to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging global community. This mission rests on the conviction that efforts to address the critical issues facing the world must go beyond political, social, and economic strategies to the psychological and spiritual roots of these issues.

Inspired by the vision of John E. Fetzer, the Institute's guiding purpose is to awaken into and serve Spirit for the transformation of self and society, based on the principles of wholeness of reality, freedom of spirit, and unconditional love. The Institute believes that the critical issues in the world can best be served by integrating the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of action and service in the world. This is the "common work," through which the Fetzer Institute contributes to the emerging global culture. Please visit our website at www.fetzer.org.

