

BYU Romney Institute Dale Wright Alumnus of the Year 2021

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I look around this room at people who I consider my old friends and colleagues and mentors and family who support me, and I feel so much gratitude. Several of you who are now faculty were my classmates in the greatest class ever to graduate from the Romney Institute although I'm chagrined to say we just had our 30-year reunion this summer.

I see other faculty I have had the honor of working with as a member of the alumni board and I've had a great appreciation for them as I've listened to them work and plan to make this 2-year experience for you students as valuable as possible in helping guide you to successful lives of service. We have alumni board members attending today. Thank you for your service to this program.

I see my faculty, who gave me the skills and coaching I needed to do what I've been doing these past 30 years at Intermountain Healthcare. Thank you so much for all you have done for me, and for this award.

When I was growing up, I loved to have my sister Karen tell me stories. And one of my favorites was the story of Queen Esther

In her own peculiar fashion, my sister spiced up the story as only she could, calling the wicked "Haman," the King's right-hand man and crooked advisor, the wicked "Ham and Cheese." The climax of the story and Queen Esther's brave step of putting her life on the line to save her people was instigated by her Uncle Mordechai asking her this question, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom **for such a time as this?**" (Esther 4:14)

The COVID pandemic has brought a lot of things into perspective for many of us. During a time of great challenge, I've seen people step up and fill roles they never would have expected. And I've marveled at the many small miracles put in place over the years that have allowed us to manage and survive in this difficult time. These miracles were brought about by people who were in the right place at the right time doing the right thing "for such a time as this".

One of those tools we could not have managed without was our Utah state immunization registry, a repository of immunization records that's linked to all

those who provide vaccines in our state. It allows us (no matter where a person has received their vaccine) to know which one they had, which brand they need for future doses, whether there has been sufficient time between doses, and whether someone at risk needs a vaccine so we can reach out to them and help them find a place to get it.

You can contrast this to the time when I started working on vaccines in the 1990s. We were just creating the first electronic medical records. There were no cell phones with apps where you could look up your medical information, no Google (or Internet) to share the latest guidelines and authorizations from the FDA and CDC. No Zoom to keep in touch with your family or to have meetings or take classes when we were sequestered at home to avoid infection.

At that time, Jacqueline Leavitt, the wife of Republican Governor Mike Leavitt, was influenced by her Democrat counterpart governors' wives (Betty Bumpers and Roselyn Carter) to start an "Every Child by Two" vaccine initiative in Utah as her First Lady platform. I had the distinct pleasure of working with her on the committee which sponsored the second most recognizable media phrase at the time "Every child by Two, it's up to you".

We had a Care-a-Van to take immunizations out to underserved communities and we had these 11 by 14-inch paper records in duplicate and triplicate. The pink copy of the form ended up in my hands. Our physicians had no idea about the immunizations that were being given out in the community to their patients. So, I would have a friend come over on Saturdays (this was pre-HIPAA) and we would sort and stuff those pink forms into envelopes and mail the records to the physicians hoping they would insert that information into the child's paper medical record. The patients only had a "yellow card" immunization record that they guarded carefully. One mother called me distraught because her car had been stolen with the yellow card in the glove box and she was hoping we would have her child's records somewhere that we could recreate her record so they wouldn't have to have her daughter revaccinated for school. We didn't, and we couldn't help her.

Mrs. Leavitt asked us what we could do to improve Utah's immunization rates, and we started to look at the technology of loading immunization records into one state database that physicians and parents could access. I was thrilled to be

put in charge of the team with Dr. Scott Williams from the Utah Department of Health to come up with the concept, plan, and funding for what we all know now as the Utah State Immunization Information System or USIIS.

Without USIIS and the other state immunization registries that have been created in the past 20 years, can you imagine what our immunization coordination and documentation efforts would have been for the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic where we gave influenza vaccines to our whole state or our current COVID pandemic where almost 3.8 million doses of COVID vaccines have been given in Utah the past 10 months? Jacqueline Leavitt was where she was in the 1990s “for such a time as this.”

Governor Herbert created a state pandemic planning task force two years before the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. He was there “for such a time as that”. Intermountain had a pandemic planning committee I co-chaired that had secured the emergency communication channels with the state, that had contracts for alternative care sites and emergency levels of care, down to the detail of refrigerator trucks to act as temporary morgues. We had stockpiles of medications to treat influenza, but what we did not know was we would be battling a new virus that needed different therapies. Governor Herbert was still at the helm when COVID-19 hit, and with his experience was leading our public health efforts in Utah, “for such a time as this.”

Another leader who’s been in place “for such a time as this” is President Russel M. Nelson. He was inspired years before the pandemic to create home-centered gospel learning and shorter Sunday services that allowed for church services to continue at home during our isolation period last year. And with his professional background as a world-renowned cardiovascular surgeon, he has been able to provide sound guidance around protecting ourselves and each other with masks (which he wore for decades as a surgeon) and vaccines.

Sharon Eubank, Director of Latter-day Saints Charities for the past 10 years, is also currently part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Relief Society presidency and had all the right channels at her disposal to distribute oxygen, medical supplies, and personal protective equipment (specifically masks and gowns) when they were in short supply. She had the resources of the Relief Society to sew those masks and Beehive Clothing to make the gowns. Through the

partnership between the Relief Society, Intermountain Healthcare, and U of U Health, Project Protect sewed 6 million medical-grade masks at a time when that was the only protection we had against the virus. Sister Eubank was in place “for such a time as this.”

Looking back at my own path that started at the Romney Institute, I was grateful during my MPA program to be taught by Dr. Kirk Hart, Dr. David Hart’s father.

In his course on ethics, he taught us about living according to that piece of God or our true self that is within each of us which the Greeks such as Socrates called living in a state of eudaimonia. On Wednesday, I shared a quote with the students from a book assigned to us by Dr. Hart. This book by David Norton on Ethical Individualism outlined that concept.

It stated, “Caprice is freedom to do whatever one freely wills. Self-determination is the freedom to do as one **rightfully must.**”

The idea of doing as one rightfully must, directed by an inner sense of self, and done with the benefit of others in mind, seems a common thread for those who were put in a place “for such a time as this”.

Dr. Hart taught principles that have directed my actions in my career and even in my personal relationships. My husband will attest I used to read parts of David Norton’s book with guys I was dating which may in part explain my not getting married until well into my 40’s. Dr. Hart was here at BYU for such a time as I needed his insights. You the faculty of the Romney Institute may not know the impact you are having on your students, or possibly just one student. But you may well be here “for such a time as this.” As your students are being prepared for such a time as they are needed.

Dr. Cecil Samuelson (you know him as President Cecil Samuelson) took a chance on a new graduate of this MPA program and hired me first as an administrative fellow to train under him at Intermountain Healthcare, and then put me in charge of Intermountain’s physician services.

I still remember the memo he sent to my boss early in 1993, asking how we could hire 50 to 60 physicians in short order. My team created an aggressive recruiting plan using added resources that would have taken at least a year or more to achieve to recruit either newly trained physicians or those outside of the area,

with still a very low chance of success. Our team concluded and advised Dr. Samuelson that the only way to grow a physician group that quickly was to hire physicians who were already practicing in our market. For me, that was the beginning of the creation of our integrated delivery system where Intermountain not only managed hospitals and health insurance plans but also has a network of employed physicians caring for our community in outpatient clinics.

A charter was signed between leaders at Intermountain and a group of like-minded but independent local physicians. The sessions leading to that charter were held weekly at 6:30 am with the physicians and intermountain leaders sitting in a circle to discuss each iteration in our journey to integration. Someone commented it felt a bit like the independent knights sitting at the Round Table. Our new, physician-led organizational structure was referred to more than once as having the feel of being our “Camelot”.

So, when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints pulled President Samuelson away to work for them as a General Authority, some in our organization worried we might be going back into a time of chaos under some leader like Mordred and fall into the dark ages. Happily, that wasn’t the case and we continued to have great leaders. But as President Samuelson left our organization, I felt his trust in us who were left behind to carry on the dream of an integrated health system. Now, I don’t know if you can conjure up in your minds that last scene in the musical *Camelot* where the actor Richard Harris (who you students all know as Dumbledore in the first two Harry Potter movies, and we think of in his younger years as King Arthur in *Camelot*). He had seen his dream of the Round Table crumble around him and was preparing for his last battle. King Arthur speaks to a young boy who repeats the principles of the vision Arthur had created with his round table. He realizes the young boy will carry that vision forward and tells him to stay behind the lines of the battle and to live to return to England and carry on the vision, and then the musical ends with him yelling to the boy “Run boy! Oh, run!”.

We didn’t know then, but President Samuelson was leaving our organization “for such a time as this” to later become President of BYU and lead this university with a unique set of skills that made him qualified for that position and that time.

I felt as he left that, just as King Arthur did when he shouted, “Run boy, Oh run!”, I could hear President Samuelson saying to me, “Run girl, run”, and to Intermountain’s leaders, “Run with that vision, run”.

My wonderful boss of 20 years, Dr. Linda Leckman led our medical group as its CEO with grace and grit which is what you need when you are directing the work of more than 1,000 (now employed) physicians. She had been the voice for Intermountain’s weekly Healing for Life radio spot, and when she retired, she asked if I would want her to recommend me to take her place with the KSL program. That confidence in me and call to “Run girl, run” gave me a platform to become a recognized media voice, so when I needed to provide trusted medical advice about these new COVID vaccines, I had a relationship with KSL and with the listeners, and was able to provide medical advice through the media “for such a time as this”.

Changes in leadership and organizational restructuring can be disruptive, distressing, and necessary.

When Intermountain’s current CEO, Dr. Marc Harrison came to the organization five years ago, he dramatically changed Intermountain’s leadership style and structure to promote nimble decision making. I was used to sitting down one-on-one with our former CEO for long, thoughtful, deliberative discussions about how to best care for patients and the community. With Dr. Harrison – we need to get our point across in a five-minute presentation. Two minutes is preferable.

Although I dislike change as much as the next person, I have been amazed at how the new structure Dr. Harrison put in place for daily huddles and incident command has allowed us to make system-wide decisions up and down a tiered chain of command and get them communicated throughout the organization in a matter of hours throughout this pandemic. Dr. Harrison truly came to Intermountain “for such a time as this.”

My final message is to you the students of the MPA program who don’t know what you are being prepared for.

I had this statement posted up in my office for 20 years. It was attributed to Margaret Mead, a well-known anthropologist, although it hasn’t been found anywhere in her writings. It reads, “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world, indeed that is all that ever has”.

I am confident you will be changing the world and am excited for you to have those moments in your life's work where you can say, "Oh – who knows but I was put here **for such a time as this.**"
