

**2010 Women in Business – Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce**

**September 30, 2010**

**Wilson Creek Winery**

**10:00 a.m.**

**President Karen S. Haynes**

Good morning! Let me begin by thanking Leah for that introduction and the Chamber for inviting me here today. The Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce along with the city, the business community, and the Temecula Valley Unified School District have been terrific partners since we established California State San Marcos at Temecula in 2008. In fact, because of increased student demand, we just moved CSUSM at Temecula to a new and larger facility on Margarita Road.

I'm glad to have this opportunity to be here with so many strong and smart women—I know we share so much in experiences and challenges. While all of our stories are different, I am certain that there are similarities as we have traveled on our own paths, putting cracks in that “glass ceiling.”

### My Voyage into Leadership

I want to start by sharing with you a story about a very important journey I prepared myself for once upon a time, many years ago. This was to be the most exciting, scary, and challenging voyage of my life, and I've had some long and exciting journeys into different cultures! I had wanted to take the trip, had competed to take the trip, and I had prepared myself for the voyage as any good traveler does: reading about the culture, learning the language, in order to understand the norms.

What made this excursion so significant and so different from my previous ones was that I would be the first outsider to enter this previously closed society. So, in addition to some of the “normal” preparation for foreign travel, I had to also think about a strategy that would provide me an entry—not raise barriers and defenses. The day finally arrived. I felt prepared.

As I approached the “sacred room,” the voices were discernible, although the words were not. I breathed deeply and entered. An immediate and total silence fell upon the group. All eyes turned to me, and some had panic in them. They didn't know what to say or do. I realized that they probably had not prepared for this meeting anywhere near as much as I had.

Thankfully, the leader arrived at that moment, greeted me with the traditional tribal greeting - which I recognized and responded to - and showed me a place to sit. The leader introduced me with neither fanfare nor warmth. The ritual began.

I tensed and then sighed—I could understand their language enough to make sense of most of it, but their body language and facial expressions seemed at times at odds with their

words. I probably just needed to learn more of the nuances of this language and culture. I waited for someone to ask me to speak and finally I realized that I must bravely jump in. I started and was interrupted immediately. I shrank back, waited, regained my poise, and tried to speak again.

Hardly anyone looked at me. No one acknowledged what I said. The discussion continued. I glanced furtively around the chamber. No one else seemed to notice what had happened. Was my diction poor? Had I inadvertently used the wrong tense, was my accent incorrect, was my dress inappropriate? I was confused. I sat back to listen harder and watch more carefully.

Ah, perhaps it was that I tried to make eye contact—clearly culturally incorrect. Maybe it was because I smiled? This was a serious, sacred ritual after all. Perhaps my voice was too soft. I gulped and tried again, speaking more loudly with a serious expression on my face, carefully looking above their heads.

Nothing.

Stunned, I sat back for more study. Who could I even ask for help? No outsider had entered the sacred chamber before me. I withdrew, feeling defeated. Musing over the situation, I missed the cue and suddenly everyone stood up. The ritual was over. I was thankful, except I knew I had to learn the secrets or endure this over and over. Would I get better? Would anyone reach out? Would someone tell me the secret?

While I was deep in thought, one of the natives spoke to me—in a language I understood! “Karen, how did you enjoy your first deans’ meeting?”

I hoped some of you might find it humorous—I now do!

And although I indicated it was a long time ago - this took place in the President’s boardroom of the University of Houston in 1985, with 12 male deans and a male senior vice president, as I indicated, I thought I was prepared - I’d had 10 years as a university faculty member, and 5 years as a graduate student. And, I had not only read about women in administration but I had written and published on this topic as well.

But, despite the preparation, the territory and culture were unfamiliar and unaccommodating. And, if I am honest, now, 25 years later, that is still too often the case.

## Challenges

Even in 2010, a woman's place is almost anywhere but in seats of power. Women may equal slightly more than half the population and nearly half the workforce in the United States, but with only 21% representation in the U.S. Congress, we have not yet achieved political parity. And we fare even worse in the corporate world: Only 15 women serve as CEOs of the Fortune 500 companies, a paltry 3 percent!

I am now in my 15<sup>th</sup> year as a university president, serving in my second presidency, and that continues to be very much against the odds. The profile of the typical college president — a married, graying, white male is still the norm. For instance, only 22 percent of university presidents are female. And for those women who do make it to the president's office, there are trades-offs. Most male presidents – 89 percent – are married while just under two-thirds of females are. Only 68 percent of female presidents have children compared with 91 percent of males.

When I became a dean, it was because I aspired to be one. And I certainly felt that I could do the job better than some I'd seen or worked for! But the cultural shock came when I realized how different my leadership philosophy and style were than those 13 men. I was dean for ten years—the only female dean for all of those years—and I enjoyed the position, being close to the profession I loved. I saw my career staying at that level.

Then life came along and provided me with an unexpected challenge or opportunity – and I went, virtually overnight, from dean to interim president, without pause for a vice presidency or even time for reflection on the path or my ideas about what I expected of that path. It was only an interim presidency for a year, so I said, “yes.”

Social work is not the “normal” path to the presidency the way that sciences or the humanities might be. At the time I said “yes” – in 1995 – I was the only social worker in the country who was a university president. And 15 years later, there are two more that I know of. My point is, that not only was I “unique” as a female president, but I was— and still am— somewhat isolated as a social worker who became a president.

It is not easy sometimes. It is never easy being a woman who is a “first” in a position, an “only” on an administrative team, or the “lone” woman interviewing for an executive position.

I remember, back in 2003 when I was preparing to travel to Cal State San Marcos for the presidential interviews, I began to pack a fuchsia suit for the large public forum that was part of the interview process. My husband was startled and said, “Do you really want this job?” He

thought I should pack a navy or grey suit. I told him I wanted to wear it. I wanted people to know what they were getting - my authentic style - and that I would be different from the other two candidates, both men. He said, “Well, if you insist on wearing it to the public forum, then say something about it.” So, I started that public forum, of over 200 campus and community members, by noting, “If you are wondering about my choice of this fuchsia suit, it’s because I am the first candidate and I want you to remember me at the end, and I’m fairly certain none of the other candidates will be in fuchsia.” The crowd roared and when selected to be president, the North County Times headline was, “Fuchsia Suit Wins!”

So along this path I have learned that whether purposive or accidental, assuming a leadership position can be both daunting and exhilarating; can be seen as both an honor and a burden; that leadership is about relationships, authenticity and vision. And, when asked, even during these difficult fiscal times, is it worth it? I would answer, “Yes. Absolutely.”

### Stereotypes, Tradeoffs, and Balance

As women who are in leadership positions, or aspire to be, we know all too well the host of stereotypes that we face daily. We are told, for example, that we need to be more assertive, but not so assertive that we are disliked; that we need to be collaborative, but not so friendly that we lack credibility; that we need to be more competent than our male colleagues, but in a way that does not threaten those male colleagues; and that we need to be role models for other women, but that women may need to behave more like men to succeed. And, my conclusion from all of this advice is that women obviously also need a good sense of humor!

And I certainly have had to continue to hone my sense of humor and laugh about some of the barriers and obstacles along the way – or at least I can laugh now! Back in the early 1970s, during my very first professional job interview, I was asked: Was I married? Did I have children? Was I planning to have children? This was my first view of the concrete wall between my expectations of professionalism and advancement and the dominant paradigm’s.

The “differential” expectations continued and a few years later while in my first year of the doctoral program a male doctoral colleague, trying to be helpful, told me I’d make my points better with male faculty if I would be less assertive—it wasn’t very becoming. *Becoming?* I asked myself. This wasn’t a beauty contest. This was “the academy,” where ideas were supposed to be challenged.

A sense of humor was certainly necessary when in the third year of my deanship at the University of Houston in 1988, the President, introducing a number of his deans to a senior Texas senator, introduced me and then added, “and she’s the sweetest smelling dean on campus!”

And in case you are privately thinking gender stereotypes don’t happen anymore – even now in 2010, when my husband and I attend a social function, and with name tags in full display, people will sometimes turn to him to ask about his university!

So, as women, not only must we fight against such archaic stereotypes but we must make choices and trade-offs, adopting more strategies to not only combat these stereotypes, but to succeed in our chosen careers while achieving balance in our lives. Balance is crucial, and sometimes “balance” is really a “balancing act.”

### Essentials for balance

Balance is more easily created, I have found, if one builds and nurtures strong teams that you trust; an authenticity in style and values; a commitment to building relationships within the organization, and to using these as the building blocks to influence the direction of the organization.

Another element necessary for achieving balance is optimism. It’s a source of power because it is an essential ingredient to vision. Pursuit of the new idea, of the impossible, takes a world view that life is okay; that one is in charge of one’s destiny. Optimism is important to my personal mental health, and it’s an important ingredient in the leadership equation. It helps me focus on how much I can learn; it frames my encounters with others to ask, where this person is smart, rather than is this person smart. It focuses me on the good and the possible, not the bad or the barriers.

### Lessons Learned

To achieve leadership success, with balance and optimism, I have learned some important lessons along my path:

1. Walk the talk – The difference between positional authority and real power comes from modeling values and building relationships. It is easy to talk about a set of values and institutional principles. It is far more difficult to examine whether you adhere to them on a daily operational basis.

2. Be an active listener - Leaders have to stop talking in order to actively listen; we have to be able to provide opportunities to listen and we must be willing to listen to things we don't want to hear.
3. Focus on people and on doing good. When I think of powerful people, I think of people who recognize their own limitations, who appreciate the resources, strengths, and skills of others, who touch and affirm others.

Work with people rather than expecting people to work for you, and don't be afraid of saying "I don't know" and seeking advice. Understand that the key resources required to change an institution are more likely to be human resources rather than fiscal or material ones. See your choice to be a leader as a special opportunity to make a difference, not as an opportunity to take the spotlight, or get the praise.

### Rewards

During my 25 years in leadership positions, I have found that one of the most rewarding aspects of being a leader is the opportunity to mentor and inspire the next generation of women leaders. While my generation has trail blazed a path of "firsts" for women, the next generations must remove the "token" aspect of these achievements and make them the norm. For this to occur, I believe that it is our duty and our reward as female leaders to inspire and mentor those who will come after us.

I don't think that the challenges facing women today are very different from those that I faced as a younger woman. The glass ceiling still exists and because it does there are still more limited female role models in many professions. So I would urge you to mentor others to help push up that glass ceiling, to seek mentoring in order to find windows of opportunity through those concrete walls, and to network in order to overcome isolation and locate new sources of energy.

### Last Words

I am certain that each of us has hit her head on the glass ceiling and although we haven't yet shattered the ceiling— or our heads!— the work we do every day pushes the ceiling up a little higher bit by bit. We have found ourselves in the velvet ghettos of our organizations with good looking jobs that go nowhere; and we have faced those concrete walls of gender discrimination.

And while these experiences still happen, so has change occurred, so it is clear that we have the collective power to make a difference for ourselves and for future generations. It is imperative that we continue, or we become, agents of change.

Today, I challenge you to:

- Set big, audacious goals;
- Expect to be successful and expect to lead;
- Go for what you want and remember there's "never a good time" – to have a child, to change a job or career, to confront a controversy – so why not do it today?
- Take your position, but not yourself, seriously knowing that the ingredients of authenticity and humor are essential; and
- Don't let anyone tell you that you can't succeed.

I am optimistic that as we showcase our skills, build on the talents of one another, affirm and touch others, and speak in our own powerful voices, we will increasingly succeed and as we do, we will:

- enrich our lives;
- create learning organizations;
- hone effective governments;
- support nurturing communities;
- and, in so doing, shatter that glass ceiling.