

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

Interview Session Date: July 9, 2021

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:00:03]

So, we are officially recording. I have something little to read off and then we will go ahead and just jump into some questions. So, I'm Nina Nevill, interviewing Mickie DeVeau for an oral history project run by the Historical Resources Center at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Mickie was recruited to MD Anderson in the Leadership Institute as a Program Director and has over 20 years of coaching and consulting experience. This session is being held virtually over Zoom. It is the first and only session that we have scheduled, however, a second interview can be scheduled if needed. And today is July 9th, 2021. The time is about 2:25 p.m. And thank you so much again for devoting your time today to our oral history project.

[00:00:59]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:00:59]

Oh, my pleasure. I was excited that I was asked.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Chapter 01: Coaching and Leadership Training Professional Path

In this chapter, Dr. DeVeau talks about her academic career, her recruitment to MD Anderson because of her expertise in coaching and leadership development, and the field of industrial organization psychology.

Chapter topics:

Joining MD Anderson

Personal Background

The Leader

Critical Perspectives;

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:01:03]

Of course. Well, I think it works out well to just start at the beginning that way we can get a little bit acquainted first. If you don't mind telling me a little bit about where you're from and a little bit about your family, and just your background, that would be wonderful.

[00:01:19]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:01:20]

Oh, sure. So, I am originally from the East Coast. I was recruited to MD Anderson about 13, close to 14 years ago, because of my expertise in coaching and establishing leadership development programs. When I first came over to MD Anderson, I was charged with really revamping the coaching programs there. We didn't have a Leadership Institute just quite yet. I was recruited first as an organization development consultant and had worked under Bill Wooten, and then others, throughout my career and then we formed the Leadership Institute in 2018. And for the Leadership Institute, I provide oversight for all personalized development programs. So, that includes all of our coaching programs and we have several. We've also embedded coaching into all of our leadership development programs in some way, shape, or form. And then I also provide oversight and help develop what we call our Accelerate programs. So, our Accelerate programs are leadership development programs that are specific to individuals we call multiplying leaders. Multiplying leaders are individuals who are seen as incredibly capable and ready to take on the next level of leadership. So, in layman's terms it's high potential leaders. And I also provide oversight for our Discover programs. Our Discover programs are more self-directed programs, online learning, and then we've incorporated peer mentoring into that program where our leaders take a deeper dive into all of our leadership characteristics, and there are eight of them, and their associated competencies. At this point for

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

the Discover programs, we have our bundle that's associated with Drive and also Professionalism that is active.

[00:03:28]

My family. So, when I was recruited about 13 years ago, I was a young mother. I feel so old, now, but anyway. When I was recruited, I had just upended my entire family and we moved halfway across the country. When you have an organization like MD Anderson want you, you go for it. In that process, and I joke around with people, I am one of those people who never really actually applied for their job. I am that less than three percent. So, I had posted my resume on a specific professional organization website and I had gotten a call from a recruiter at MD Anderson. So, being from back East, the big player there is Sloan. And interestingly enough, at the same time that MD Anderson was recruiting me, Sloan-Kettering was recruiting me at the same time. But we decided as a family that we wanted something a little bit different, a change of pace, better weather, so we decided to move to Texas. And as of right now, since moving to Texas, we were the only ones that we knew when we moved to Texas. And then, my parents have decided to come join us. They actually live with me. So, I'm in a multi-generational home. My parents, they're downstairs. They have the master suite, and then, rest of us are all upstairs with the remaining bedrooms. So, I'm trying to think. You had said questions about family, what was the other thing you had mentioned, Nina? I have forgotten.
[00:05:17]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:05:19]

Oh, no worries. I had said just a little bit about yourself, where you're from, family, and your background. So, very open-ended. That could be taken however you so please.
[00:05:31]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:05:31]

Sure, sure. I guess another thing that probably might be relevant is one of the reasons why I was recruited. I have an advanced degree in Organizational Psychology. So, my training is in coaching and is in developing coaching programs and leadership development programs. That's where my doctorate is in. Also in needs assessments, a bit of project management, a ton of experience in performance management, too. So, my academic career is what was very appealing to MD Anderson. And then it was augmented by my professional career. Before coming to MD Anderson, I worked for Independence Blue Cross which is a health insurance company in Philadelphia. And that's where I really got my feet wet in developing programs that were specific to leaders. So, that whole idea of personalized development, I started that way back when, when I worked for Independence Blue Cross, and then have slowly been able to implement a lot of things here at MD Anderson and continue that learning and growth.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

[00:06:44]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:06:44]

That's so fascinating. Well, you've already shared so much which I guarantee we will get into in a little bit more detail. Regarding your educational path, going back a bit, what inspired you to pursue that path? Was there something drawing you at that point to coaching and leadership? Or was it more just to focus on—I guess I suppose what aspect of that drew you to it?

[00:07:11]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:07:12]

Sure, sure. So, once again, I'm one of those weird, unique individuals. I knew from a very young age that I wanted to be a psychologist. I just didn't know what kind of psychologist. And then I had actively pursued a liberal arts college. I went to University of Scranton for my undergraduate. I wanted a smaller college, one that had a pretty strong psychology program. And I didn't know if I wanted to do clinical, or school, or industrial organizational psychology. And it was within my first probably two months of my undergraduate career I had volunteered for an event where we worked with severely emotionally and physically disabled children. And that's when I realized that I couldn't handle it. I simply couldn't. My heart was breaking and I felt useless and helpless. And that's when I really broke down, because I knew from the age of 12, I wanted to study why people behave the way they behave. And that's when I connected with one of my best mentors, my father, and we reviewed a couple different things. And he had a very biased opinion, not only just being my father, but also being an accountant by profession. He had said, "Mickie, you know, you have a head for business. Why don't you try something in the business world?" And that's how I stumbled across industrial organization psychology. So, my rest of my undergraduate career was a focus in what we call IO Psychology.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Chapter 02: Leadership Training at MD Anderson

Leadership

In this chapter, Dr. DeVeau talks about the concept and practice of leadership, her work in leadership training at MD Anderson, her reflections on some of the executive leaders at MD Anderson, the evolution of the Departments of Organization Development and Faculty Development at MD Anderson, the creation of the Leadership Institute, the concept of LEAD, and her efforts to create “a sustainable coaching culture.” “So, in essence,” she says, “everyone is a leader and everyone has the capabilities of developing their leadership skills.”

Chapter topics:

The Leader

Critical Perspectives on MD Anderson

Leadership;

On Mentoring

Portraits

Education at MD Anderson

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:08:52]

And in that process in studying that I was much more intrigued by the applied aspects of IO Psychology rather than the selection and assessments and statistical analyses and research portions. So, I knew that I wanted an advanced degree, not necessarily a PhD, an applied degree, I should say. So, my doctorate is a PsyD. It's a doctorate of psychology, and it's an applied degree, and it's specific in organizational psychology. So, it's a little bit different than everyone else who's at the Leadership Institute or at MD Anderson, is that it's only the O portion of IO. And the O portion allowed me to dive deeper into coaching to understand career counseling, I did group therapy, I ran group therapy courses. I also did a ton of organizational analyses, all as part of my academic background that I later used as part of my consulting background before I got into Independence Blue Cross and then later, MD Anderson. So, the whole idea of, why psychology? It's just an utter fascination with human behavior. I am one of three daughters, the middle daughter with an older sister and a younger sister who are just so different than me. So, I always was fascinated about how can they be so different and we have and share the same genetics and family upbringing? So, just that bases of family dynamics is what sparked my interest in psychology.

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And I, also growing, I think it was just the dynamics of my family in general who were very open, in service to others. So, I had a lot of friends who had dysfunctional homes that came and

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

they stayed with us and we always had some kind of houseguest who was a little bit on the down and out and we helped to support them, whether it was a family member or a friend. And sometimes it was those, “We’re of similar social economic backgrounds, I don’t understand why our lives are so different. What’s behind that?” And just being fascinated by the psychology of it all. So, that’s kind of what got me into it. And then people are just fascinating. I just find people fascinating and so interesting. So, that’s why I (inaudible).

[00:11:45]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:11:45]

Oh, I completely understand that. And that makes sense to me, a little bit more about the leadership background, then, as well, because from my understanding that’s such a huge field, and a diverse field and can really speak to how different people are, I’m sure. Again, this is coming completely from an outside perspective.

[00:12:07]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:12:07]

Well, when you say the whole idea of leadership, one of the things that I recognized is when I had that crisis, my very beginning parts of my undergraduate degree, one of the things I realized is that in that learning, that I really wanted to work with functional members of society, and to help them be even better. And it’s the whole idea of the trickle effect, like if you work with someone who’s already good and help them, make them to be great, they can have—it’s like a throwing a rock in a pond. The ripple effects are significantly increased if I can help just one person, one leader, that impact can have lasting and broad effects. And that was just so intriguing about also working with leaders.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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Is there, without divulging too much, would you be able to give me an example of a time that you’ve seen something like that happen?

[00:13:10]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:13:13]

Oh, yeah. Sure. So, I guess there’s a couple examples that are popping in my head. I’ll use one of my earlier examples, if that’s okay.

[00:13:22]

Nina Nevill, PhD

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

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Sure.
[00:13:22]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:13:23]
When working for Independence Blue Cross, I had worked with, and really helped one of the subsidiaries. The CEO of that subsidiary was just launching that health insurance aspect in a different state and what did that look like, and really vying for that market. And in that, he was the CEO of that subsidiary, it is helping him think about, he doesn't need to do it all. He needs to surround himself with the right people. And what is he doing to do that? What is his selection processes? What is his training processes? What is the culture he wants to establish? And how does he want to inspire others to those leadership levels? So, it's not just about the technical expertise, it's about the culture that they want to inspire. So, that was just one example. And as a result of working with him and setting it up as, what are you going to do to select, engage, and retain those folks, it was an entire huge program in which performance management came into play, also a little bit of succession planning came into play, too, and I was able to really help establish some pretty firm plans and processes for the subsidiary that was eventually then adopted by the bigger institution.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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That's incredible. It's wonderful to hear, not only helping the individual who obviously has the ability to have a greater effect, but then, putting in something at a more institutional or even systemic level that can have that affect over time and more sustainably. That must feel empowering to be able to do that.

[00:15:32]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:15:33]
Yeah, yeah. I think what I get the most pleasure out of, though, is seeing and watching his success. So, he is the one that was open to it. He did the heavy lifting. I might have just guided him along the process. So, it's experiencing the success through others.

[00:16:02]

Nina Nevill, PhD

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And this is sort of a fun question that I just like to ask folks because, why not? We get a variety of responses to this question every time, so take it however direction you'd like. But the

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

question is, if you had to confidently say that you are better than roughly 10,000 random people at one thing, or a large group of people, what would that thing be?
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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:16:41]

Oh, that is a fun question. What immediately popped into my mind was actually a running joke that I have with a lot of my clients is that I am better than the general population at identifying the emotions I'm experiencing, or the dysfunction that I'm going through. Being a psychologist, I am well aware of diagnoses and the running joke that I have with them is, I know when I'm being dysfunctional. I can diagnose myself. I don't stop myself from doing it is the self-management piece I need help in, but I can turn and diagnose myself when I'm being a little nuts. And I think it's that awareness that I think that may be one of my superpowers, for lack of a better word. But it's only half the story. It also goes to—and you're going to learn a lot about me—it's like my struggle with my weight. I bounce around in weight, losing and gaining 40 pounds just about every year. So, I know what I need to do, it's just doing it. And I think that is one of the things that I do, maybe better than most, but it's the self-management and the execution that I sometimes fall short of.

[00:18:09]

Nina Nevill, PhD

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That's definitely incredible. Awareness is a huge piece of that puzzle. I think a lot of people spend a good portion of their lives just trying to get in touch with that. And it's definitely a moving target kind of thing. Being in touch with it maybe in your twenties and your thirties, it can look different, I'm sure. That's a great answer, though. I can't say we've gotten that one, yet. So, that's good to have something new on the books. Now, in terms of your earlier years at MD Anderson when you just started, I'd like to know just a little bit more about what opportunities you felt that it had to offer you. And I know you spoke a bit about this earlier, but if you could go into a little more detail that would be great.

[00:19:03]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:19:04]

Sure. So, one of the things that was very intriguing—well, there were multiple things that were very intriguing to me about coming into MD Anderson. One is that at the time when I came on board, the idea of coaching was seen as a like a scarlet C. So, you were sentenced to coaching. It was the one last-ditch effort before we terminated you. So, I saw that as a challenge because coaching is so much more than remedial. And the idea of how do we convert or think through or help the organization, the institution, get to a point where people want coaches? How do we change it to a culture of coaching? So, when I first came on board, it is, one, I needed to wrap

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

my hands around all of the coaching that had been occurring. And in that process of doing that I realized that some of what people were terming as coaching I would have never have termed as coaching. And some other vendors that they had chosen to work with were not qualified in my mind. So, being able to wrap my hands around that and begin to set standard operating procedures and practices around that was one of the first and biggest things that I had to do. In that process, it's doing an RFP for appropriate vendors. I set out, what are the criteria that I'm really looking for? And then, having any and all institutional funds that are used specifically for coaching or what they term as coaching, it needed to go through me so that I can provide a pulse check on how things are going, monitor progress, report back to sponsors about whether or not this is a wise investment, and then begin to really think through of, look at all this money that we're spending on vendors. If we take a moment and take a small portion of that and begin to develop it into a training program that our leaders can do so that they are better equipped, look at how much money we can save.

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So, it was a bit of the ROI on coaching and then converting that into lost expenses, lost investment, actualizing future investment and the retention. And I used a bunch of our big survey results to really help speak to that story. And I also kind of—not kind of, but I also leveraged our counterparts in Human Resources to get an idea of what are the biggest pain points? Why are people leaving the institution? There's all the research out there that says people don't leave an institution, they leave their boss. So, what are some of the characteristics that will help people to stay? What do we need to do to train our bosses to be better bosses? So, that led to the whole idea and the evolution of leadership development, too. So, it wasn't just for coaching purposes. There was a much broader perspective. I was just blah, blah, blah, blabbing, and I can't remember if that answers your question, Nina.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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No, that does. Absolutely. That's very helpful in thinking about especially trying to get a sense of the earlier picture of how things looked. I'd also like to know if there were any key people at the beginning that you felt were helpful in allowing you to move forward with some of these things, if there's anyone that comes to mind, maybe mentoring or advising in this process, or just that you worked with.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Yeah, I think there were several people. So, the first person was Bill Wooten, who was my supervisor at the time, my immediate manager, who paved the way, made those connections for

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

me to speak to other individuals. And then, in that process, I reached out to a number of key leaders and had them experience coaching firsthand and then they could be the champions so I don't have to beat the drum, they were beating the drum for me. They were instrumental in that piece. There were a couple other things that happened coincidentally, or maybe not so coincidentally. We had a new vice president of Human Resources, Shibu Varghese, who came on shortly after I did, followed by a number of other senior HR leaders. So, I tapped into them about, "What are some of the things that you wish you knew when you first started that you know now?" Those kinds of things. And that led to the birth of a particular type of coaching, which is onboarding coaching. And I think the other piece behind all of this is, and I talk often about this, and it's not a dig to our previous presidents by any stretch of the imagination, but things really took off, actually, when Dr. Hicks came on as ad interim, and then, with Dr. Pisters, when Dr. Pisters came on board. So, it was an evolution of how people thought about leadership and the characteristics of leadership in that process that helped, tremendously. And Larry Perkins, who's the AVP of Talent and Diversity helped out a lot, too. When we were looking to launch onboarding coaching, he was one of the first people that went through the whole process. So, it helps to have our leaders go through it and then champion it.

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And that's the other thing I think that helped out tremendously is, I don't pitch it as, "This is a must-do program." I pitch it as, "Let's pilot it with a couple key people," people that I oftentimes choose because I know they have a lot of informal and formal authority within the institution, and if I can get them to be champions, I don't have to advertise a blessed thing. And that is where it is at this point, Nina. I am getting so many requests for coaching and part of it was, or is, "I know so-and-so who has a coach, and I want one, too. How do I get in on it?" Or, "I know so-and-so who went through CoachRICE," which is our in-house collaboration with the Doerr Institute for New Leaders at Rice University, of delivering an International Coaching Federation, it's called ICF, it's one of the only—well, there are several but it's the largest accrediting coaching bodies out there to bring in a certified or approved training in-house. So, we are training our internal leaders to be coaches. After they get through a certain number of hours of coaching hours, and they do a couple other things, they can apply for a credential with ICF and then, in essence, build and put out their own shingle and make money outside of MD Anderson, if they want to. So, there's ways that—

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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Wow, that's incredible.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Yeah, yeah. It's super cool to think about it. Because we're at the point where we were creating a sustainable coaching culture by educating our leaders on what it is like to be an internal coach, and then, they are, in essence, the people that, it's like that ripple effect with the pond, they are doing the coaching and they're having that impact on others. So, it goes back to, if I just touch a couple of key people and get them, sometimes people will call it, get them to drink the Kool-Aid with me, then everyone we help will be drinking the Kool-Aid.

[00:27:37]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:27:38]

Well, it sounds like you've seen a lot of change in your time. And you mentioned something earlier about the origins of the Leadership Institute and before that, your role coming in. Could you speak a little bit more about what, I guess, first of all, a little bit about the history of the Institute, but more so, I'm curious about the type of initiatives that were in place felt less prevented and more so as a last resort, if you could talk about a little bit of that change that you've seen.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Sure. So, I think—so when I first started, there was a department called Organization Development. And then as we evolved and developed and brought on more projects and programs, impacted the institution at a larger level, not just with performance management, but we also brought in the employee opinion survey. We helped develop tons of different programs that addressed, what are some of the things that employees need? We took a hardcore look at what are some of the assessments that we're having people go to in order to even come into the institution? So, part of it is, and I'll give you an example, one of the things that we've really worked on was the idea of how do we help our colleagues in recruitment narrow the pool of applicants down to the best pool possible? And we do that through assessments. So, one of the biggest ones, we get thousands of people who apply for a single administrative support position. So, having assessments and having them go through assessments, like, do you really know how to use PowerPoint? Things like that, to have them really assess their capabilities, helps us narrow down that thousands to a couple hundred. And then, we continue to do that through a more manageable size for our colleagues in recruitment, or else they'd be flooded. It's just incredible how many applications we get.

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That's just one of the things that Organization Development did. And as we got more and more success with a lot of the programs, the assessments, the interventions, and the surveys that we instituted, we had become to be seen as institutional resource. But being seen as an institutional

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

resource, we weren't allowed into certain areas. So, as in any big institution there are certain politics that keep you in or out of certain things. We had had tremendous success, and continue to have success, in our admission areas, specifically the administration admission area. So, those would be the individuals that people typically think as executives. One of the areas that we lacked or didn't have as much success in reaching out to, not that we didn't have success in helping them, but being seen as a resource was in the faculty side. So, we started to have lots of partnerships, with what was then called Faculty Development. And in Faculty Development, we got together and we shared, what are some of the education and training that we're providing to our faculty? And here's some things we found to be really successful with executives. How can we help and translate this? So, what was happening is that we were running parallel programs, one that was for administrative leaders and one that was for faculty leaders. And faculty leaders touched on the clinical and the research side of admission areas. So, this whole idea of the parallel, it felt very—it was just a duplication of efforts when we should be thinking about what does a good leader look like? Who cares if you're wearing scrubs, a lab coat, or a suit? A leader is a leader. But we didn't get to have that message until we had a president who believed in it. And that didn't really happen until Pisters came on board. So, with Pisters, he had said, "A leader is a leader. There's going to be a single education platform for them. Here are the characteristics that we think make up a good leader. And oh, by the way, we're going to use this for selection, too."

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One of the things that he advocates for is the idea that you can be the best in the world. He calls them rainmakers, like bring in tons of money into the institution, and forgive me for my language, but if you're an asshole, you're not going to get into MD Anderson. It takes more than just being the best. You've got to have some of those soft skills. That's the East Coast in me, Nina, so, you know. Curse words are going to come out every so often. (laughs)

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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That's exactly how it goes. I completely hear what you're saying.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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But it took a senior leader like that, the head of the entire institution, to say something like that that allowed us to bring us together and force us to come together and offer a single, comprehensive platform for learning and development. And that was the birth of the Leadership Institute.

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Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Nina Nevill, PhD

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And in terms of some of the—I think I have a better idea through your examples of, at the ground level, what it looked like. In terms of more, I don't want to say theoretically, but what are some of the goals more broadly, then, I guess, at the Leadership Institute? I know that there are so many specifics and so many different things that it does, but if you could speak a little bit more broadly about what the goals are, that would be great.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Sure. So, I guess the easiest way for me to describe this is to talk about a couple different things. One is we use the LEAD as an acronym. So, L-E-A-D. and that really incorporates our philosophy. So, what we're interested in doing is creating leaders that are learners, that's the L, that are emotionally intelligent, that's the E, that are Accountable, and so, accountability in general. Now I'm blanking, is it really A? is A accountable? But we'll just go with it for now, Nina.

[00:35:05]

Nina Nevill, PhD

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Sure. I can always do a little Google search afterwards.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Yeah. And then, the D is leaders that are interested in developing and serving others. So, all of our programs have to touch on more than one of those or at least one of those aspects of LEAD. If it doesn't, then why are we doing it? So, it goes into the whole idea of continuous learners with the L, emotional intelligence is huge. It is embedded into just about every single leadership development program we run. We use the EQI, which is an emotional intelligence assessment for developmental purposes and for selection purposes. In terms of accountability, we talk about alignment of values. We talk about the performance management process. There's tons of things that are in the accountability piece. And then, the developing and serving others, it's all about the idea of coaching. Coaching and developing. Another thing that's a bedrock of the Leadership Institute is our philosophy around development. So, our philosophy is learn, practice, and apply. So, our programs, there's some element of LEARN, and that's what you think of traditional training. It's the online learning or the lectures, et cetera. The practice piece is through case scenarios, through role plays, through peer coaching. And then, the apply piece is, what are you going to do to teach that back to others? Or what are you going to do when you

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

go back on the job to enact these behaviors? So, our programs follow that philosophy. So, what you might find in some of the leadership development programs or the Leadership Institute programs, is that they'll have some online component, then we'll get together for a synchronous learning, a live, virtual event where we discuss, "What did you learn and what are some of the things that you've been using?" And then we offer journal articles or journaling prompts, et cetera, for the apply piece. Then, it's sometimes done six months post a session.

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So, it's about what are some of the other resources that they can use for the apply, or how are they going to build up a network with their fellow peers so they can help each other apply what they've learned? So, our programs have all three of those elements embedded in some way, shape, or form in them.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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I'm happy to hear about all of this. It seems like an incredible mission and especially in talking about the LEAD acronym, I'm certainly happy to hear about the emotional intelligence aspect. I think the other three are something I've seen somewhat commonly in other programs, but that piece is not always there, and I'm happy to hear that we're hopefully moving in a direction and that becomes more incorporated.

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Yeah, definitely.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:38:29]

So, in terms of the—before we move onto something a little bit different, have there been any changes, I guess, since the development of the Leadership Institute that are fundamental that we haven't touched on that you'd like to talk about?

[00:38:51]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:38:52]

So, one of the next pieces of our evolution within the Leadership Institute is redefining, or not redefining, reemphasizing, how do we define a leader? So, in essence, everyone is a leader and everyone has the capabilities of developing their leadership skills. So, the next evolution of the

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Leadership Institute is the incorporation of what is still on called Employee Development and Talent Management Systems. So, as of September 1st, the Leadership Institute will incorporate not only leadership development programs for those who are formal leaders, like individuals within (inaudible) who have people reporting to them, but it's also for every single employee. So, every employee can go to the Leadership Institute and find resources, training, tools, to help them in their development and their journey. So, that's the next evolution. So, similar to what I had mentioned earlier about the whole idea of how a leader is a leader regardless of you're wearing scrubs, a lab coat, or a suit, here the next evolution is, a leader is a leader, regardless if you have people reporting to you or not. So, it's helping us as an institution understand what does that mean? And then also, I think the next portion of that is, it's not just what the institution can do for you but it's what you should be doing for the institution. So, it's inspiring this whole idea of, it's self-directed, too. You have to take responsibility for your own learning and development. There are tons of resources out there. And it's not going to be something that's going to be spoon-fed to you. You have to take an active involvement in it.

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Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Chapter 03: MD Anderson in the Age of COVID

Obstacles, Challenges

In this chapter, Dr. DeVeau talks about the changes she observed at MD Anderson as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of leadership challenges. She also discusses, “How are we making diversity, equity, and inclusion a cornerstone, not just an add-on, but a cornerstone, of our programs?”

Chapter Topics:

Working Environment

Portraits

Obstacles, Challenges

Critical Perspectives

Diversity at MD Anderson

Leadership;

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:40:49]

Yeah, absolutely. It sounds like a great direction to head into. I’m sure there’s a lot of excitement there. In terms of the big year that we just had and with all the change happening, obviously at a global level and a healthcare level and every level you can put a pin in, pretty much, what aspects of the past year had an effect on the Institute, or on this plan, for September 1st? Were there any changes that you saw that you felt were directly related to either the pandemic or any disparities that you saw?

[00:41:31]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:41:32]

That’s a great question. So, I think some of the things that popped up as a result of the pandemic, so one of the big things is the whole idea of the myth that learning only happens when you’re physically in the same room with someone. So, it sparked the reorganization, the redesign, of a lot of our programs to be on Zoom, to be synchronous learning, virtual learning, and in that process, it allowed us to open up those learning opportunities to significantly more people because we were restricted by how many seats we can fit into one conference room. Now, we’re only restricted by how many people can a single facilitator handle at one point? (laughs) So, the delivery of learning has changed. I had a couple of ideas but they flew out of my head, Nina. So, virtual learning, I think what we also found, and what we have implemented is thinking differently about mentoring, too. So, mentoring is part of the Leadership Institute. Before the pandemic, we talked about this whole idea of reverse mentoring, or what we called

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

mentoring up. So, that is an essence where a senior leader is paired up with a mentor who's a frontline staff member. So, the frontline staff member mentors the leader on what he or she should be doing to be a better leader, gives advice, lets them know, "Here's really how it happens on the front line. I know you talk about this at this higher level, but it doesn't always translate as well." So, it was a great opportunity for our senior leaders to get out from behind their desks, to walk in somebody else's shoes for a little bit.

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And what we have done is having those occur, historically, was in person, and arranging those times was difficult. So, we implemented of software package called My Mentoring, the software behind it is called Kronos, and that allowed us to have these electronic connections, these virtual connections. And it also allowed us the time and space to set up what we called mentoring circles. So, it's not just a one-on-one it's an entire group where they're mentoring each other. So, that is another thing that sparked through the pandemic, that it's not just a singular thing, it lets us lean on each other even more in a group aspect. I'm trying to think. What else? The whole idea in our partnership with other areas of Human Resources, specifically with wellness, taking the time out for self-care and then having that and the idea of emotional intelligence and empathy being really incorporated into leadership training, and also, into our Performance Management Systems. So, the whole idea of the leadership characteristics and having those embedded in our performance evaluations is another thing that we've done throughout the pandemic. It's always something that was on our mind, but now, it's forced us to really take a step back. And from a coaching standpoint, we were doing fabulously with coaching pre-pandemic. All the requests that we were getting were for developmental coaching for people who wanted to be even better in their current positions.

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What we had seen with the pandemic is that some of those bad behaviors crept up. And it. When people are under stress, they're going to go to previous behaviors. And sometimes those are bad behaviors. So, we saw a slight increase in requests from remedial coaching. Could have also been that people's patience with those bad behaviors have decreased significantly, too, throughout the pandemic. So, people are just not as tolerant as they used to be. So, there's a couple of different theories that I've got going on in terms of it, but what I can tell you is that our request for remedial coaching took a little bit of an uptick through the pandemic. The other thing that we had done is, coaching was seen, specifically, coaching was seen as something for the elite, something for not even just people who lead people, but you had to lead departments in order to get into a coaching program. We have changed that and we are now really leveraging this internal cadre of coaches that we have as a result of graduating them from CoachRICE to use them as what we call on-demand coaches. And on-demand coaches. they are available to everyone across the institution. You just have to ask for it. So, it goes back to the need for

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

people to be self-directed. We are not going to blanket and assign everybody a coach. There's 22,000 of us. It's just simply impossible to do that. But if you're really interested in it you need to connect with the Leadership Institute and we'll get you a coach. We have the capabilities to do that. So, we developed other programs, coaching programs, to help individuals get through all of this. We've also partnered with EAP in order to really help people understand what is the difference between coaching and therapy? And help our colleagues in EAP with that, too. So, there's a couple different things throughout the pandemic that we have learned. But some of the biggest things are the ones that I mentioned that learning does not have to be within the same room as someone, physically in the same room as someone. It doesn't have to be in person. And really leveraging the whole idea of microbursts or microlearnings, this idea of the flipped classroom, read a couple things in advance and then let's get together and discuss them. So, we really began to redesign what we thought our programs could look like, or should look like, as a result. Is that what you were looking for, Nina?

[00:48:40]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:48:41]

Yeah, absolutely. And in thinking of redesigning, and it sounds like it was a period of a lot of learning, a lot of new data coming in. Most of what you've mentioned has been somewhat positive and I guess I would like to know how the Institute can act differently, moving forward to advance its goals. Or act in the same way if you just think it just requires more time, more resources, more energy, whatever it may be.

[00:49:13]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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So, what I see moving forward is the idea of really educating all the employees about, and having think through what is their leadership journey? I know it feels very simplistic but the whole idea of, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" is still a perpetual question that so many people across the world have, even though they might be 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, or 70. They still question, "What do I really want to be when I grow up?" Or, "What do I value?" And I think that what I see in the future is putting out tools to help people think, to help people reflect. One of the things in the beauties of the pandemic was that it forced us to stay at home and we slowed down and in slowing down, it allowed us to reflect. We need to figure out ways to continue that reflection because with that reflection comes intentionality. And intentionality is what you need in order to enact your journey, and your dreams of leadership, your dreams of your best self. Without that intentionality, you're kind of dead in the water. You're just this mindless person going through life. So, that's one of the things I think we will continue to be challenged with as things begin to pick up pace more. It's how do we make sure that people are giving themselves the time and the energy to reflect, to think through what worked, what didn't work? Just like the question you just asked me. We're going to be going through an entire

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

period within the Leadership Institute, and we've already started, about what is our after-action review? What did the pandemic teach us? What are some of the things that we've changed as a result? What do we still need to change? What are some of the things that simply aren't working for us? So, there's lots of things that we are trying to do and lead the way in that process. And what we're finding is that a lot of our clients, our client groups need help in that disciplined reflection.

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So, a lot of our requests for working within tech teams have increased as a result because the leaders are recognizing that need, and they're also recognizing that they, themselves, are feeling incredibly overwhelmed and they don't have time to do it themselves and how they can lead an entire group to do it? So, they're calling us in to help them with that process.

[00:52:19]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:52:19]

Well, it sounds like reflection is one of those things across the board that has been a big part of this last year. And a lot of introspection and time to really turn inward and for all fields and for all of people, like you said, at every position, in any position. So, it's definitely a huge—it must be a huge piece of it. It's good to hear that that's something that's being in conversation and that people feel comfortable talking about, as well, because I think it's different to have that internal process happening but then to be able to translate it to a conversation or to be able to have discourse about it, I think is really important, especially in a workplace setting where you typically maybe wouldn't think to do that. But this has been such a huge event that it might require that.

[00:53:15]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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Yeah. I think the other area that popped up as an area of need is the whole idea of equity, inclusion, and just racial tensions and racial inequities, in general. So, having more of a focus on that has been another emphasis for us within the Leadership Institute. How are we making diversity, equity, and inclusion a cornerstone, not just an add-on, but a cornerstone, of our programs? So, I think it's, for us, in that redesigning, we're continuing to redesign that because it feels like it's an ever-evolving thing. But that's one of the things, the areas that we are focused on and we struggle with.

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Nina Nevill, PhD

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Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

And regarding these disparities, and in my conversations with other folks it's the thing that, "Well, these have been here for a long time and of course they've been just exacerbated," but how do you then plan to train others how to navigate these disparities, in terms of coaching if we're talking about people who have many people reporting to them who probably also have these concerns, what's one of the ways to move forward with that?
[00:54:49]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:54:50]

So, one of the things that we're really emphasizing is for the leaders to have the courage to ask the question, for the leaders to have the courage to take a look at their own biases and how those biases may or may not be impacting their decisions to hire, their decisions to put certain people on certain projects, their decisions to put certain people in certain programs as they nominate people. So, it goes back to the whole idea of those leadership characteristics, of what are they doing to be reflective? What are they doing to raise their level of awareness and the level of emotional intelligence around it? How are they asking questions and being collaborative? Do they have a group of trusted advisors that they can talk to and say, "You know, I'm thinking about this idea," or "How should I approach this with my team?" or "Should I do an analysis of the compensation equity in my department?" or "Let me take a look at my department and how many people of color do I have in my department?" So, we have a number of leaders that are beginning to look at that or even just to open up the questions of, recently, it was one year post the death, or the murder, of George Floyd. How many departments actually talked about that? I don't know. Those are the things that we are advocating for, and like, why not talk about it? And it does, it takes a lot of courage from the leaders to be open and to be vulnerable.
[00:56:55]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:56:55]

Of course. And is that something that you've seen in the past, before this past year, those conversations, do you feel like they had been taking place, or how were some of these racial and gender inequities addressed before this past year?
[00:57:13]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:57:14]

Yeah, I think that's an interesting question that you ask. I think that we were much more comfortable at addressing gender inequities, not necessarily racial inequities. And I think that we had some great counterparts like Liz Travis in the faculty world who really looks at minority faculty leaders. We had an incredible leader, Dr. Harry Gibbs, who was the Head of Diversity before he passed away, and then, he passed that on to Larry Perkins. And I think the next—I think it's a slow evolution. And I think our evolution at identifying gender inequities has been

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

much further along than it has necessarily in the racial inequities. And I know that in Liz Travis's group, there are a number of really fabulous leaders who are focused on that, and having that group now report in through Human Resources has been another huge stance on, we're one organization, one institution, and should all of us, regardless of the population we serve should be focused in on it. The whole idea of the living wages increase has been another thing. So, there's been lots of different things that we have been doing, but it's slow. There is more work there. And part of it is, what are we doing to help leaders be more comfortable in very uncomfortable conversations?

[00:59:05]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[00:59:05]

Sure. And in your own experiences working through the last year, are there any examples that you could give of things that you maybe saw first or secondhand with whether it be this issue of gender disparities in caregiving in a virtual workplace, or even this culture of burnout and things that we see maybe changing, not necessarily increasing or decreasing, but definitely changing with this virtual world of the past year? Anything that comes to mind?

[00:59:43]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[00:59:44]

So, when you were saying that, Nina, some of the things that popped into my mind and conversations that we continue to have is just the general disparities about who gets to work in the virtual world. So, if you look at some of the articles out there, the science, the research around it, and you look at COVID, and what populations, racially, that were impacted the most by this disease, it is people of color. And if you also look at what kind of jobs do people of color, and especially those who were most impacted, they are in those kinds of jobs that don't even offer the opportunity to do virtual work. So, it just goes back to the inequities. And what are we doing as an institution to balance those out? Can we? But then, that's where I think some of the things that you had mentioned earlier about how others talked about it, this is a huge systemic problem. It's not just MD Anderson. And sometimes it feels so big that we become paralyzed by it and we choose not to talk about it. What we're advocating is, you need to talk about it with the understanding that, yeah, there are going to be moments when we're going to be paralyzed by it but it shouldn't preclude you from talking about it. Am I making sense?

[01:01:24]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:01:25]

Yeah, of course. I think that's been a lot of people's headspace, is being able to relate it to a much broader societal issue, and then, that all of a sudden makes you feel very small, even if you're a huge institution with a lot of resources, it's like, well, really, at the end of the day what

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

can we do about these issues? And I guess this is more of what I'd call a dreamland question, in a hypothetical situation in which resources were somewhat endless and we weren't as deeply connected to the rest of society what would you like to see happen in terms of combating some of these disparities? Gender, race, socioeconomic, pretty much anything you can think of.
[01:02:15]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:02:16]

Yeah. So, it's funny you say that because we started something like this in the Leadership Institute. So, what I ideally would love to be able to see is incorporating this at the Leadership Institute at MD Anderson is too late. We need to go into grade schools and high schools. We need to educate those kids on what does it look like? How can we help them develop this dream, this utopian society, where things are equitable, regardless of how you look or how you think? What does leadership look like? And how do we define leaders? So, starting at the grade schools and high schools. And I know Dr. Josiah Halm and Liz Travis have been working, or thinking through this, about how do we mentor those kids who, as society deems them to be in the lower socioeconomic classes, what are we doing to mentor them, to help them see the possibilities? It starts at that younger age. If we wait until they become professionals at MD Anderson, it's too late. I feel so defeatist when I say that. There's always opportunity to grow and to learn but if you really want to have a huge impact, you have to start earlier.

[01:04:03]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:04:03]

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a great answer. That's one thing that I always say to people, for myself, personally, when asked about racial inequities I have a hard time not pointing to three specific pillars of society, and one of them is education, and another one is healthcare. And I think if we start there, in terms of equity, that's not a bad place to be. In terms of this past year, what was the institution's response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, or specifically George Floyd? Was there any communication when this is happening, or did it feel like you all were left in the dark a little bit? What was your experience with this?

[01:04:55]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:04:55]

Oh, no, I think the institution did a fabulous job of beginning the discussions. So, Dr. Pisters, throughout the pandemic, had released communications. Sometimes he did it daily, sometimes he did it weekly, but around the time of, specifically it centered around the murder of George Floyd, we had a panel discussion where we brought leaders who represented various different groups. So, like Dr. Lorna McNeill spoke to the whole idea of health disparities. You had mentioned about inequities in healthcare. Dr. Lorna talked about that. Her entire career is

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

looking at disparities in health, healthcare in general. We had a number of our leaders who were sponsors of our employee network groups, like—and I’m never going to get all the letters correct, but the LBQ, you know what I mean, right?
[01:05:58]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:05:58]
Oh, sure, LGBTQIA-plus, the whole gamut.
[01:06:05]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:06:06]
Yeah, I know they call themselves the Alphabet Mafia.
[01:06:10]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:06:10]
I haven’t heard that before. That’s great.
[01:06:13]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:06:15]
We have leaders who were sponsors of that employee network group. We also had our Chief Diversity Officer up there, Dr. Larry Perkins. And then, Shibu Varghese was there, too. And I’m trying to think who else was on there. But a number of our senior leaders held a panel discussion to talk about what impact this has had on them, their own life experiences as a result of being Black in America and what does that mean? So, there was discussions. There was more of an emphasis on diversity and training in these areas. So, there was a number of things that had happened. So, in honesty, it was really around George Floyd, not necessarily Breonna. But you know, I think we were able to get both of them addressed. One of the other things is that if you ask a couple of employees, it was like, “Oh, that’s great that we talked about it. What are we doing now?” How are we talking about this? How are we talking about how we changed our selection processes as a result? So, I know some of the things that executive recruitment has been doing, working with certain executive search firms to help us have a much more of a diverse candidate pool, we operate by the Rooney Rule.
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Don’t ask me exactly what the Rooney Rule is, but in essence, the Rooney Rule helps us ensure that we have a diverse pool of candidates that, in that last final bit, at least one person is a person of color. We’ve also talked about the whole idea of blinding our resumes, so extracting names, extracting student organizations that people might have been part of, colleges if they might have

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

been part of, to try to eliminate some of that biases. We've upped the whole idea of our unconscious bias training. We incorporate unconscious bias training to all of our selection committees, as so you might know, in order to get hired into MD Anderson for a senior leadership position, it's a lot of work. There is a ton of group interviews that they go through, and everyone who serves on a panel as an interviewer has to go through unconscious bias training so that they become aware of what some of their unconscious bias is. So, we've been doing a number of different things, I just don't think we were very—I don't know how effective we are in translating those practices down to the frontline employee.

[01:09:16]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:09:17]

And that makes sense. It's a situation that the more you do and the more you know, the more there is to be done, and the more there is to know. So, it's definitely not a destination. But it's good to hear that conversations have been had, and it sounds like from you and other folks that steps are being taken, at least. In terms of your understanding of other institutions, similar institutions to MD Anderson, is there anything that you can think of regarding racial inequities but even more broadly regarding the pandemic or even leadership that you think MD Anderson does differently?

[01:09:59]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:10:02]

So, a couple of thoughts are popping. I think as a result of the pandemic we have become—this is going to sound horrible—less of an elitist. So, here's what I mean. Prior to the pandemic, we have poo-pooed any idea of working remotely. It was just not a possibility. We would never even entertain it. And as a result, I think we probably lost some pretty great talent. Now that we went through the pandemic and we see that it works and it works quite well, we have begun to look at and take a beat from some of our, I wouldn't say competition, but our partners in industry who have been doing remote work for decades and incorporating some of their best practices. When I look at the Texas Medical Center, I think that there are—we'll look at Methodist. So, Methodist during the pandemic, they never really truly adopted the whole idea of remote work. From my understanding, they are requiring all of their employees to come into the office and it's an oddity if you're working remotely. So, I think there's things that we're doing better but there's still a lot to learn about the whole idea of working remotely. The whole idea of future of work—so, before I came to MD Anderson, before I went to Independence Blue Cross, I worked for Merrill Lynch. And this was 20 years ago. And my role was what they called "A work-life strategist." So, my job was to go into areas of Merrill Lynch and to talk about the idea of flexible work arrangements, and then, analyze through interviews, surveys, et cetera, the possibility of implementing flexible work arrangements there.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

[01:12:25]

Now, granted, they had some restrictions for FCC, but so do we, for joint commission. But they still implemented some of it. And one of the things that they talk about was this whole idea of face time. And the way that they defined face time was from a performance management perspective, from a leadership perspective is, “I will only believe that people are working if I can see them at their desks early in the morning or late at night.” So, I think that philosophy is still living, and I think it’s still living at MD Anderson, from the sense that, how do I prove that you’re actually working if I don’t see you working? So, now it’s helping leaders think differently about what is work? Isn’t it about the deliverables? And if somebody can get something done in hour hours, why should we penalize them for that? Let’s help build their productivity. So, I think that there’s stuff to learn, there’s things that we are relearning, things that we can learn from other industries to help us with this. Am I answering your question?

[01:13:44]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:13:45]

Yeah, absolutely. I think from the outside point of view, it’s hard to know what others are doing and if a lot of these initiatives and practices are commonplace or if they are truly unique, and so, just talking to people like you, it helps put the pieces together, at least, in my mind in being able to know, especially with the amount of change that has been in the past year, it’s even harder to get an idea for some of this stuff. So, yes. It is very helpful, thank you. I think I have—sorry, go ahead.

[01:14:25]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:14:26]

I was just going to ask, is there anything that you need me to expand on?

[01:14:30]

Nina Nevill, PhD

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So, far, I think I have down what I am—I think no is the short answer but I might come back to at the end if there is anything that could use a little bit more clarification. I guess for now, and this is another hard question because as they say, hindsight is 20-20, but if you could have done anything differently in the past year, whether it’s within specifically your professional capacity or in the dreamland situation at the broader institutional level, what could you go back and do? Or what would you do?

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Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

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So, I think part of it would be to think about how to best get some of these learnings out to mass populations. So, it goes back to the whole idea of everyone can be a leader. So, it is much more about how do we partner with other areas more effectively in order to get some of this information out? Or some of these resources. How can we effectively market these resources? So, it's a double-edged sword. Part of it is, how can we communicate more? But the other piece is, we're so overwhelmed with all of the messages, do I just want to add another message? What good would that do? It's about thinking through of how to have the best impact, or the most impact? And I'm of a continuous improvement mindset. I don't know if we'll ever really know the answer. But it should be worth a try. I think the other piece is, why did it take the murder of two people to raise the social consciousness of this? And granted, it's been going on for hundreds of years, so what took us so long? What took me so long in that process, too?

[01:17:14]

So, the whole idea of white fragility, and my white blinders, and how does that impact others, microaggressions that I might have done, conscious or unconscious. So, it's just that own awakening of me, too, in that process. Other things I would have done differently, I think the other pieces, which I commend the organization, is we need to stop taking ourselves so seriously sometimes and be kinder to ourselves and take care of ourselves. I think one of the things that the pandemic has forced us to do is to take a look at what is really meaningful, and how do we devote our lives to the stuff that's meaningful rather than the busyness of it all?

[01:18:19]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:18:21]

Yeah, absolutely. It seems almost, ironic is not the exact word, but in an institute that deals with cancer, you would think that idea of what a meaningful life is, and what a fulfilling and kind experience is, and then something like this happens, and I get the sense that it still had the ability to re-shift a lot of people's perspective, and to reframe what we can each do for ourselves, what we're allowed to do, what we're allowed to ask for, to be able to even do that. And I think that's maybe another piece of the puzzle that will probably change and grow and move over time, too.

[01:19:05]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

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When you said that, it resonated with me. So, I think one of the things that the pandemic did—as an institution, we're really great at serving our patients. We kind of suck at serving each other and serving ourselves. So, I think the pandemic has allowed us to take a beat, take a moment, and think through, “What do I need to take care of myself because if I can't take care of myself, I can't take care of my patients. What do I need to help my colleagues so they can take care of

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

themselves? Or how can I take care of my colleagues? How can I be nicer or kinder to my colleagues? More compassionate to my colleagues?” So, I think that is the awakening that several people have had in the institution, is they’re realizing that their gas tanks have been depleted for quite some time and they expend all their energy on their patients and then their family lives suffer, their personal lives suffer, their health suffers, all of that.
[01:20:26]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:20:27]

Yeah, that’s a tricky thing, and I’m sure it’s something that most people toy with. And it’s knowing how much can an individual be asked to provide for themselves, as well, and at what degree is it required for there to be something bigger in place, in order to allow for that? And I’m happy to hear that it sounds like in a lot of fields, that that’s a conversation that is starting to happen. Or maybe in some more than others has been happening for a long time, but it seems to be taking some precedence, now. In terms of the—to me, I feel like we’ve covered a lot and I don’t have a lot of questions left. I suppose one of the last few things I’d like to talk about, or to ask, is if you have—this is going way from the pandemic but just your experience broadly at MD Anderson, if there is a big project or something that you worked on or contributed to or piloted. that comes to mind is something that you’re really proud of or that you are proud of yourself for, for doing, if you don’t mind talking about that a little bit.

[01:21:56]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:21:56]

Yeah, sure. So, I think reflecting on my career at MD Anderson, some of the things that I am probably the most proud of is helping the formation and the direction, establishing the formation and the direction of the Leadership Institute has been something that I am proud of. Another thing that I’m quite proud of is the whole idea of the culture change that the institution has had around coaching. So, how people are now almost beating each other up so they can get a coach and they’re asking, “Why not me?” not, “Why me?” So, I think that switch in mind is something that is just really cool to be a part of. And just the general success of those programs has been really great to be a part of that, too. I think on a personal standpoint, seeing the people that report up to me thrive has been another really cool thing, personally, professionally, seeing them advance, that’s been really cool. And also seeing (inaudible)—

[01:23:32]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:23:33]

It sounds like—I’m sorry, go ahead.

[01:23:34]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:23:36]

So, one of the other pieces is, because I'm the lead facilitator and the person that helps coordinate CoachRICE program for us, being a part of that program and seeing people develop and have those aha moments in that program, and then also hearing about their success as coaches in the institution and getting emails from their clients telling me how much they valued the coaching engagement and how much they've developed, that's really cool.

[01:24:21]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:24:21]

That sounds like a lot to be proud of. And it sounds like a very shared experience. I've talked to Dr. Holladay and Mr. Coffee so far, and some other folks who seem to share the same kind of things to be proud of and the achievements. So, it's really wonderful to hear more about it. And I guess I wonder what your hope would be, then, for not necessarily your future with MD Anderson, but even going beyond that, we're thinking a little ways out here, but what you would hope the next generation to make of what you all have worked to build.

[01:25:05]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:25:08]

So, I think—

[01:25:09]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:25:09]

It's not an easy question by any means.

[01:25:10]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:25:10]

No, no, no. So, from an institutional perspective, it is developing the internal talent pipeline so that we are developing the next generation of leaders who want to stay at MD Anderson, who are not compelled to go elsewhere to get additional experience because they're hampered here. So, beginning to chip away at the glass ceiling, beginning to see more equities in terms of racial, gender equities, and even as the salary equities, I would love to be able to see that. And I see that in the future for MD Anderson. I also would love that this idea of the coaching culture really takes hold, and that you wouldn't need someone like me anymore, you would need to use external coaches again, that we have leaders who do that themselves. So, ideally, looking at our senior leadership and seeing a more diverse palette of people. It is seeing significantly more internal hires, or internal promotions, internal movement than external. Like granted, I know

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

that our research world doesn't always lead to that, but to be a hub of innovation, to think differently about how we cure cancer, who we cure cancer with, addressing some of those health inequities. In Lorna's group in health disparities, they've done research that, based upon your zip code, they can predict your likelihood of you getting cancer. And it's all about available, healthy food options in that area. So, if you have a higher concentration of fast-food restaurants in your zip code, it increases the possibility, or likelihood of you getting cancer, significantly. So, wouldn't it be awesome—
[01:28:02]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:28:02]
That's incredible.
[01:28:02]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:28:02]
I know. So, it's kind of like, ideally, wouldn't it be great that we had healthy options, everybody had healthy options? So, that's, ideally, what that's I am thinking of. And some of it is really grandiose and will never happen in my lifetime but it would be awesome to get started on some of that.
[01:28:30]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:28:31]
Yeah, absolutely. Those are great ideas for the future. And it is hard to feel grounded in them, sometimes. I share some of those with you. And that can be difficult because it doesn't feel real, or possible. But with enough people thinking the same way, and with data coming out, I think that that tends to be one of the big areas where we see changes when we have a study that's as precise as something like that, a zip code, it makes people stop for a minute and think. Well, I feel like I have learned a lot today and that there is so much that you have been able to contribute and share. Before we close out, I'd like to know if there's anything that you wish that I had asked, or hoped that a question would come up about, or just something that you'd like to add, you'd like people to know.
[01:29:36]

Michelle DeVeau, PysD, PCC

[01:29:36]
Yeah, that's a great question. Nothing is popping in my mind right now. I came in here with, "Let's just explore," and a whole sense of curiosity so I didn't really have expectations for today. My only expectation was that you got the information that you wanted or needed, and I hope that was met. And if not, you can always reach back out to me and ask me a couple more questions

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 1
Interview Date: July 9, 2021

or just tell me to shut up and answer this one portion of the question, not the whole big thing.
(laughter)
[01:30:10]

Nina Nevill, PhD

[01:30:11]

Well, thank you so much for that. We appreciate that. Yeah, there will be, I'm sure, later down the road, some looking back through all of these and if there are any little holes or gaps, it's good to know that we can reach back out and try to make sure all of it is covered. Well, thank you so much for taking the time again today to speak with me and to help with this project. I'm sorry, again, that the video didn't work, otherwise I'd say it just feels like a good conversation but I promise I am here on the other end, and in an ideal world this would have been in person, but as things go, better to have it done then to have it done perfectly and to wait too far. So, we sincerely appreciate it. I think I'll stop the recording there, if that's okay with you.

[01:31:07]