# Admin Essentials: Professional Development and Succession Planning Transcript

>> JAMIE KOENIG: Hello, everyone, and welcome to this session of the series on professional development and succession planning. My name is Jamie Koenig and I'm a specialist at AUCD. We'd like to thank you for joining us today. Before we begin, I'm going to launch two poll questions so we can get a sense of who's in the room and where your interests lie. So if you could fill that out while I do the rest of my intro, that would be great.

    So a few logistical notes. There is closed captioning provided which you can access at the bottom of your screen. This roundtable is being recorded and will be available on AUCD's website following this event. Please mute yourself when you're not talking to prevent background noise. Feel free to use the chat box to ask questions and engage. But this is a conversation. So you can also jump right in. The first time you speak, please introduce yourself. There will also be a survey at the end of the event.

    Today we'll be discussing practices for effective and sustainable professional development.  And succession planning. This will be informed by the recent AUCD map and technical plan written by the Georgia State University UCEDD. For this we're joined by experts Molly Tucker, Mark Crenshaw, and Derrick Willis. Molly is a training and advocacy manager and Mark is the director of interdisciplinary training. Derrick Willis is the director at the Iowa University UCEDD. We hope to collectively problem solve challenges and collect resources. Based on this roundtable, a tip sheet will be disseminate ed to the network.

    Looking at our poll results, I'm going to go ahead and end the poll. It looks like for the most part everyone here's been ‑‑ most people have been with the network for a really long time. Six out of seven five‑plus years. And that we're most interested in discussing the leadership team professional development followed by mid‑level. I'm going to share the results with you if you want to take a look. With that, I'll hand it off to Molly as a primary author of the leadership map and TA plan to give us a brief overview before an open conversation facilitated by Molly, Mark, and Derrick.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Hi, everyone. It was definitely a team approach like we worked closely together. But thank you for that, Jamie. I'm going to go ahead and share my screen. So can everyone see everything okay? Perfect. This is only a small part of what we covered in the leadership map and we wanted to highlight some of the things we thought were relevant to today's conversation and set the tone for what we're going to talk about for the remainder of the hour.

    But just to begin, for those of you who were unaware of what the leadership map was, the purpose of this project as you might have heard was provide UCEDD network members with information about the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they need to advance their careers within the UCEDD network. So what do people need to do in order to stay within the network, advance within the network, and become the leader within the network? So the first thing we did was to create authentic and well rounded professional opportunities was we did a literature review. We focus on recruitment and retention strategies which looked into organizational leadership.

    We wanted to see what are work place behaviors that are occurring and are specific to a UCEDD environment. What are some generational differences that exist in the work place? And do they actually have an impact on the way that people interact with one another. And then we really focus on this idea of how do we create a sense of workplace belonging. What does the literature tell us about that? And how can we use that to develop resources so people can start to foster that sense of belonging within their own centers.

    We also did an environmental scan. Some of you might have submitted documents for that. So if you did, I wanted to say thank you in advance. But we reviewed anything that was listed within leadership within NIRS. Every center defines leadership differently. But we looked in NIRS and we disseminated two surveys across the network.

    The first one was about individuals talking about their experience within the UCEDD network and what were opportunities they had or had not been given during that time. And then the second one was what kind of resources have we had already in the network that are about leadership aside from our LEND programs that we know many UCEDDs also offer. Then we also looked at job description. So we know there are some jobs that are consistent across the networks. And we know some of our UCEDDs have specific jobs based off the projects that we offer. But we wanted to get an idea of what consistency, what looks the same, and doesn't look the same. And how can we make sure templates exist so when people go to hire new positions, they're going to have something to use and begin to look at as an example.

    Then the last thing we did was Mark Crenshaw and I, who is also on this call, we did 21 different interviews with individuals across the network. When we say across the network, we mean from every corner of the United States. Which was exciting for us to meet people that we probably would not have had the chance to interact with otherwise. But to hear about their experiences and what they thought helped them advance or what they think the network was missing when it came to advancement. Mark, do you have anything you want to add to this before I go to the next slide?

>> MARK CRENSHAW: No. I think this is a pretty comprehensive overview of the work we did. So I think that's great, Holly.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: All right. Feel free to jump in at any point. We divided up the country based off the U.S. Census Districts. So we have region one, the northeast, region two the Midwest, region three the South, and region four is the West. Because we know there are UCEDDs outside the continental United States and territories, we created region five as well.

    What you'll notice is that region four or the West had the most participants. They were really excited about the opportunity to share their experiences and talk about the things that they felt they needed or they were looking for. And so that's where we got a lot of our input. And it sounded like from talking to them, they haven't always had the opportunity to share their experiences. That was something we were really glad to give an opportunity to amplify.

    As I said, we had 21 interviews in total. There ended up being 22 people. One interview ended up being with two people from a specific center. They wanted to do it together. So we really did get perspectives from people who were directors all the way to people who identified as, you know, recent trainees. And so we felt like it was a good overall view of what the network offers, what kinds of positions exist, and the types of people that are filling these roles.

    Further more, we looked at the stance in NIRS as well as the ones provided by different centers. And once again, you'll notice that there's sort of a discrepancy between who was most likely to provide their information. One of the things we came up with is the Northeast had the most leadership activities that they were currently offering that could be seen in the sense of professional development for actual UCEDD team members. So as you guys probably know, a lot of our centers provide professional development. But they're provided with the sense of an external audience who is going to go do capacity building and work within their state. There's not a ton when it comes to actually building within our own network.

    And so that's one of the things we noticed. And while there's lots of people that are doing capacity building, there was none actually being offered for our own network. And that might not actually be accurate. It's just sort of what we were able to discover based off the scan. But I think this is a really timely conversation about what can we provide to keep people in the network, how can we build up our own team members so they're able to be leaders in these spaces? Again, thank you, Jamie, for hosting today because I think this is a relevant conversation right now. Mark, do you want to say anything about this before we go on? All right. Mark's shaking his head no. Okay.

    So as we did the interviews, we really sort of divided our questions into a couple different topics. So we wanted to hear first off what positions do the individuals serve in currently or the past if they've been in the network for several years. And what are their primary responsibilities? What do they do on a day‑to‑day basis? Did they have a prior connection to the network before being hired and many answers were yes. Many had previous questions whether it was by being a trainee, by knowing someone that worked for the Center. It seemed like that was sort of a pipeline to get into the UCEDD network. We want to know about why people want to do this work. What keeps them doing this day after day? What is it that drives them to be part of our network and to do work within the disability community?

    We wanted to know about their career goals and then also their stress levels. As well as what kind of professional development opportunities had they been offered thus far in their careers. And had they actually been able to have any career advancement thus far? And if not, what did they think was keeping that from happening? And so those are really the things that we focused on during the interviews. And from those interviews, we created this.

    So if you have used this before this is called a word cloud. Whatever you want to refer to it as. We took all the transcriptions from the interviews and put it into Otter AI and this is what happened. What is the number one thing that people talked about, it was people. People are their motivator. People are what keep them coming to work every day. People are why they're doing this work in the first place. People feel like mentoring and the relationships they've had are in the positions they are still or why they got to the position that they're currently in.

    But then also they talked about sometimes people are the thing that can be difficult. Trying to figure out how can I manage my stress level? How can I make sure I understand what is expected of me? And so people really became the crux of all of our conversations. But some other words I wanted to talk about, a lot of centers talked about their director and the leadership they were under and how that shaped their future. They talked about grants and trying to bring in money and how that's something that can be exciting. But also as you know can be stressful. Especially for individuals that are younger and also trying to learn how to do this.

    They talked about the network within their own states as well as nationally and the things they've been able to accomplish as a result of maintaining relationships. And then other things we heard people talk about are ‑‑ and I think you guys will, you know, relate to this. Sometimes one of the most difficult things is ‑‑ are sort of the incentives and things universities can and cannot provide to their staff. So obviously salaries were something that came up when it came to what's difficult or what's one thing that might be stressful or something that leaders feel like can be hard when it comes to both securing and maintaining great people.

    And so that's, again, something that we had some thoughts about and put in the plan but are not going to be talked about today. But we want to talk about today sort of the ideas they came up with based off what kind of professional development is the network looking for. What are they hoping to see in the coming years? What are they feeling their teams need in order to be successful? Before I do that, Mark, is there anything you want to add to this that I might have forgotten? Oh, you're on mute, Mark.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: I would just sort of expand on the people. Like, I think there are lots of other words that showed up in our word cloud that are about people and relationships. You know, I'll say lots of folks talked about people they worked with. Also lots of folks we talked to talked about relationships with people with disabilities that were the motivators for them to be engaged in their work. Which is not a surprise. But, you know, I think some of, you know, some of the relationships were internal to the UCEDD. Some of the relationships were community‑based relationships with folks outside the UCEDD that were really ‑‑ they really motivated people to stay connected and to keep asking questions about how their center could do more impactful work. So just to say, you know, I think it isn't a surprise that people really did put a premium on relationships in the context of this. I think it's ‑‑ that's a huge driver for getting people in to make connections over time.

    I think the other set of responses were about relationships that were external to the centers and relationships that were sort of driving the work in some ways.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you, Mark. So one thing that we really wanted to address and think about is we can't retain good people if we don't recruit good people. How can we make sure we're getting the right people in the seats? During our interviews, we asked what are some characteristics or qualities you look for in candidates at your center? What are some qualities you have seen in individuals that were successful?

    So here's the ones that came up most frequently based off our responses. So one of the first things people said was the individual needs to have a love of learning. They need to be excited about new things. They needed to be open to learning new things. They needed to be open to the idea your job might look different and the ability of new information. They need to be entrepreneurial. They need to be flexible and again open to embracing opportunities as they arise.. They want to be sure to have a connection to the disability community. This goes back to what you were saying, Mark. That's why a lot of people find themselves interested in a position. Of supporting individuals we care about. When people have ‑‑ that level of motivation tends to be higher. One of the things that came up very, very frequently is that you can teach skills a lot easier than you can create a sense of values. And so we want to often look for individuals who have the same values as our specific centers as well as our network as a whole. Because there are people that already believe in what we're trying to accomplish. They believe in the messages we're trying to deliver. That's something we heard.

    If you can find someone that cares about this and truly aligns with what your staff is looking for, you can often fill in the gaps by teaching them those things. Value can be a much harder thing to establish or develop for an individual. You want to have someone who is curious and is always looking for new ideas, looking for new possibilities, looking for new solutions. Someone who's proactive in nature. They're willing to take risks. They have a sense of humility. So obviously our centers work at both the micro and macro level, but it's important to have someone who is a systems thinker, see how all of these things work together. Especially again when we're talking about being solutions focused. Someone who is comfortable with not only relationship building but relationship management. That goes back to something Mark, you mentioned a second ago as well. People that are innovative. This means the types of projects that they're developing, the way they're thinking about those projects, the way they're thinking about funding and how we can bring it in for our individual centers.

    And then the last two are really about this idea of the type of person they are. Someone who's willing to be collaborative, work on a variety of different teams. And then has a really positive energy and feels like they can improve the rapport and really prove the morale of the people around them.

    These are the people we want to find and if we can find them and nurture them, we can hopefully get them into space where is they can be. Leaders at our state level and potentially leaders at the national level. Mark, do you want to add anything to this.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: I think it'll come later. What this reminds me of, Molly, is ‑‑ and we talked about it in our conversation last week. I think we have a kind of restrictive ‑‑ some of us have kind of a restrictive definition of who a leader is in our spaces. And so what I would say is that, you know, if you've got people in your center, in your space, people you're looking to recruit and retain to your space who have these characteristics, you know, I don't think that ‑‑ you know, that sort of leadership is a set of traits that is, you know, limited to kind of the assistant director and direct.

    I think if you have these characteristics, you have what it takes to be a leader. So to just say what we heard from leaders in our network is it's not position dependent. And we'll learn about that just to say, these dedesirable traits are the traits we're looking for in leaders.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you, Mark. So the next thing we did, we asked about what kinds of professional development people wanted or they thought their teams would benefit from. The next two slides are sort of recommendations we made to AUCD for possible topics for webinars in the coming years. One thing that came up is linking business and clinical operations. So we often will have people come in who have a clinical background and now they're serving in sort of an administrative role and helping them understand how these two things are connected. Helping them understand what does the business look like on the back end? What do we need to be prepared for in order to provide high‑quality services? One thing that was probably in every conversation we had with a director, specifically was like how can we best communicate with human resources so that they understand who we are, what we need, and what we do. And then the same applies to government relations. To ensure that we're not lobbying and ensuring we're not only following AUCD in our federal protocols but each of our states have protocols as well and be able to walk them appropriate. Understanding the difference in management and supervision and sort of what both of those look like and how they contribute to someone's ability to lead successfully. Writing competency‑based job descriptions. It's one thing to put out a general job description but really to say what are we looking for? What do you need to know how to do? What skills do you already need to have coming in? And if you don't have them, we want to outline them to be clearly up front so you can be prepared to take those on if you were to be hired to our center. To get an idea of what is someone's background. But more importantly in specific situations, how are they going to respond? What are the things important to them and how do they plan to implement their own sense of values into what you're already doing?

    Making sure that people are able to recognize, understand, and utilize their team strengths. What is it that each individual person on your team brings to that team and how can we make sure that we're maximizing their ability to use those strengths so they can be as successful as possible but also have the sense of self‑fulfillment every day when they're coming into the office.

    We also had a lot of people talk about the importance of grant writing. We know that's crucial to our ability to be successful as centers. But how can we make sure there are other people in the centers that feel comfortable doing this besides just the faculty or the higher level leadership. Making sure that people know how to have meaningful inclusions with research. Providing meaningful mentorship. Mentorship was probably the number one thing that people told Mark and I helped them advance to where they are today. It's because someone took an interest in them, someone believed in them, and someone fostered a relationship to help them get where they wanted to go.

    So people want to know how do I pay it forward. How can I do that for someone else? How can I make sure I'm providing meaningful mentorship and not something that's just surface level? How can we use the MCH leadership competencies for staff development? For those of you that work in a LEND program, how can we use that same sense of competencies so we don't build the staff once they're part of the center? How can we create a positive workplace culture? How can we understand our staff's similarities and differences? All of us are unique. How can we make sure we understand what each person needs and how can we make sure we're understanding how our teams can best communicate with each other? How can they, you know, resolve conflict appropriately? How can we make sure we're all able to see each other as individuals in these spaces?

    And then lastly, how do you not only give feedback, but how do you receive feedback and how can you use that feedback for personal growth and development. One thing that we've talked a lot about as an internal team as we did all this work is that professional development is not a punishment. Sometimes people think professional development means I've done something wrong. You guys are telling me I didn't do it right. I had to fix it. We don't want that to be the case. We want to think about the opportunity. It's where people see something in you that you want to continue to as I said grow and develop. But that was something we really wanted to think about. It's one thing to know how to give feedback, but also if you're on the receiving end, how can you take that feedback and be able to integrate it and implement it into the work you're doing in a way, again, that's going to help you continue to be successful in the projects you're working on. Mark, do you have anything you want to add?

>> MARK CRENSHAW: No.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Okay. All right. So from this, obviously we want to talk about succession planning or transition planning as we talked about it in the plan. So we talk about what specifically do assistant and associate directors need? So when we were asking directors specifically about that, these were sort of the specific webinars that indicated would be helpful for their team members. So one, understanding their role. What would be expected of an associate director? What are some things they're going to now need to take on that they previously weren't focused on? Again, that idea of management supervision, finding and securing funding. What does that mean? Where should we look? What does a good application look like? How can we provide that mentorship in that area?

    How to be an effective and transparent communicator. One thing especially in light of the pandemic that came up is how do we maintain staff motivation and staff morale? Again, recognizing and understanding strengths, giving feedback. Transition planning. So if the idea is you're going to hire someone to serve as an assistant or associate director with the intent of them being the director some day, what are things to help them understand of day one of them taking that job and not waiting until, you know, a few months before you plan to leave. But really that you're building up their ability to be in that role some day from the moment they take on that position. Then the last one about what should they attend? What are some state‑level meetings they need to be going to to understand the dynamics of your state or the relationships in your state. Are there university. Level meetings they should be privy to? And what should they be exposed to so when they step in that role they know what to expect for their center. So those are the things that they really identified as important for an assistant or associate director who ideally would transition into that director role in the future.

    And then sort of the last thing is we did our kind of whole plan around what's called the four frames. And we took all the information that we acquired from interviews, the surveys, the literature view, et cetera, and thought, okay. What are the four frames? Mark, I'll turn it over to you to talk about it. But what are the traits an individual needs within each one in order to advance in the network and be successful as a leader? So Mark, I'll turn it over to you to talk about why we use this model and why we think it's effective within the UCEDD network.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: Sure. Absolutely. So the four frames are taken from the work of Bolman and Diehl. In the '90s they came out with a seminal book and they've updated it several times. And there's actually some more accessible versions of it as well. But essentially they say that sort of leadership ‑‑ the work of leaders falls into four domains. And so as you can see on the top left of the slide, the first one is structural domain. And it has to do with the processes and practices that you put in place to get the work done; right? So, you know, what needs to happen in terms of the structures of the work to make us successful? And then on the top right is the human resources frame which sort of has to do with how the people around you in an organization feel about their contributions and feel about sort of their role and what they understand about how to be effective in their work. On the bottom left is the political frame. It has to do with kind of the relationships that are necessary to get work done. And so it has to do with, you know, in a UCEDD that might be kind of who do I need to be connected to in the state agencies to make this work successful? What are the constellation of relationships we need as a center to be successful in this work? And then on the bottom right is the symbolic frame. The symbolic frame really has to do with sort of how you work to sort of help people understand kind of why what they're doing is important. And how ‑‑ and sort of the principles and practices that sort of go into helping people connect to mission of the work. As you can see, what we've done here is take the characteristics of individuals that advanced in the network and put them in the four frames. So you'll see in the structural frame things like collaborative, folks who have grant writing success. So, you know, that's really somebody who knows how to set up a proposal and respond to a funder's guidance related to a specific opportunity for funding. And sort of in the human resources frame, there are things about communication. There are things about teaming. There are things about individuals taking initiative for personal growth. Those kinds of things. And then in the bottom left in the political frame, we talk about a focus on system change. It's really important. People who build and maintain strategic partnerships, collaborate with partners at the state and national level, those kinds of things.

    And then the symbolic frame, folks with visionary forward thinking. The lived experience ended up in this frame. Some questions about motivation, intrinsic motivation. So essentially what Boleman and Diehl say is every leader has a dominant frame they operate out of. And if you're going to be successful as a leader in an organization, you actually have to be able to assess a challenge related to the four frames and use a solution ‑‑ or develop a solution or develop a way forward with that challenge that addresses the challenge from the correct frame. And so essentially, thinking about leadership and thinking about building teams where folks have strengths in thinking about different frames and as a team then you come together and you bring these perspectives to the work.

    And so we just thought the frames were really helpful in terms of organizing the kinds of characteristics that are imperative for being successful in your space so that there were people who sort of had their eye on multiple of these frames. And Boleman and Diehl say the leaders who are most successful are the leaders who could switch frames easier than others. All of the challenges that come to me as a leader aren't going to be about how I relate to people. And so sometimes I'm really going to have to look at challenge in the structural frame and say we really do need to come up with a better process here to meet this challenge.

    And so kind of what Boleman and Diehl would say is as leaders who, you know, are aware of the frames, then can we switch lends essentially and say, oh. That really is a symbolic challenge. What's the symbolic solution? Instead of saying, that's a symbolic challenge, I'm going to use a structural lens and come up with a structural solution to a symbolic challenge or something like that. And so essentially their idea is sort of to be able to assess a specific challenge, to be able to assess a certain set of skills that are needed and to say, you know, that actually falls in this frame. And so, we need to develop solutions that, you know, fall in the same domain as the challenge.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you, Mark. And the last thing, so Mark asked me to add this because he thought it might be beneficial even though as someone who does not like to talk about themselves, it makes me inherently uncomfortable.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: (Laughs).

>> MOLLY TUCKER: So I joined as a social work trainee. I was in graduate school when I was completing my clinical internship. A couple months before I graduated, one team member left. So I was hired on to take his role and lead all of our leadership activities specifically our project we do for development. For about two years I was hired to do a leadership project. I started to get more and more projects under my belt during that time. I started to take on more responsibility and then 2019 I got promoted partially due to all the diversity of this project. So one of the things we think is important as we think about advancement for individuals within the network is what are they being exposed to? Are they becoming able to see lots of different projects, lots of different opportunities burden of proof do they fit? How can their skills be used in multiple ways?

    But also because I was a team lead and as Mark talked a lot about was that relationship management piece. I built and maintained relationships with our state partners and made sure we were able to continue to have projects funded and provide the quality of work they wanted. And so after two years of that, I was then promoted again to a manager role where I have people that report to me. And part of that, though, that changes over the course of those two years is then I became responsible for proposing projects. I went from just being added to projects to proposing or acquiring projects.

    Again, these are really the ways that someone might be able to advance and again, I am not someone who was on our center leadership. Mark will argue that I'm one of our center leaders, but I'm not on center leadership. This is just an example of things that you're exposing your young staff to to help them really tap into the network, tap into what's important so they can possibly see themselves in those roles in the future. So I'm going to stop sharing my screen now so we can turn it over for a conversation with Mark and Derrick about what we talked about today.

    So Jamie, I don't know how this goes now.

>> JAMIE KOENIG: Well, we can just kick it off to Derrick and Mark. I see there's a question in the chat about whether the AUCD Leadership Academy will be in person or if this information will be part of that. I don't know the answer to that. I don't know if either of you do or if that's something that remains to be seen.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Mark, do you have an answer to that?

>> MARK CRENSHAW: So I see it's Michelle's question. We want to get you to the AUCD Leadership Academy eventually. I will tell you that currently the plan is for the academy to be in person in the summer. But, you know, we're still in the midst of COVID, so that plan that we have made for summer 2022 could change. It is our goal and our hope that three out of the next five Leadership Academy cohorts might be in person. But we're up to having that change based on the public health stance. I know I didn't answer your question directly, but that's what we know so far.

>> DERRICK WILLIS: Let me just start by thanking AUCD for putting on this framework and allowing us to discuss this, I mean, extremely important topic of leadership and how to grow within your network I also thank Georgia State for their amazing work. I was one of the individuals interviewed, and I've been waiting for the product. When I saw, just amazing. And I appreciate the leadership they took on this in helping us kind of lay a framework for development, growth, opportunity for individuals. When I talk with Mark and Molly, I never wanted to be a UCEDD director. I had my own body of work I was doing within my center. Working in the community I was at. And the families and the particular population that I was interested in, making sure I had resources and were not that underserved population. I never really looked at that big picture. And I feel like a lot of my leadership in my leadership journey came from the network itself after being recognized for the work that I was doing. And, you know, being encouraged to apply for leadership positions within the network. And what I try to do is just create an environment that as we mentioned here, that really creates a positive workplace culture.

    Some of my greatest lessons came from being in terrible workplace cultures. And I looked at that and I said if I ever get in a position where I can make a decision, I will never put anybody that works in the organization that I have some leadership in, I would never put them in those situations. And so a lot of my greatest lessons came from some of the most difficult experiences that I have with leaders. And it kind of shaped me and helped me understand what kind of leader do I want to be when I have that opportunity? And what kind of teams do I want to create and what kind of environments do I want to create? And I love what emerged out of what Molly was talking about was this meaningful mentorship. Because I think that is so critical. And I was just talking to a staff last week and I notice we just hired in probably six or seven new staff. Those individuals are one job away from their college degree. So this is just a second leg of their career. And I want to begin to start doing that meaningful mentorship with them to really help them learn these models, learn these structures understand leadership and start beginning to grow our own. You know, we all ‑‑ we're constantly looking for leaders and constantly looking for people to play key roles in our organization. And sometimes we don't look at all of the resources we have within our ‑‑ currently within our systems and our structures.

    And so my goal now is to develop kind of a network that provides that meaningful mentorship within our organization so that as our ‑‑ I call them our senior leaders. I have the luxury of having staff who have been here for 20 years. And people don't leave. And I see that as we must be doing something to create an environment for people to stay here for 20 to 25 years. And when people don't leave, it's awesome because we have all this experience. But how do you create a space for those who are emerging in and who are coming in? And knowing that those people with 25 years in, eventually they are going to want to spend time with their grandchildren and spend time in retirement and things like that.

    And so how do I continue that pathways is what I call it now. I used to call it pipelines, but I think they're too narrow. Pipelines, I think, they have restrictions to it. I see it as pathways that we created these pathways that allow people to begin to see opportunities and learn and grow in systems. I'll stop there and let Mark add some more to that as well.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: So Derrick, this is really consistent with my experience of you. This is Mark talking. I apologize. You know, you really laid out kind of your vision for moving your organization forward in terms of pathways and that. I wonder on the other side, are there things you heard today or you heard when we talked before that, like, are really sort of representative of present challenges in that for you? And, you know, basically does it ring true? And what would you need as a leader in the space to deal with whatever you perceive the challenges to be?

>> DERRICK WILLIS: Yeah, yeah. Well, again, for me part of my challenge is growing an organization, making space for emerging leaders and creating those opportunities when, you know, you work on soft money. There's always this balance of do you create an environment where you hire the individuals first and then have the money the challenge for me is trying to figure out. It puts a lot of pressure on young, emerging leaders to say, okay. If I don't get this money, I don't have a job. I want to have ‑‑ I don't want people to be stressed about those types of things. I want them to say here's my body of work. And be comfortable in their ability to carry that out with the support of our seniors and experience, leaders providing that meaningful mentorship and helping them guide through that process.

    So right now I'll see that as one of my biggest challenges as well.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: I saw a couple hands raised. Ask your question or put it in the chat box. Either way.

>> DERRICK WILLIS: Yeah, we want this to be more of a discussion than a presentation.

>> Happy holidays.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Happy holidays.

>> So I think Derrick brought up a very good discussion on ‑‑ when I took on the UCEDD, I was only about five, six years into UCEDD before I was given the leadership role. But I think also when it's given the leadership role, or even when it's in a group and everyone is looking for someone to take a lead on a project, in a cultural practice here on island, they often give it to the young person in the group. So, you know, and then it comes to another activity, give it to the young person in the group. Another activity, give it to young person in group.

    And it became such a negative experience for me. Not that I was the youngest in that group, but I didn't want it anymore. You know? Because of the experience throughout the years and I kept getting this ‑‑ and I would have to say I've got a lot of positive influence from those outside of the culture. Im find them say don't you see it as leadership opportunity? No. But then through all the years, I kept hearing this. And I said, I'm seeing it from the negative experience but not seeing it as an opportunity. And that's what changed the way I started to lead was because if you want it to be done right, you have to show your leadership in making it be done right in the manner that it's meant to be done. Then I started to trust myself a little bit more and started to trust myself more in grant writing. Started to trust myself in having conversation with those at different levels.

    But then also to trust myself, hey. Don't do it alone. Bring somebody else with you. Because you don't want them to repeat the same leadership that you were put into. And I also have to recognize being part of several conversations within our network. How I always admired the transitioning of new leaders into replacing the ones who's ready to transition out. I would have never thought of that. Because of my experience, I'm thinking that's how it's supposed to be done. You go and learn.

    But I started to value more and more, if you want the legacy of UCEDD to continue in your community, you need to keep grooming more leaders and bringing more to the table. Even if they're going to sit there quietly. But let them be part of the conversation, you have the type of decision making. And then also experience a little bit more of a whole innovation and conversations we have at the table. Yeah. Thank you. I needed that.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you. Derrick, I saw you nodding your head a lot. Would you like to respond?

>> DERRICK WILLIS: Yeah. I was going to say as I listened to you talk, that one of the things that has emerged from this ‑‑ from the last couple years and all of the things we have experienced with the pandemic and others is that, you know, we have those working in one location anymore. And I always had staff working all across the state. And we have teams.

    So finding that opportunity to manage and to lead in a different kind of way and using technology as a way to be that conduit that kind of brings us all together and helps us stay connected is a new challenge for us now. And, you know, I had a luxury of walking down the hall and connecting with anybody I need to connect with on any given day. That's not here anymore. So thinking of all leadership in a new environment, a new climate I think is going to be something that we need to be conscious of and we continue to try to find avenues to begin to continue to have that meaningful mentorship, but do it in a way that's a little different than what we normally experience as well.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Anyone else have a question?

>> DERRICK WILLIS: One more thing while you guys are thinking. I was talking about this workforce environment and positive work place environment. I had a conversation and actually a staff member I had a conversation with is actually on here. And it made me proud, because she felt comfortable enough to express some things that she had seen that helps me become a leader. And so even when you are in these positions, you can always grow and you can always learn from that. And to create an environment that people feel comfortable ‑‑ number one, care enough about it. And then feel comfortable enough to even express it I think is it let me know the environment I'm working so hard to create is happening.. And I don't know, Meredith, if you want to speak on that a little bit or not.

>> I didn't know I was going to have to talk.

>> DERRICK WILLIS: (Laughs).

>> Well, this is something that Derrick that you've talked about a lot and I hold onto. And to me, I left the ‑‑ I have been with Iowa's UCEDD since 2008 kind of. I left for a brief period of time and came back because the kind of working environment. I didn't have in the next situation that I moved onto where I thought I was going to find better leadership opportunities and an opportunity that would allow me much of what I had at the UCEDD but was looking to move ahead in a different way and to find an environment that is not perfect. That takes a lot of work. And I think one of the important things for me is ‑‑ and I'm working with a lot of people who have been here but also working with people who haven't been at the UCEDD for some time. So listening to this conversation to the presentation helps me in my role as a leader of communication information, dissemination, and working with now as a supervisor and working with teaching people how to do some of the things that I do and to contribute to that overall I think is really critical.

    And it's something I aspired to. It's something I was happy to come back to. And I think the idea that we need to value that in everybody across the board in staff is really critical.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you for sharing that.

>> We see that also in ‑‑ not in a relatively short‑term commitment to self‑advocates at the UCEDD. And in our LEND program. I think that's a really critical part of what we do here in Iowa too. My office is in an office where now I'm ‑‑ we're still in COVID but with easing of COVID, I'm surrounded by a bunch of LEND people. So that's added to my whole experience too.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you for sharing, Meredith.

>> What?

>> MOLLY TUCKER: I said thank you for sharing and thank you for being here.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: Especially because you weren't expecting to. Well, so one of the things I heard from Tafa that I wanted to sort of amplify is in the context of sort of what leadership is in these spaces, we often think about sort of ‑‑ and I said this part before. We often think about titled leaders. But one of my probably most important mentors in this leadership space has been Dr. David Satcher who is assistant surgeon general of the U.S. who was on our faculty for about nine years. He would say, please remember that leadership is a team sport. You know, please remember the goal of a good leader is knowing when to hand the baton.

    And so, you know, just to say part of what I heard you say, Tafa, is that, you know, part of what you have come to your leadership with is this idea that you need to encourage other people to be in spaces where the leaders are and encourage those folks to listen and then encourage them to find the confidence to speak; right? And so, part of it ‑‑ that's a really important reflection. Because, you know, I don't think any leader that I know that I respect a lot, you know, is in a position to do it by themselves. And, I mean, I think from my perspective that ties into what Derrick is saying about sort of sometimes you ‑‑ sometimes we're looking for leaders and they're right there. Sometimes they're people we already knew. So anyway. Just to say. I heard some wisdom that might be ‑‑ that I might want to make sure other folks heard. And then there's a hand.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Karen, go ahead.

>> Thanks. Karen Heath from Alaska. This is a great conversation, thank you. My question is at our UCEDD I knew for several years that my boss was grooming me to become the director eventually. So I think some of my anxiety was what if I decide I want to leave before that happens? And I felt a little bit obligated to continue to stay. Even if it was like, oh, I think I'm ready to retire or I'm ready to move on.

    So one of my strategies has been to ‑‑ we're grooming leaders underneath. So we have a director of training. A director of community services. A director ‑‑ two directors of research, and a director of our ECHO budget. Now I have five potential leaders that may come up into this position. My question is, though, how would I ‑‑ it will be challenging when I'm ready to move on and say which one of those five. So do you reach out to your university and deans and ask them to help us with deciding and interviewing? That's my question.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Derrick, do you want to go first?

>> DERRICK WILLIS: Sure. I'll take a stab at it. Again, it's just my personal opinion on that. The first thing that I've learned in this situation is that ‑‑ and I recently hired an associate director and actually got called with an operations manager. When I approached that it was in my mind thinking I'm approaching that situation as the person who could possibly be the next person in line. I'm a short‑termer. I'm 36 years in the field. I'm probably only going to do about three or four more years. But I didn't want to put that pressure on that individual. I had that conversation with her. And she said she doesn't know if she wants to be that next person, you know?

    But what I do is prepare them. And if you have a number of individuals, I would continue to mentor them, continue to prepare them for roles and responsibilities if, in fact, they want that. You know? Me personally, I would want ‑‑ I would not want to leave it at the hands of the university. I would want to have a stronger say in that position and working within our network to kind of help navigate and help bring that person to the light and everything.

    But also, again, just doing everything I can to equip those individuals with the leadership opportunities to grow that would ‑‑ if they make that decision that this is what they want to do, put them in the best position to be competitive in that. Just my thought.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: The one thing I was going to say, and Mark jump in, Karen we heard a lot throughout our conversations of HR doesn't always work with how we want it to happen. So you might have a perfect person in mine mind that works with your team and your university will be like, nope. We're not going to let them serve in that role or we can't pay them what you want to pay them, et cetera. Figure out what is your university going to approve and what are they going to say is acceptable and not acceptable. And you can look at your team and figure out who has the right skills to go forward. Mark, do you want to add to that? What people want and what HR has are different.

>> MARK CRENSHAW: I'm not going to give you a structured response. What I'll say is I think the other important consideration is to think about the history of your organization history of your UCEDD and where it's headed now. And sort of what ‑‑ sort of what is the growth and development that is necessary in the next generation of the organization. And so it might be that the person needs skills and competencies and experiences that are really different than the ones you have. As the leader who is transitioning. But what are the consolation of these five leaders and the skills and competencies they bring to the role? But also what does the organization need that might be the same and different than what it needed, you know, when I came? Or when the director before we was here.

    And so just to think about that. I see that sort of as potentially sort of in the political frame in terms of the relationships that might be necessary and also sort of in this model frame. What does this person need to stand for? What do they need to amplify in terms of your organization? How that might be the same and different than leaders who have been in this space before.

>> Can I add to that and say that in my time in my role supporting network members, I have seen it happen where a director is getting ready to retire and the person that they have in mind to take the role behind them turns out does not have all of the qualifications. They have not done the necessary things to build up their resume in areas that would position them to be accepted by not just the university. Because yes, they are the primary decision maker, you know. When a person retires, they give up the power to make those decisions and it does sit with the university. But also with ACL. There are specific requirements written into the act about what qualifications the UCEDD director must have.

    And no matter what relationships a person has within the university or within the community or within the center or if they have ‑‑ don't have any grant writing experience. If they don't have any faculty teaching experience. Depending on what role the director has within the university, there may be requirements that the university has and ACL have for the role. So as you're thinking about preparing people for that next step, make sure that they're checking those boxes. Because that could be made for you.

>> DERRICK WILLIS: And I do want to reiterate what Molly said. And I said don't let the university make decisions. I think it's important that you partner with the university. So we have a great relationship with our HR person that is within our center. So we work together. I made the mistake of saying that I had the grant funding that I wanted to hire my operations manager. And then when I bumped up against HR and they had their certain requirements and that person, their years of experience didn't match what I wanted to give them. They have these little boxes. And so you do have to have a relationship with them and the ability to negotiate and have those conversations up front and get on the same page to work with them to bring that next person on as well. I've learned some lessons in that situation there for sure.

>> I would say some of the recommendations from successful retired directors who have been able to shape those transition processes involve providing university HR with resources that they can use so things like who needs to be on the search committee, what are the ‑‑ you know, as detailed and thorough as possible around what your references for what the search process would look like. People love it when other people do work for them. (Laughs). If you give them those things and they don't have to do it themselves ‑‑

>> MARK CRENSHAW: And what I'll say is that Sarah and her team at the URC have lots of resources related to this ‑‑ to how other folks have managed these transitions. So if you're in a place where your organization is thinking about that, just know what all your resources are.

>> JAMIE KOENIG: Okay. Thank you, all, so much. I realize we are now several minutes past the hour. So thank you to our content experts especially for staying on later. And thank you for joining us today. I've put an evaluation link in the chat. It would be great if you could let us know how we did. You could also give us topic suggestions for future Admin Essentials. This was recorded. It'll be online in a couple days. There'll be a tip sheet based on this information in a couple months.

    So thank you so much for joining and enjoy the rest of your day.

>> MOLLY TUCKER: Thank you, everybody. It was great to talk with you.