

Title: Leading a Psychology Department Through Uncharted Waters

Date & Time: Date: May 17 at 12 p.m. ET

Sara Wiener: Hello, everyone. My name is Sara Wiener. I'm a member of Division 14 of the APA, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology or SIOP. I have been partnering with the APA and SIOP on this Lead from Anywhere webinar series. Today, we have Dr. Lee Ryan from the University of Arizona, who will be sharing her experiences in leading a psychology department through uncharted waters.

Let me share a little bit about Lee Ryan's background. She received her PhD in cognitive and clinical Psychology at the University of British Columbia in 1992 and completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California San Diego. Dr. Ryan has been head of the psychology department at the University of Arizona since 2015, and as a professor in the departments of psychology, neurology, and neurosciences. She is also the associate director of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute at the University of Arizona.

Dr. Ryan's research focuses on understanding the brain mechanisms responsible for memory, how memory changes across the adult lifespan, and how those changes relate to brain structure and function. She is particularly interested in understanding the factors that lead to individual differences in age-related cognitive function, including genetics, cardiovascular health, diet, and exercise.

As a clinical neuropsychologist, Dr. Ryan has worked with individuals and families who are coping with chronic and progressive diseases, including multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease. In 2021, the University of Arizona was awarded a \$60 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to establish a precision aging network of researchers across the country to better understand how and why people experience brain aging differently with the ultimate goal of developing more effective treatments and interventions targeted to the individual.

Dr. Ryan is one of the associate directors of the Precision Aging Network. Dr. Ryan also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in memory, neuropsychology, neuroanatomy, and cognitive neuroscience, and she has been very active in mentoring programs at the University of Arizona that encourage women and underrepresented students to pursue a career in science.

On a personal note, I have had the opportunity to observe Dr. Ryan's leadership over the last few years as I am a member of the advisory board for the psychology department at the U of A. She is a respected and successful leader, including an extremely innovative one, especially as was seen as she navigated through the global pandemic. I am truly thrilled that Dr. Lee Ryan is with us here today to share her insights on leadership. Dr. Ryan, I turn it over to you.

Lee Ryan: Thank you so much, Sara. After all that, I'm not going to talk about research today. I'm going to talk about being a department head. I am a head, not a chair, but I don't think there's really that much difference. Let's get right to it.

As Sara introduced me, she pointed out that-- this is my short version of my CV. I started with my PhD and went on to a post-doctoral fellow. I had lots of graduate and post-doctoral training in neuropsychology, neuroanatomy, cognitive neuroscience, MRI physics, and MR image analysis, something that I've become pretty much an expert in.

I joined U of A as an assistant professor in 1996, and I established the Cognition & Neuroimaging Laboratory. That's my own lab, but it also provides support for neuroimaging research for faculty from across campus. As Sara mentioned, I'm the associate director of an institute. My research has been really successful. There's all my funding. I have lots of it, it's ongoing. Then I became the department head in 2015.

One of the striking things that you probably have already noticed is in that resume, there is nothing there that taught me how to run a department, how to lead an academic organization. I think that's true for so many people who take this job. We are not prepared. I did not take IO courses, unfortunately, as an undergraduate, maybe that would've helped me a lot, but I want to talk about my journey as a department head and some of my insights. There's so many things I could have talked about, I know there are many other issues, but we'll keep it short so we have time for lots of questions, I hope.

Every chair head right now faces new and difficult issues because, of course, as all of you know, the academy is changing. These are challenges that face every educator and every administrator in every department, not just psychology, but they certainly have an impact on us. The first and foremost is the decrease overall in the amount of financial support that is provided to universities from states. We are a state school here at the University of Arizona, but we actually have about the same amount of funding that private universities get from their state legislatures.

Decreasing enrollments. If it hasn't already happened to you, it is on the horizon. The enrollment cliff is happening. We just don't have that many high school students that are graduating and going into higher education. That is going to change things a lot. The changing expectations of students. Students and, in fact, all of society, and that includes governments. People want to know that what we provide to students now, it's not just enough to say that we're giving them a wonderful university education, but they want it to be career-focused. They want to know that what they are learning in university is leading to a career. That applies not only to undergraduates but to our graduate students as well.

The majority of our graduate students are not going to have a career in the academy, and we need to rethink the way that we train them so that they are ready for careers in various fields in the private sector. We are all focused on building diversity, equity, and inclusion in our departments and at every level in our department, from faculty to undergraduates to staff as well. Now, we have to face the pushback on our efforts to include diversity, equity, and inclusion kinds of programs.

One that I want to point out that is incredibly important for departments that are like mine, which is a research one university, the increasing cost of research. Startup costs have gone up massively in psychology. People need all kinds of new toys that

they didn't need before, and salary expectations are much higher. Bringing in the best faculty to do research is much more difficult for us.

In psychology, I do neuroimaging research, many of the people in our department do that, or they do EEG, and it's not unheard of now to have startup packages that are pushing \$1 million. Then there's all the unexpected stuff. Of course, we've all gone through the pandemic. Even if you took all the IO courses in the world and you learned about leadership, nothing prepared us for that. Everyone was scrambling and a huge amount of the stress and the decision-making fell on the shoulders of chairs and heads of departments.

It was an incredibly stressful time. We had to help our undergraduates by moving our classes online, but we also had to deal with the issues of shutting down research and the impact that data had on junior faculty and on graduate students and post-docs in particular. People were dealing with so much personal difficulty, deaths in their families, severe illnesses, so much of that fell on our shoulders and it was a tough time. There's things that always go on, faculty losses that you weren't expecting. I just had a faculty give me her resignation two days ago. Wasn't completely unexpected, but they pop up. These are things that you suddenly have to deal with.

Staff turnover. We've all been there. You think you have a great team in place, and then someone comes and says, "You know what? I'm leaving." You start building again. Then there's things that none of us could really be prepared for. I call them low-probability, very high-stakes situations. Here at the University of Arizona, in this last year, we had a murder of one of our faculty that happened, a good friend of mine. He was shot by a disgruntled graduate student who had been let go from their program. There's always something that you just need to expect the unexpected. There's a lot on our shoulders as chairs and heads that we need to deal with.

Let's start in 2015 when I took over as the head of the department, and I freely admit that my department was a bit of a mess. We had gone through years of state budget cuts because the State of Arizona was really hurting financially. A considerable amount of our funding at that point came from the state, not so much anymore because of all those budget cuts.

Tenure-track faculty, we had 28 of them. By the way, in 1996, there were 40 when I started in this department. Out of those 28, I was looking at 6 retirements that were going to happen within the next three years or and we only had one teaching faculty. 60% of our faculty only had extramural grant funding. Our teaching load over the years, in spite of the decreases in our faculty, our teaching load had continued to increase. In 2015, we had 1,700 majors. It was a BA in psychology, and we taught around 35,000 student credit hours every year.

We had just recently transitioned from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to the College of Science. At that point, when we moved SBS, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences refused to pay their commitments. We were saddled with more than \$400,000 in commitments that psychology needed to cover somehow. In July 2015, the first month of my tenure as head, I received another \$70,000 cut in my base budget that I had to give back to the university. That's not the way that you

really want to start as the head. Before I get into how I fixed this, let me tell you the good news, the end of the story.

Here's my department now in 2023. We have 32 tenure-track faculty. We're up somewhat, but that's also replacing all of the losses. We've done a lot of hiring. We've expanded our teaching faculty. They are fantastic and we love them and they've made such an important contribution to us. 98% of our faculty now have extramural funding, at least one federal grant. Currently, we have a grant portfolio housed in primarily in psychology of \$46.5 million. Our total collaborative grants across the university are \$182 million.

I have helped to double our administrative staff and our advising positions, and we've created new positions in the area of development in professional development, and we brought on another full-time clinic director. Our teaching load is about the same. It's actually gone up to about 2,000 majors and we still teach over 35,000 student credit hours yearly.

We have a fully online now, and I'll talk about this a little bit later, a fully online bachelor of arts program in psychology. We've actually gone further into teaching than we were before. We also have some unique things, a certificate program in gerontology with a focus on healthy aging. We're creating another program in forensic psychology, and we've created dual degrees in partnership with universities in Peru, in Indonesia. We have two or three others that are in the process of being developed.

The bottom line is that our yearly revenues above costs are about around, right now, 1.5 million. Currently, we have a 2.5 million carryover. That's a very different department than the one that I stepped into eight years ago. How did I do it? Oops. Oh, so the first thing is, I just want to point out, let's go back to that list in 2015. The first thing that you're probably asking, and it's a really legitimate question is, why in the world would you take this job with a department that is in such disarray? That's a really good question.

I actually have thought about that a lot. I think some of it was sheer stupidity. I didn't know what I was getting into. It was also that I had great confidence in a lot of the faculty who were here. They were demoralized and concerned about the future. They didn't see a way forward, but I had ideas and I thought, if I can get working with some of these faculty who also had ideas, then maybe we could make a difference.

I've done a lot of research and I've done a lot of clinical work, but hands down, this is the hardest job I've ever done in my life. There isn't a week that goes by, I believe, where I don't hate my job, maybe even more than once a week. Certainly, in the early years, they were incredibly successful or stressful. I can also say that this has been the most rewarding job of my career. I keep that in mind in those difficult times when terrible things happen in the next unexpected event.

What did I do? How did I create change? Well, before I started, I knew that I had a few months to get ready for this and I knew I didn't know what I was doing. I asked people like Sara, she was not around then, but I knew people who were experts in this. It turns out my sister is a big business consultant, and we had individuals here

in Tucson who worked with large corporations who I knew and I asked them, what do I need to know? I read a lot and I thought a lot about what I was going to do come that 1st of July when I started.

In the first three months, you've probably heard a lot about the importance of those first three months, I took that very, very seriously. I knew that I needed that, that was my opportunity to learn a lot about the department and about concerns. I listened a lot to all the constituents. One of the things that I say over and over again is that staff at universities are not given a voice. I included them in that discussion, in those listening sessions, graduate students, undergrads, post-docs, I listened to everyone, not just faculty.

Then I knew that I had those three months to take some actions. I was looking for the low-hanging fruit that would make some gains in our department. If you can't do that within three months or so, I believe that you've lost the war because it's going to be ever so much harder to convince people that you can affect change. They need to see progress, even if it's small steps. They need to see that change can happen, especially in a department like mine where, as I said, the prevailing view, they were pretty demoralized.

Then over the next five years, these things happened in parallel with one another, but we started with a lot of planning and strategic planning. I do want to say that strategic planning gets a bad rep. There are lots of strategic plans out there that sound really great. They've got all kinds of aspirational goals, and then they get put on a shelf and nobody ever looks at them.

When we took a different tack, I brought in a friend, by the way, who is the head of HR of a very large corporation here in Tucson to help us do this process. We came up with strategic plans, we've done it twice now, that were aspirational, but they also had clear goals that were feasible. We laid out those goals. We laid out the steps that we would need to take to get there, and then we went the next step to say, what's the business plan? For every one of those goals, how much is it going to cost us to get it in place? How are we going to sustain it financially over multiple years? What's the return on investments?

In our strategic plans, we looked for two things, building excellence, but also financial stability and sustainability. The second one was budgeting. I started this. I had to, at the very, very beginning with a \$70,000 cut, I had to redistribute resources. How I dealt with that \$70,000 cut, I knew, because I'd been in this department long enough, that some of our staff were basically coasting and we were not organized well.

Instead of just leaving things as, I decided at that point to clean house, and I let five people go, five staff members. Couldn't let faculty go because those faculty salaries are not part of our base budget. I let staff go. I have to say it was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life to sit with those people and tell them that they were losing their jobs. It was the opportunity, and two people, two consultants who I said, I talked to and I said, how can I do this? I remember my sister saying, "Lee, you do this once and you never do it again."

I took it as an opportunity to reorganize the structure of staff within the department. I actually went past the 70,000 so that I had some resources that I could take small amounts of money at that point and redistribute those investments into new programs, into areas that would build excellence and help us become financially sustainable.

The other thing that I spent a ton of time on, and I still do, is implementation. That is building an engaged team. I met with people, I helped them, I mentored them, I built trust with them, and at the right time, I gave them their own tasks. I gave them power to make change. Those things were really important.

Some of the things we did, I can't go through these in a lot of detail, but I'll just mention a few of them. Again, these all had a dual purpose, to build excellence in the department, but also to maintain or to build a financial self-sufficiency. I mentioned that we didn't decrease our teaching. We actually went in the opposite direction.

The first thing we did was we created a bachelor of science in psychological science to complement our bachelor of arts program. This gives students intensive research experience. We really felt that we weren't doing the best job of serving all of our students. I do believe that as the majors in other departments in the College of Science have gone down over the last few years, ours have stayed the same or increased. It's partly because of this bachelor of science program that is very unique.

I was around at the very beginning. This was serendipity that the University of Arizona in 2015 was just getting their feet wet with online education. Once I looked at the funding model, I thought, "Wow, we are all in." The way this works here at U of A is that of the tuition for online education, 35% of it stays with the administration, but the rest of those dollars come directly to psychology. This was incentive for departments to build online education.

I also saw it as an opportunity for us to serve students who, otherwise, we have not been able to serve. People who are single moms, a lot of people who left higher education, university years ago because of just life circumstances. We have a lot of vets in our program, people who can't, for one reason or another, come to campus. I saw this as a way to build excellence, but I also saw it as a way to generate revenues for our department.

In the second year of that program, we were profitable. I brought in an amazing faculty member. I stole her from, Penn State who had done a lot of online education. Why reinvent the wheel when other people have been doing it already? We were profitable in year two, and by year four, we were in the top 10 programs for psychology in the country. Currently, that program brings in revenues of around \$2.5 million and it continues to grow.

On the faculty side of things, I created a kickstart pilot program. I needed faculty to start going out and getting grants. We increased the expectation that faculty were going to get grants, but we helped them do it. We gave them pilot funding. At first, it was only \$5,000 because that's all I had, then it went to 10,000, now it's 20,000 for some of these grants. We also gave them support for grant writing in the early

stages of developing grant proposals. I increased staff to provide more support on both the pre-award and post-award side.

Faculty retention. I did not want to lose another faculty. Many of the people who left here in those early years were people who were highly research active. I didn't want to lose them because the reality is that replacing a faculty is way more expensive than keeping one happy. We put money into renovations in lab spaces and actually all throughout the building and offices, replacing research equipment, providing them with bridge funding, and giving our more junior faculty mentoring that would help them be successful in research.

That makes such a huge difference. Often, I think we bring in a new faculty. We say, "Here's your startup package. Here's this beautiful new lab. Now go away and leave me alone." We can't do that because we want to build a place, a department where people feel that they are going to be valued throughout their career and they're going to be supported throughout their career. I hired outstanding teaching faculty. I told you that we now have eight of those including the one faculty who has amazing expertise in online education.

One unique thing that I did here, I did not want them to be second-class citizens, and so they are fully integrated through our bylaws and through our committees into faculty governance. Every one of our committees has teaching faculty on it. They vote on everything in this department with the exception of tenure, which they're not allowed to vote on.

I thought a lot about retention and this idea of the importance of giving students professional development and help with careers. We expanded our undergraduate support for career services. We have two people now who focus on professional development and career development. We also expanded, as we expanded advisors, we expanded our success programs. All of these things help to make our undergraduate curriculum more useful for students.

They see where they can go in their careers, not just into psychology. There are so many other things that our students do. About 10% of our undergraduates actually go into medical school. They go into law, into business, into lots of different areas. HR is a big one as well. We want them to know that those are career paths.

By the way, as the enrollments go down for new students coming out of high school, one of the things that universities should be doing is increasing their retention so that you don't just worry about bringing them here in their first year, but you worry about having them actually graduate after four years. The University of Arizona does not do well in that regard. We have a long way to go to retain our students and ensure that they graduate.

The last one is I hired a development director. At the time, I think we were the only department on campus who had a full-time person thinking about communication and development broadly rep. We created an advisory board, of which Sarah Wiener is now one of our advisors. We started connecting with our alums, something we'd never really done before. We established a yearly capital campaign that has been very successful, although not during the pandemic that everything went off the rails

then. These are some of the things that we did to build excellence across the board in every area but also to become financially self-sufficient.

What are these qualities of a chair or head that I think are important? There are a number of them, but this is the short list. First of all, you have to have a vision. You have to see where you're going. Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else." It is incredibly important to have aspirations, to have goals, both aspirational and concrete, and then to translate those things into strategies and plans. Vision is nothing if you don't have a way to get that, to make that a reality.

You have to be informed. You have to understand all of the challenges now that face the academy, that face your particular university so that you can start thinking ahead. If anybody in this business doesn't read *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on a weekly basis, then you're not doing your job. You need to know what is going on and to be thinking about those things.

As I said before, you don't reinvent the wheel. Other people are going through the same things that you are. I talk to other heads of psychology departments all the time to see what they're doing and what their challenges are. If you're having a problem, it's a good bet that other people are having it too.

I think you need to be entrepreneurial and innovative. The academy is simply not the same as it was before, and the role of a head or a chair is not to be a caretaker. I decided very early on, when I was reading all that stuff about leadership, that I was not going to be a head that just relied on one person, the dean, to go and ask resources from. I was going to think outside the box and figure out other ways to change this department. I really took on a view that I was essentially running a mid-size company instead of running just an academic institution.

You really need to be flexible. I talked about all the unexpected things that come up. You just have to plan that nothing is going to stay the same. Every time you get things rolling, something changes. The budgeting model at the university changes and you are now reorganizing and rethinking where your priorities are.

On a personal note, I think you need to be credible, authentic, and self-aware. It is just an enormously important part of your job to build trust, to be honest, and forthright with the people who you work with. That requires being self-aware and understanding your own shortcomings. I freely admit, it was hard for me at the beginning. I am not a patient person. I do not like when people dither and give me 50 reasons why we shouldn't try something new. It's really difficult for me to deal with that.

I needed to learn to, yes, be decisive, but also to take the long view. I still struggle with that. I lose my temper with people. Really understanding your own shortcomings and what's going to be difficult for you. What your strengths are is important too. I know that I'm really good at bringing people together and getting them to work as a team, but patience, not so much.

Your whole job is relationship building within your department, within every constituent within your department, but also with like-minded departments across campus, university administration, people in the field, other-- I mentioned I talked to other heads and other researchers a lot across the country and actually around the globe, but also making those connections with individuals and leaders in the community and with alums. All of those relationships, I believe, provide opportunities for your department.

I will say one other thing about that. I said that you need to have goals and a vision. The other thing that strategic planning allows you to do is to know right away when you want to say no. When opportunities come along from all of these relationships that you're building, that meet your goals and your vision, then great. You say yes, but you also need to know when to say no. That strategic plan really helps you in picking and choosing the right paths.

The last one, I'll say, so incredibly important, is empowering. The most important thing that a great leader does is they make sure that there are multiple leaders waiting in the wings to take over from you. I do not want to have this job forever. I was supposed to be head for five years. The new dean came on at the end of the pandemic and she asked me to stay on. I'm probably going to stay for another year, maybe two. From the beginning, I was thinking, "I need to get people ready to do this." I've done a lot in terms of mentoring, and then when they are ready, delegating and letting them know and giving them the opportunity to lead, and giving them feedback and really working with them as a team, empowering everyone in the department.

I've said several times here, and I'll end with this. My department was in disarray, and people really were demoralized. That is not the case now. People see that change can happen and that they can make change happen. That if they come to me and say, "Lee, I have this idea," that 99% of the time, as long as it fits with our plan, I'm going to say, "Go for it and I'll support you."

That is a different place. Every one of our faculty is involved in strategic planning, is involved in creating new programs, so is our staff, and that is gold. I don't know of another department that has a staff as engaged in the running of a department and the future of a department as ours. Maybe I'm wrong. Anyway, that's my list. I want to stop there because I know there are a lot of questions. I hope that's useful. There's so many things I could have talked about, but we'll stop there and I'll take questions.

Sara: Great. Thank you so much, Lee. A number of people have asked about reading lists and books you might recommend. I think you did have a slide on that if you want to just pop that up or just share what you think.

Lee: Sure. I did think about that because I mentioned reading. If I had to pick three, you as IO psychologists probably know these books. They are classics. *The First Ninety Days* is an amazing book that gave me a lot of thought about what I needed to do in the short run to reset the department.

The Power of a Positive No by William Ury. If you don't know that book, you should. It's just a little book. One of the things we do a lot is we say no. William Ury has a long-storied career as a diplomat. It's formulaic in a way, but it actually works and it really helps. How do you say no to people without damaging your relationship with them?

Then *Good to Great*, a classic book by Jim Collins that I really thought gave me a lot of ideas and thoughts about what it really takes to be a leader and where it worked and where it didn't. If there were three books, those were the ones that I would choose. By the way, I don't think there are good books on how to be an academic head or an administrator at a university. I've read a couple of them and I think they're not very good, quite frankly.

Sara: We have people from all over the world on this call right now, and we'll have more who are listening to this afterwards, but all over the United States and all over the world. There were a few questions on speaking more about partnership with other countries and potentially sharing about global and cross-cultural collaboration tips that you might have.

Lee: Absolutely. This is something I'm so excited about. Here at the University of Arizona, we have an Office of International, they call it UA International, where we're creating partnerships with universities around the world. We are very much at the forefront of that. Some of them are what we call micro campuses where you have a presence in those other countries. We've done it a little differently where we're using our online education as the primary method for connecting with students, but those students have opportunities to come here, our students have opportunities to go there, and our faculty have opportunities to connect on a weekly basis with faculty at those universities.

As I mentioned earlier, we've set two of these programs up in Lima, Peru, and Jakarta, Indonesia. I think it is such an amazing opportunity for our students. Those students, by the way, are integrated into our regular classes and taking online. They have lots of opportunities. The people who teach those classes make sure that they have opportunities to talk to one another so that they can learn from each other. I think it's what universities should be all about, and so I'm really excited about that.

Sara: There are a couple clarification questions about, if you could define teaching faculty, bridge funding, and is there a difference between a chair and a head.

Lee: Oh, okay. Teaching faculty. Many people call those individuals by different names. You might call them instructors, they might be adjuncts. Here at U of A several years ago, the provost changed that so that they are referred to as career track faculty. I like that because it takes away or at least some of the hierarchical structures. Research faculty are tenure track faculty, career track faculty can still go from assistant to associate to full professors, and they have, at most, a three-year contract. They are not tenured. We have tried our best to integrate them into our power structure here at U of A and certainly in our department. What was the other one?

Sara: What do you mean by bridge funding?

File name: Leadership_Psychology_Dept_FINAL.mp4

Lee: Oh, bridge funding. For example, if a faculty has one or two grants, and they have a couple more in the pipeline, but they need-- they have a downtime where they're not funded, and if I'm pretty confident that they are going to continue to be funded, you don't want people to have to let all of their staff go. It's like rebuilding every time you get a grant. That is really inefficient and you lose a lot of really well-trained people under those circumstances. For short periods of time, if necessary, we will provide the funding to keep those people working until a new grant can be put in place.

The difference between a chair and a head, in some places, there is a difference. For example, a lot of places that-- it depends on the university. In some places, a chair has more of a mandate to go to their faculty every time that they want to make a decision and get consensus and have votes. We don't do a lot of that here. I do do that. I'm very aware of and in favor of faculty governance, but there are a number of things on my list where I make those decisions.

When it comes to anything like the distribution of resources, space funding, et cetera, even salaries to a great degree, that resides with the head. I think that is a much better model because, as you all know, faculty and getting consensus among faculty can be challenging at best. If we had to do that for every single thing that I had to do and a decision I had to make, I don't think I'd get very far. I like it the way it is, but I know there are different models at different universities.

Sara: Great. There were a number of questions about the online programming, different components of that being how did you decide on the strategy and what is the strategy for online programming, synchronous or asynchronous, or both. A third part of that was how you maintain honesty in these online programs. Somebody was concerned about a rise in cheating.

Lee: Oh, okay. Well, the first one, at the very outset, we adopted a quality assurance program called Quality Matters. Ashley Jordan, who is the faculty who oversees our online education, is very knowledgeable about that program and the methods for developing really great interactive online teaching. We evaluate every new course that we create on a regular basis. Our courses are evaluated when they're first created, and then every three years after that so that they're as interactive as possible and they have really good quality across everything, the content, but also the ways that students have to interact with one another.

All of our online courses are completely asynchronous. The reason is that we are reaching out to those individuals who cannot add a course in necessarily at a particular time of day who can't come to campus. They're all asynchronous, but that doesn't mean that they aren't interactive. One of the things I learned very early on when some of our faculty were starting to teach these courses online, and they would come to me and they would say, "Lee, this is so amazing. This is not like teaching now. This is mentoring." They loved it because now they're interacting with each individual student and small groups of students through different mechanisms. They're not talking to them face to face. We really value that interactive opportunity that online teaching has.

I will say also that our experiences and using technologies to build interaction online have now informed our in-person main campus teaching to a great extent. There's a lot more interaction in our in-person classes because of the lessons that we've learned in the online space. About cheating, there are a number of different things that our faculty do to deal with that, we could go through a litany of them, but there are certainly a lot of people who think about that and ways that you can-- we're thinking about it in the classroom too because now, everyone has cell phones and they're connected to the internet. We do most of our testing online through a program called D2L, although I think that's going out the window and we're probably going to move to another one.

I think across the board, we need to understand how to evaluate students better and in ways that decrease cheating. I actually don't think that that is such a big deal. I think the way to do it is to evaluate students in different ways that don't require them to just regurgitate information. Every one of us, what do we do when we have a question we can't answer? We go look it up on Google. We know where to go to find an answer, and our students know how to do that too. That's good. That's what they're going to do. If they can't remember something that they need to remember, they're going to know how to go and find that information. What we need to evaluate them on is critical thinking and evaluation and taking it beyond just regurgitation of information. Some of that obviously has to happen, but I think there's ways around it.

Sara: That's great. There were related questions on leveraging digital tools. It's interesting that the pandemic had promoted some of these new ways of potentially going after student engagement and learning. One person asked about tips in how you deal with criticism, particularly if it's pretty biting. You talked quite a bit about some of the qualities that you're good at and some of the things that you're challenged with, but how do you deal with that?

Lee: It's not easy. You and I, Sara, had been talking earlier about being a woman in this position. I do think it's harder for women. We are not used to being criticized. We get different kinds of criticism than our male counterparts. In our society, women are supposed to be nice and we're not supposed to be criticized. We're supposed to make everybody happy.

Criticism is hard. I listen to criticism. I do 360s for my position. I've done it from before the university needed. I did my first 360 when I had been in this office for three months. Nobody else was doing that because I needed to hear what people were saying, but it is hard, and what you need to do, really-- and actually, Sara has helped us a lot because of her expertise in doing these kinds of evaluations.

What you need to understand is that there's always a balance and that you want to give opportunities for people to give you positive feedback too. I take feedback very seriously. I try to think of it as constructive criticism, but I'm not going to make everybody happy, and I know that some people, they don't like me. They don't like what I do. They probably don't like it that I make them do things that they didn't want to do, that they didn't do in the past and that they don't want to do now. That's part of being a leader.

I do think you need to have a thick skin. You need to have your allies and the people that you can sit with and just complain every once in a while for your own mental health. That is really important, but criticism, I think you need to be coached on how to deal with criticism. Some of that helped me as well in the early years because there was a lot of criticism in the early years. Now, it's less because, first of all, I'm so far along in my career that I don't care anymore, frankly. Also, I can say, "Here's what we've done. Here's the things that we've done in this department. Here's my record. You want to do this, knock yourself out." That silences a lot of the criticism, but in the early days, it was overwhelming, and I will admit, there were days when I was this close to quitting. I just thought I'm not going to take this crap. That's a great question. That's really good.

Sara: I think a lot of leaders have to deal with that. Somebody asked about what a 360 is, so do you want to take--

Lee: We're always the ones who are evaluating faculty and our grad students, et cetera, but I allowed them to evaluate me. I had a consultant who came in because the university didn't do anything like that at the time. They reached out to faculty, students, and staff and asked, "How is Lee doing?" Then they helped me to go through that information and to sift out the feedback that we could turn into constructive criticism, as opposed to the things that were just they don't like what you're doing that you can't do anything about.

Criticism is interesting because a lot of it is very useful, but it should never be taken as a reason for you giving up your vision, giving up the path if you believe that it's the right path forward. It doesn't mean that it's your way or the highway, but I think there are limits in how much and how you integrate criticism into what you do as the head. Does that make sense?

Sara: Yes, no, absolutely. There was another question about how you maintain balance between doing your research and working as the head of the department.

Lee: I don't think I have an answer for that one. Very early on, some heads do simply give up their research. I did not do that. In fact, the opposite happened to me. As soon as I became the head, my grant portfolio went crazy. It is an incredibly hard challenge, so I tell everyone and I believe it's true. It's not that I shifted from research to being the head. I now have two full-time jobs. That's my choice. I don't think it's healthy, quite frankly.

You really have to find ways to balance and to keep yourself sane. You have to have time for your own personal health and wellness as well. It's challenging. The way that I did it was that I, early on, went to the department and to the dean and said, "I can't do this unless you give me more research support." I have an amazing lab manager who helps to coordinate everything that happens in my lab. I have a research scientist who works on my grants, and she also oversees a lot of the research. If I didn't have that, I wouldn't be able to do it, but it's still a really big challenge.

I just got another grant, by the way, and I feel like when I heard about it, usually, people are like, "Hooray," but I put my head in my hands and thought, "Oh, no, now, what do I do?" It was one I really wanted. It's a treatment grant for traumatic brain

injury that we've worked on for so many years, so I can't help myself, I guess. That's really hard to do both well.

Sara: I think the bottom is that you have a very robust research program in addition to being head and have to seek out resources in order to keep that going.

Lee: Absolutely. I have great support on both sides. I have fabulous people working for me. I really, truly believe I have the best staff in the world. I have a great associate head now who is so engaged in new initiatives and helping on that also on the head side of things. I have the same in my lab, so I'm very lucky.

Sara: I'm going to switch gears. We have a few minutes left. There were a lot of questions about diversity, so a couple of different angles on this. One, integrating it into the curriculum. Then, of course, there's pushback, if you will. Maybe that's not the word. I'll stick with it for now. Somebody used that pushback on how they phrase it academic freedom. Can you talk about that a little bit? Then let's get into recruiting staff and a diverse staff and how you go about doing that.

Lee: Great questions. I didn't have time to go into that, but part of both of our strategic plans, a big piece of the strategic plan was focused on building diversity in every aspect of what we do in the department. It's not one thing. It's in everything. It's integrating it into the curriculum. It's expanding the diversity of our graduate students, bringing in faculty with varied backgrounds and diverse backgrounds. That, by the way, is the hardest thing to do. Not only that, and in staff as well. Not only that but building a culture in the department that welcomes them.

I think of diversity even more broadly than that. We're not just talking about underrepresented individuals of minority status, but we're talking about LGBTQ individuals. We're talking about young faculty and graduate students who have families. The academy has not valued families, so that's diversity too. We came up with a plan that is really very comprehensive. I asked one of our faculty that was very involved in diversity and cultural research to be the director of DEI in our department. He has a very large budget and also a large committee that thinks about all of these things.

You mentioned one thing, Sarah, the curriculum. Every one of our undergraduate syllabi now talk about and address DEI issues. Every course has some curriculum that is more welcoming to individuals from diverse backgrounds and also addresses the issues of diversity in psychology. That's easy to do if you're teaching a course on cultural psychology or health disparities. It's a lot harder when you're teaching a course on brain cognition and cognitive neuroscience.

Even there, we've found that there are ways to highlight the research of researchers from diverse backgrounds to let people know that they have role models out there and to highlight that kind of information. It is something we think about all the time. It can't be just one thing. It has to be in every single thing that we do. We say, "What about DEI? How does that impact the decision that we're making in whatever it is?" I think that's the way to do it now.

Now, the pushback, we're in the early stages of that here in Arizona. We don't know where that is going. We are already being very careful about the wording, but so far, we have decided not to change anything that we are doing, and so we'll see where that goes. I think that's a huge conversation that we need to have in this country, but certainly, in academia. I have colleagues in Florida, for example, who are leaving because they simply don't see how they can continue to work in an atmosphere where they're being silenced. It hasn't happened to us here yet in Arizona, so we will see where that one goes.

Sara: Well, unfortunately, I'm looking and it just turned to the top of the hour, so we're going to have to stop. I'd like to thank Dr. Lee Ryan for this incredible presentation and answering so many of your excellent questions. Thank you all for joining, and this will be available on replay as well if you'd like to see it again. Thank you, everyone.

[01:00:23] [END OF AUDIO]