

A College President's Shadow by Angela Clark

Everyone has a story to tell. Sometimes our stories borderline a typical life considered to be ordinary and a few that depict an altogether fascinating tale of less than ideal circumstances turning into a vision of inspiration. Many of us on campus have heard the second hand details of what it is like working with and around Dr. Howard, but I would like the record to reflect that the most daunting part of job shadowing him, by far, has been the attempt to include more than 8 hours of interaction and professional development into this one page summary.

It was apparent the night before we started that this day wasn't designed solely for us as an employee to learn about Dr. Howard, because he uses every bit of the day, and more, learning about who you are as an individual shadowing him. Dr. Howard's days begin well before the sun comes up, but luckily for me, he waited until the sun had risen before inviting me to join in his daily schedule. Our morning started off via speaker phone where we established that there were no ground rules for the day. All things were transparent. I was not once treated or considered to be an actual shadow, as you might imagine from the label of job shadowing. On the contrary, I was "given the stage" to partake and even lead off discussions throughout the day. It is important to note that questions were encouraged and asked throughout the day.

We officially kicked off our day visiting the President's Cabinet staying only for a quick introduction in order to get back to the office. The plan was to review the PowerPoint presentation being used for the keynote address scheduled later that morning. Naturally, that plan didn't go as originally anticipated. Upon arriving in the office we were greeted by students who stopped by to schedule a meeting, quickly followed up with an impromptu faculty member stopping by to address a concern. After accommodating these interactions with a smile on his face, we were left with just enough time to polish off the presentation for the Republican Women's Luncheon while also proofreading additional correspondences that needed to be sent out. Before and following the luncheon, Dr. Howard greeted a multitude of individuals who all wanted his undivided attention as though no one else was in the room. He made sure I was introduced to everyone he met. Upon returning to campus we immediately went into a leadership team meeting. An impromptu agenda was scripted and discussed by a team of leaders that amazingly incorporated humor as they addressed one serious issue after another, despite the reality that they were all in need of immediate solutions. The ending of this meeting brought us back to his office where he ran down from memory, his jammed packed schedule of events and travel for the rest of the week. I noted that his desk calendar is still turned to February 2017. Wrapping up our day with a walk around the campus where we visited with staff, students and recapped the day's interactions and conversations, it seems that if "calm and relaxing" was possible in a day of the life of Dr. Howard this day would have been as close as it gets.

In conclusion, this particular story may not prove to be as thrilling as reading the newest book released by a favorite author or watching a season premier that ended on a "cliff hanger" the season before, but it is a wish come true that I am able to share this experience of my life with you. April 3, 2017, the day I shadowed Dr. Lonnie Howard, will long be a highlight of my career in higher education. Dr. Howard proved to be ethical, transparent and compassionate toward everyone he came into contact with, and I have no doubt that he will lead our campus to even greater heights than we ever thought possible. I am grateful for this opportunity and I'd like to close with a special thank you to Veronica who was very welcoming, professional and ever so helpful throughout the entire day.