

Good afternoon, Director Christensen, Faculty, In particular Dr. Hart thank you for your friendship these many years, Staff, Students, and my personal guests - thank you for taking the time out of your busy lives to listen to a few reflections on a day of personal recognition. Most importantly thanks to my greatest supporter my wife Debbi. I would never have made it this far in my journey without you. In my public service life, I have never before received a personal recognition award. I have received group achievement awards and performance bonuses but nothing quite like this. I don't know if it's my church driven cultural concern about pride, but I initially tried to downplay the significance. My family would not let me. They have gotten quite the kick out of telling anyone they can about "dads selection as BYU's Man of the Year". Because of that good natured teasing it caused me to make a closer examination of the criteria for the award. Key words to me included:

"demonstrated extraordinary service and leadership in the public and nonprofit sectors and in the community - exhibits high standards of excellence and has gained the respect and loyalty of colleagues, peers, and family."

It is one of the greatest of honors of my life that the BYU MPA Program would notice that I have tried very hard to have that kind impact and be that type of person. If I had the choice of one award this would be it. It speaks to more than just technical and work competence but the manner of achievement. In addition, it speaks to how you balance that work life with family, church and community. This distinction between your capability and how you employ it was brought home to me the other day by my 6-year-old grandson Arthur. My son has been taking him to soccer goalie practice for a couple of months. At first Arthur just shagged balls but the older boys have taken him under their wings and now he does all the drills. One night on their way home Arthur said, "Dad, I'm a good goalie". Like all good fathers he told him he was getting better at the drills and developing. Arthur responded, "No dad - I'm a good goalie". Something in the way he said it made my son ask what he meant. Arthur explained, "You know--- I'm a GOOD goalie - I'm nice, I'm kind ---I'm good." I have reflected a lot on the story since and how it relates to the BYU MPA. **The MPA Vision states "We aspire to lift the world through Christlike leadership in public service"** and the **Mission states "We develop public service leaders of faith, intellect, integrity, and charity."** The BYU MPA program is about developing and being "good goalies" in a world that regards these values less and less.

As I have continued to reflected on this award, I realize this isn't an individual achievement. It's about the relationships I have been blessed with and how individuals have helped me along the way. All my guests today are here because they have had a significant role in my success.

I am fortunate that before I was admitted to the BYU MPA program, I was able to experience examples of people living the MPA values. Over 40 years ago when I was applying to university, my best friend was going to the U and many other high school classmates had chosen to attend Utah State. A recruiter by the name of Tom Gourley from BYU came to my school and promised that if I came to BYU, he would always be there to help me. It swayed me and I chose BYU. I was awarded a half tuition scholarship, but money was tight for my family. In my first test of his promise, I called him and plead my case that my AP class work had not shown up on my transcript and that if considered would help me get a full tuition scholarship. Tom took that additional info to the scholarship committee and my scholarship was

upgraded. The semester I got married I missed a key deadline and was going to have to miss a semester. I called Tom in a panic and he helped me fix the problem. Four of five kids have been admitted to BYU with Tom providing steady advice (2 have graduated and 2 will in April). A bonus daughter and bonus son in law have graduated (he also ended up being their bishop). Somewhere along the line he became deputy director or director of admissions, but I just kept calling Tom for advice and he always kept his promise. When I think of **Integrity in Action** I think of Tom. (Recognize Tom) I have worked budgets for almost the entirety of my career. And it's constantly been a process of telling people what they would get, which, except in very rare occasions, is not what they thought they needed. Recently during a very difficult budget season I received what I considered a significant complement. The Associate Center Director at a NASA center told me that although they were not excited to see my call because they knew news would be difficult they also knew I could be trusted to have done the right thing in balancing the budget and that I would tell them the truth. Being seen as a person of integrity has been essential to my success.

An important lesson I have also learned is that to be truly happy, being part of and building community is essential. As newly married students at BYU our Bishop and his wife demonstrated what building Zion looked like. Over the years we have stayed in touch. I have observed as they have served as Branch President in the MTC, as President of a volunteer International Service Organization, as full-time missionaries in Texas and as local missionaries. They are truly examples of what it means to sacrifice all that they have in order to serve. All while they have consistently kept their home open to countless visitors (our son who is here recovered from Brain Surgery in their home). I call their house the Nauvoo House. They embody the **MPA value of Service to Community** – Kim and Gaylin Hodges understand their higher purpose and work to bless others and to build the kingdom of God (acknowledge Kim and Gaylin). As I have served in the community and church in many capacities, I have worked to create Zion because someone showed me what it looked like.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank the MPA program for providing the foundation I needed. Over the years I have told anyone I could how it provided me with the skill set I needed to be successful. I wanted to recognize just a few of the many faculty who made a difference. Dr. Wight was the director when I applied 35 years ago. I doubt he would understand the impact on my life. I was an average undergrad student trying to find his way in the world with no real idea what I was going to do to make a living. He was kind and helpful and most importantly encouraging. Dr. Michael Thompson who was working as Assistant Dean in the Marriott School took the time to teach written and oral communications. I'm certain there was nothing about my class work that was memorable. I would be shocked if he had any recollection of me. His classes have been invaluable. While at NASA for multiple years I have been responsible for writing Agency strategic planning guidance, Mission Directorate Program Guidance, Mission Directorate Budget submissions to OMB, and the NASA President' Budget Request to Congress. I have developed and given budget presentations to OMB and Congressional staff for those budgets that have justified Billions of dollars in appropriations. Not bad work on his part for a student who could only muster two B+. I thank him for his excellence even if he didn't know it was hitting the mark. I wanted to mention Dr. Walters. I remember telling another student in his quantitative analysis class I often felt like I was chasing 10 yards behind him hoping he would fumble so I could catch up. My last semester I mustered the courage to take a directed research class from him. It was a disaster. I had an intriguing idea but it did not go well. I have the C on my transcript to prove it. I

hope it is not too surprising to learn that I am known and relied upon for my analytical ability. I thank him for being patient, generous with his time and helping me with a path through to graduation.

These are just three examples of faculty who modeled for me the **MPA Value of Excellence and Generosity**. I think back to that time in my life. I wondered if anyone was able to see a young father who was going to school fulltime, was working full time, was serving as an Elders Quorum president and was trying to do it all. I am grateful that when I didn't always get the balance right, I was supported and encouraged. The lessons have not been forgotten and I can see them in a comment made in my most recent executive evaluation from another executive with whom I interact. She wrote "He accepts mistakes others make as just that – a mistake and not a reflection of ill intent. Rob actually took time out of a daughter preparing for wedding to talk to me about a misstep I made and was incredibly gracious in response." It's easier to be a "good goalie" when you have other "good goalies" who have shown you the way.

Director Christiansen and faculty I encourage you to keep being "good goalies" to the students in the program making room and time for students like me. They may not have figured out a clear path, they may not be in the top of the class academically and they may not even appear to be learning the lesson as you might like but your excellence and generosity can make all the difference in their ability to live the MPA vision and values throughout their careers.

As I read through the MPA values I immediately thought of my wife when I saw **Respect for All**. She is a therapist, and I am amazed at her love and acceptance especially for those who struggle with this life. She has developed the ability to be the most internally consistent person I know. What I mean by that is how different is the person that you meet on the street with the person that you could expect behind closed doors with a hidden camera. The closer those two people are the more internally consistent I believe we are. Since I live with Debbi I can say for her there is little difference. The less the two are alike though the harder it is to have the kind of respect for all described in the MPA Value. Many years ago she shared with me a quote that I think has profound implications and when I get angry wanting to place blame I can still remember her reading it to me. It's "immature people do not see others as real". The origins of much of the nasty rhetoric we are experiencing in politics today could be traced back to this quote. When we do not see others as real they become vehicles to use, obstacles to overcome, or irrelevancies to ignore. Real people matter like I matter and it is no longer acceptable to treat them poorly. People inherently know if you see them as real. When I am being a "good goalie" other people are real to me.

President Russel M. Nelson has said, "As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to be examples of how to interact with others—especially when we have differences of opinion. One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people." If we are going to realize the MPA Vision, we must make a conscious effort to live the MPA value of **Faith in Christ**. When I was early in my career, I traded conversation about religion with co-workers. When I became a supervisor, I made a conscious decision to be careful about how I spoke about religion lest someone have a concern that I might grant preferential treatment based on how someone's beliefs might align with my own. With that though came a conscious effort to live in such away that if someone discovered my faith they would not be surprised but that they would see an example of someone applying the teachings of Jesus Christ.

As I was contemplating the MPA values it led me to think about the most influential leader that I have had. That also led to some difficult thoughts about my most problematic leader. The two experiences were polar opposites. I applied for a position vacated by my then supervisor and made it to a second interview which went well. A week later it was given an individual who had not even applied for the position or gone through the selection process. The decision maker said “this will be great for you”. The relationship started poorly. From the beginning my boss was distrusting, difficult to get a straight answer from, was remote, often wanted to take the organization in a direction I did not understand and betrayed a confidence that was damaging to my relationship with another colleague. After having received the highest performance rating possible the previous year from my former boss, this most difficult of bosses proposed an average rating which could have had potential career implications. I started looking for another job immediately.

My best boss on the other hand has totally made my career. She had an amazing ability to set high expectations and provide the resources and encouragement to get the job done. She had a light touch, with high standards but would offer suggestions and provide help when the workload or situation became overwhelming. When she was promoted to Deputy Associate Administrator for Mission Support she gave me a bigger role and more autonomy convincing her boss I could do it. It has allowed me to be seen differently at NASA and I now have a positive reputation and engagement with NASA leaders at the highest level. I owe her quite a bit.

As with most good stories the clever twist is that the Good Boss and the Bad Boss are the same person. Lisa Ziehman is one of the finest Executives I have ever known. I watched her at great risk to her career take on bad behavior by a high-level political appointee. This year she was awarded the Presidential Rank Award as a Senior Executive, a Federal Government wide award. I’m sure you must be asking yourself when did she change? The transformation happened on a Friday and when I came back to work on Monday everything was different. If we could only get all our difficult bosses to change so quickly – right?

Her transformation begins with the **MPA values of Love, Free Agency and Accountability**. Fortunately for me that Friday I met with my executive coach. He practices these attributes. One of the greatest blessings of his coaching is that he could help me see what I needed to see and not what I wanted to see. Accountability for what I was doing, coupled with the Free Agency to change and delivered by someone who loves me, helped me to see clearly (Thank you Tim Treu). I came back determined to be the right kind of employee. To this day my staff at the time would all tell you that on Monday I was a man transformed. Everything changed and all the benefits of my good boss became mine because I decided to be a “good goalie”. In preparation for this talk I told Lisa about the recognition I was receiving and asked her to share a few words about our work together.

“I have worked with Rob for almost 15 years now and would describe his strengths as being a servant leader and having a growth mindset. As a servant leader, he exhibits the qualities which draw people to want to work with him – not because they have to, but because Rob prioritizes their best interests, and they trust him to involve them in decision making processes.

Throughout the years, I have seen maturation in Rob’s growth mindset. His journey has enabled me to reflect on opportunities to grow my own leadership abilities. I would say we have been on this journey together, and that continues today. We seek each other out for advice and counsel because we value

each other's perspectives and roles in the organization. Rob pays it forward by being a role model to others, so they can grow in their own right.

While I have gotten to know Rob through work, I consider him a friend who prioritizes the well-being of those around him over personal ambition or authority. This is clearly demonstrated in his unwavering commitment to his family and faith. These qualities define who Rob is and he is most deserving of receiving this special recognition as a distinguished alum."

As I finish reading those words from a trusted mentor I have a few closing thoughts:

1. What would I have lost professionally and personally had I not changed my heart?
2. What would the organization have lost?
3. How gratefully I am for Lisa's generosity in accepting my change.
4. How happy I am that she can see my commitment to servant leadership, faith and family.

As we can see by simply turning on the news - we live in a world in dire need of leaders who **lift the world through Christlike leadership in public service**. It is my firm faith that as we look to Jesus Christ **Our faith will give us the capacity to envision a better future, the confidence to make that future happen, and the courage to act in the face of challenges**.

As my grandson Arthur would say, "lets be GOOD goalies". Thank you most sincerely for this wonderful recognition.