Success! How can you help?
A message from the Advisory Board Chair

We are coming to the end of an amazing summer session of online classes and clubs! Thank you all for participating and supporting OLLI in this transition phase. You should have received your fall catalog and, I hope, are prepared to register again! We are going to need some help to make the fall sessions successful. Please consider the following ways you can volunteer. Remember everything will be online, so you will be helping from the comfort of your home! And if you volunteer, it is for fall only. OK- how can you help?

- We need volunteers to monitor classes. You will be letting people into zoom and offering assistance to those who are having zoom difficulties. You will also take attendance.
- We need volunteers to make phone calls to the membership the second week in August to make sure everyone has gotten their catalog and answer any questions members have about fall.
- We need 3 volunteers to cover the “lounge” in the fall, talking with members who zoom in with questions and just socializing.
- We may need volunteers to register members who have mailed in their forms. You will use your home computer to do this. We will start a list of those willing to do this and call on you if needed.

Janet Dand

Onward…
A message from the Executive Director

You’ve read this from me recently and it’s a simple mantra that keeps pulling our OLLI forward during these most interesting of times. I’ve had the pleasure of sending regular communication to all of you in emails, bulletins, and messaging. In doing that, I’ve come across the many silver linings that the shifts into our evolving normal and online learning have presented to us. Mostly, I have seen the resiliency of our OLLI members. We have fought against isolation, stayed connected, and learned the benefits of the latest technology. Who knew that our smart phones, tablets, laptops, and desktops would be as valuable as the hand sanitizer we seek on barren shelves? Thanks for climbing this steep learning curve together! From the top of this mountain, we can see the possibilities of a growing OLLI community, the value of knowing each other, and the benefits of shared learning experiences in our online classes. Welcome to OLLI’s Fall 2020. We got here together. Let’s enjoy it!

Lynn Provenzano
OLLI@UTEP INTERVIEWS DR. HEATHER WILSON

Nicole Grant, newsletter editor; Janet Dand, OLLI board chair and Executive Director, Lynn Provenzano, were privileged to interview Dr. Heather Wilson, on Zoom.

We had a wonderful hour chatting with Dr. Wilson and learned much about her as a person as well as her vision for UTEP.

The full transcript of the interview follows the OLLI Advisory Board News and Updates in this newsletter. View/listen to the interview which will really allow you to get to know her ‘up close and personal.’ As you will see, if you view the link, that she is warm, gracious, funny and very articulate.

The interview lasts about half an hour.
Interview Link:

https://minersutep-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/varreola1_utep_edu/EdpA5QvCKCtlobjJINbSQb6lBDIgST3xLk6Hz4osu5AgF0A?e=NH8Y7e

Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for spending time with us!

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COOKIES?!

The OLLI Office has been closed since March 24th and the cookies have been sitting on office shelves since then. We won’t see face-to-face classes anytime soon, so, in the giving spirit of our OLLI, the cookies and a few other donated items have been donated to the UTEP Food Pantry. The Food Pantry has remained open during this pandemic for students still living on campus and currently serves an estimated 10 students each day. Espi Candeleria from SELC (Student Engagement Learning Center) and Crystal Brown from the Prospector (and formally OLLI) have been reassigned to help the Food Pantry. They welcomed the donation and assured us that students will appreciate the treats.
OLLI@UTEP ZOOMS AHEAD!  OLLI INSTRUCTORS SHARE ZOOM EXPERIENCES

RUBY MONTANA
“Teaching in ZoomLandia has been interesting, to say the least. While I'm certainly grateful for the technology that makes online teaching a possibility, it goes without saying that it hasn't exactly been smooth sailing. One of my funniest experiences occurred while teaching for one of my UTEP Humanities courses. Mid-lecture, my grocery delivery arrived unexpectedly. It seems my partner made the delivery arrangements and forgot to let me know the time of arrival, and also forgot that I had lecture at that time. This would not be a big deal for most people. However, I have a fur tribe consisting of four pups, so anytime the doorbell rings they practically bark out "BATTLE STATIONS!". And, as with any grocery delivery, many items needed to be refrigerated asap. I delivered the rest of my lecture on Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, while putting away my vegan cheese and produce. So, it goes.”

KATHLEEN KEY
“I was resistant to zoom teaching at first because I wondered how could I teach art history if I wasn't directly in front of the students? I was resistant because I have taught for 35 years face-to-face and I couldn't imagine any positive points using zoom. But after teaching many lectures using zoom, the students have told me they can see my slides better than in a classroom and they can adjust the volume so they can hear better than in most classrooms. Many tell me they miss the contact with friends, and I understand that, I do too, but for now, I think zoom is pretty fabulous! I am hoping in the future we will be able to offer both zoom classes and face-to-face classes as I think we need both types of classes to service our students.

On the lighter side, we have a senior kitty from Cairo, Egypt named Chi Chi who waits until I am teaching on zoom and Bill is running an errand and not around, to start his special Egyptian howl. Long time cat owners know what this sounds like but for my other students it must sound very unusual coming through an art history lecture! Just part of life now like so many other things we didn’t know we'd be dealing with a year ago!”

OLLI@UTEP FACEBOOK NEWS
Now that we are part of the Extended University, we have an official Facebook page, Olli-Utep. Many of you may have seen announcements about this page and have visited it. There is another OLLI Facebook page that Hannah Gomez and Marie Livingston set up as a personal page OLLI at UTEP. This has been a great page but because it was unofficial, we had to set up our new page Olli-Utep. Eventually the photos from various events were posted on the old page will be transferred to the new page. From now on we will post events, announcements, articles and information about events in our classes on our Olli-Utep Facebook page. Please visit our new official Facebook page, like and follow it. In this time of social distancing we hope to make connections with everyone.

*Marie Livingston*

“Keep planting and sowing, living and knowing; beautiful things take time, and that is okay.”  
Morgan Harper Nicols
OLLI's ACROSS THE NATION

There is a network of OLLIs in the United States. Ever wonder what they are like? Here is a snapshot:

- Membership ranges from 500 to 11,000 members
- Average membership: 1,196
- 73% are between 65 and 79 years of age
- 78% offer Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- 65% offer free parking
- 25% offered remote learning before Covid
- 98% offer remote learning now
- 92% are using Zoom
- 75% offer scholarships
- 60% have 5-10 committees
- 95% have Curriculum Committees
- 51% have elected volunteer leadership
- Number of committees range from 1 to 20 or more
- Members’ primary interests: History, Fine Arts, Current Affairs
- Member fees range from $30 to $850 per year
- Volunteers average number: 216
- 48% average with, at least, $25,000 in annual fundraising
- $4.5 million collected in annual fund raising

Data from the OLLI National Resource Center & Granite State College, New Hampshire OLLI

Across the OLLI Network:

There are discussion groups and interests regarding diversity and racial issues in the news. If this is of interest to you, an attachment has been added to this newsletter with discussion group opportunities and informative links provided by our OLLI affiliates.
NEW OLLI@UTEP ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS ANNOUNCED

The OLLI Advisory Board of Directors is delighted to announce three new members! They will be filling key positions on our Board: Curriculum, Volunteers, and Marketing. We asked them to introduce themselves to you, tell us a little bit about their experiences, interests, OLLI experiences and their desire to serve on the Board. Rather than writing an article about themselves, they were sent ‘bullet’ points to consider, so here they are, in their own words:

BILL KEY, CURRICULUM CHAIR

Born in Houston, moved to El Paso to complete high school and college. BSME in Mechanical Engineering UTEP/Master of Science in Acoustics from University of Houston. After completing Military Service in 1971, worked at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock for a couple of years before returning to Houston to work in the Oil and Gas Industry. Worked for Engineering firms and Manufacturing firms until 1995. From this date I began a long career in Egypt working for an Oil Company before retiring in 2016.

Kathleen, my wife, also an OLLI instructor, and I have traveled extensively to the South of France and Amsterdam. The trips I found the most thrilling were long excursions in Egypt’s Western Desert to Siwa Oasis. We always did this in large groups when friends from the states were visiting.

• The most invigorating and delightful thing about OLLI is meeting and working with the students. Having lived most of our life in other places and coming here as retirees, it was amazing to make so many friends quickly. Kathleen organized a 70th birthday party for me at Amelia’s. We had almost 50 people, mostly from OLLI, attend. I am quite certain we would have had much less in Houston.

• UTEP has a world class Geology department that provides the teachers for OLLI’s geology class. I always find this class interesting as the various teachers present the same concepts using different techniques. I spent great deal of time the last 5 years of my career listening to petroleum geologists expound on this or that, so I find the OLLI geology classes so refreshing and that’s why I keep taking them.

• I have taught five different courses concerning the Nile and Egypt, three brown bag specials concerning subjects that varied from Mules to a near building collapse in downtown New York, to the raising of the Duomo in Florence. But my favorite was the three lectures on El Paso Natural Gas, which is now Kinder Morgan. Oh, how I loved those tales of daring-do by the old-time pipe liners.

• During the COVID epidemic I did some part time work for a Houston firm. We had several remote meetings with participants worldwide. A couple lasted all day, and it was exhausting. But it worked real well the whole time, and I think it kept some people from expounding and made things run more efficiently.
I know, from the one Zoom class I presented to OLLI on the Duomo, that students can see the slides better, text on slides comes across clearer, and in my opinion students like it as much as live, but they miss the social interaction. I liked giving it in that format, but I would rather see everybody who wanted to hear what I have to say in person than on a computer screen.

• In my opinion OLLI has been slammed by events that are beyond their control: UTEP raising the parking fee exorbitantly (particularly difficult for people on fixed income) and COVID. Our board is trying to deal with these problems and keep OLLI going. I thought if I could help them, I should.

KAREN FRASER, VOLUNTEER CHAIR

Karen Fraser with daughter Dr. Elisa Fraser Wilson

Born in Lincoln, Nebraska and moved to Illinois for grade school, high school, nursing school and college. Retired Registered Nurse BS (for Nursing) from Millikin University, Decatur, IL MA in Health Services Administration, University of IL Springfield Worked in clinical nursing, as a floor nurse for about eight years and then transferred into hospital education, nursing informatics and for 17 years before retirement, as clinical systems analyst, Information Technology, Huntsville Hospital Systems, Huntsville, Alabama.

• Moved to El Paso in September 2012, to be near my daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren. Continued to work remotely for Huntsville Hospital for another year to finalize a 10-year project converting physician personal order sets to fewer physician-collaborative medical and surgical departmental order sets.

• Have struggled to accept the dry Southwest environment, now see that El Paso has its own beauty and enjoy nurturing the flowers I have added to my own landscaping.

• My daughter and son-in-law are in the music department at UTEP, so I have attended a number of their concert offerings. (Editor’s note: her daughter is Elisa Wilson, Director of Choral Activities, and son-in-law is Steve Wilson, Chair of the Department of Music.)

• I like theater, both musical and other, reading fiction and while more confined to home right now, cooking and baking.

• This past year I joined the Board of the El Paso Society for Musicians of the Future (EPSMF) and have met several very talented young persons. Have not taught an OLLI class but value the presentations of all whose classes I have attended for about four years. My favorites are the classes on movies, El Paso history, music and law enforcement.

• I moved here as a rigid conservative but have attended several classes to learn other perspectives and raise my insight into social/political issues that I had not fully appreciated or thought about. OLLI has been good for me. Serving on OLLI's Board is a way of giving back.
MARK PUMPHREY, MARKETING CHAIR

Mark Pumphrey is from rural Kentucky and also lived in South Dakota, South Carolina and North Carolina before moving to El Paso in 2010.

Mark has B.A. and M.S.L.S degrees from the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Mark was a student in Geneva, Switzerland for one semester. He has traveled to Europe many times with his husband, Jean-Claude Linossi, who is originally from Strasbourg, Alsace, France.

- He was a Public Library Director and State Library Literacy and Institutional Library Consultant for 40 years before retiring on his 66th birthday on August 6, 2019. He retired as Director of the El Paso Public Library.

- Mark is an avid writer and singer.

- Some of his favorite OLLI classes have been Kathleen Key’s art history classes, yoga classes of John Kuberka, and Monica Gomez’s Wellness class. Although he has liked all of the instructors and classes he has taken, the philosophy classes taught by Ruby Montana and Cesar Rivera are his favorites so far.

- Mark likes most of all the personal relationships with instructors and fellow students that OLLI has afforded him.

- Zoom has been a great chance to put names to faces and to communicate more with fellow students through chat. He likes being able to take screen shots of class slides for filing and future reference.

- Mark agreed to serve on the board as a way to give back and to make the OLLI experience the best it can be for everyone.

OLLI @ UTEP ADVISORY BOARD NEWS and UPDATES

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

I began our membership drive by reaching out to all Independent and Assisted Living Residencies in the El Paso area. I spoke with all of their Activity Coordinators. I subsequently e-mailed catalogs. I also reached out to a few Social Service Agencies that work with older adults. In addition, I submitted an announcement to The Neighborhood App that reaches approximately 8500 residents.

Susan Sobin assisted me in mailing out OLLI postcards to area Senior Centers, local real estate agency and retired teachers association. She plans to follow up in the fall session with KTEP, UTEP news, local newspapers, community calendars and local news stations.

Two new contacts were made with The View @ Montecillo and YWCA on Bartlett. In addition, I will follow up with Senior Center contacts once catalogs are sent out.

Mary Harris
VOLUNTEER CHAIR

The OLLI Volunteer Committee has two current ongoing projects:

1. Member outreach phone calls - Olli outreached to our current membership every two weeks, beginning the week of March 30, 2020. We had 15 volunteers calling 509 members, which translated to approximately 30+/per volunteer. We asked how our members were doing, answered any questions they may have had about Zoom and updated them about the status of OLLI. Our members were not always available, but volunteers left voicemails. Most of the members reached appeared to be well, were happy with our calls, and expressed a willingness to continue accessing OLLI through Zoom. Once the summer session was up and running, we ceased our calls.

There will be another outreach to the membership the week of August 10th, so be ready for phone calls!

2. Masks - One of our instructors requested OLLI membership assistance in sewing masks for our local hospitals which were running short. 26 members stepped up to volunteer. These volunteers partnered with Angels of El Paso to sew for hospital workers, first responders, and any other agency in need of masks. Thus far, the organization, with our members as part of the team, have donated 4,876 masks since March to our medical professionals in El Paso and the surrounding areas. One of our OLLI volunteers, Shari Schwartz, brought her sewing machine with her to Colorado and has made 180 masks so far.

There will be another outreach to the membership the week of August 10th, so be ready for phone calls!

Janet Dand

EVENTS AND SOCIAL CHAIR

Since we can’t enjoy celebrations in our OLLI lounge or attend events around town, the Advisory Board decided we needed to come up with a few online fundraising ideas of our own! The following are events we will be hosting this summer and into the fall:

❖ TRIVIA NIGHTS - All trivia buffs are invited to compete for prizes and help raise a few funds for OLLI at the same time! We are still working out the details, but we will let you know dates, times, entry fees, and prizes during the summer session.

❖ OLLI RESTAURANT DAYS - We will be working with restaurants in town to raise funds for OLLI and give the restaurants our business and free advertising! Look for details in your OLLI emails and on our Facebook page.

❖ ONLINE ART AUCTION - Student and faculty artists who wish to donate art pieces to the auction will be featured in our first online auction! Members will have the opportunity to bid on their favorite pieces.

❖ ZOOM-A-THON - Like a Telethon, but on Zoom. When the time comes, we will need all of our talented OLLI members and instructors to help us put on a show - musicians, artists, singers, dancers...whatever your talent, we hope you will give us a few minutes to showcase you!

Leanne von Mittenwald

SAVE THE DATE! AUGUST 19th 2PM to 3:30PM
Join in the OLLI GAMES: TRIVIAL PURSUIT TOURNAMENT.
We’re having some fun in a FUNdraiser to support our OLLI programming.
Register online. $5 fee. Additional donations welcome. Be a player or a viewer/life-liner.
PUBLICITY CHAIR

UTEP Communications Director Daniel Perez did a story about OLLI and the online summer classes that is on their website. KVIA ran a story about OLLI’s summer online classes. The link was in the weekly bulletin and on the Facebook page. The press release below was sent to all media contacts in El Paso and Las Cruces.

For Immediate Release:

UTEP’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) is where curious minds gather. Members tell us they come for learning and the intellectual stimulation of the courses and stay for the people and friendships. All OLLI classes will be online for the Fall semester with opportunities to enhance the lives, as well as the health and well-being, of adults over 50 years old during this period of Stay Home-Work Safe.

OLLI offers exciting, stimulating courses (see attached catalog) with classes beginning September 8. Enrollment is $70 for as many courses as desired for the entire fall term. Membership is $30 per person and $50 for two in a household and is good through the 2020-2021 academic school year. Members also enjoy the benefits of OLLI@UTEP as part of a national network of Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes.

The OLLI Fall 2020 catalog and registration for membership and courses can be found online at www.utep.edu/olli. For information, call 915-747-6280. OLLI welcomes new members and encourages wellness through social and learning engagement. OLLI’s virtual classrooms offer this to our community of mature adults.

Shari Schwartz

OLLI@UTEP INTERVIEWS DR. HEATHER WILSON: Full Transcript

FAQ’s:

• Born in Keene, New Hampshire
• Attended The United States Air Force Academy
• First woman to command basic training and first woman Vice Wing Commander at the Academy
• Graduated from the Academy in 1982 as a Distinguished Graduate (magna cum laude equivalent)
• Earned a Rhodes Scholarship to study at the Oxford, continued her education at Jesus College, earning an M.Phil. and D.Phil. in international relations

• Oxford University Press published her book, International Law and the Use of Force by National Liberation Movements, which won the 1988 Paul Reuter Prize of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Paul Reuter Prize is awarded for a major work in the sphere of international humanitarian law. Wilson won the second Reuter prize ever awarded.
• An Air Force officer for seven years, was a negotiator and political adviser to the U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom, and a defense planning officer for NATO in Belgium, where her work included arms control negotiations.

• First female military veteran elected to a full term in Congress. She was a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives for New Mexico’s 1st congressional district from 1998 to 2009.

• President of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City from 2013 to 2017

• Served as the 24th Secretary of the United States Air Force from 2017 through 2019.

• While Secretary of the Air Force, Wilson focused on restoring the readiness of the force which had declined after years of combat and budget constraints.

• Became President of UTEP in August 2019

• Selected to serve a six-year term on the National Science Board (NSB) in March 2020

• Married to Jay Hone, an attorney and retired Air National Guard Colonel. They have three adult children.

• Dr. Wilson is an instrument rated private pilot.

Dr. Wilson Interview
June 24, 2020

Interviewers: Nicole Grant, OLLI newsletter editor; Janet Dand, Chair, OLLI Board of Directors; Lynn Provenzano, OLLI Executive Director

Q: The pandemic has actually provided some opportunities in education. How do you see UTEP and OLLI growing together for the future?

One of the things this has opened up for the faculty as well as students is the availability of remote learning, and while that has given us new tools for life long learning, the other thing this whole pandemic has reminded us of is that we are really social beings. And to me that is one of the advantages of the Osher experience in that it allows people, mostly retired, to engage in lifelong learning. There’s plenty of research showing that lifelong learning is really good for you and good for your brain.

Q: How does UTEP see its role in community outreach?

One of the things the pandemic accelerated, and a lot of us saw this coming, is that learning will become a spiral of lifelong building of credentials and experience, and the reason is the pace of change is accelerating. Universities in the future will become centers for engaged active lifetime learning. OLLI will become something that is the end of your career and it is the capstone to what you continue doing, part of just a pattern of life, continuous learning for joy and professional success.
Q: How do you see OLLI’s role fitting into UTEP’s view of community outreach?

UTEP is here because it’s desperately needed by the community that we serve, and when we look at our mission, it’s about access to higher education, but also positively impacting the health, education, welfare and economy of the community. That’s where the outreach is involved. We are here to have a positive impact on the community. And that means engaging people in all stages of life--you know, wonderful things that are going on at UTEP, like OLLI, the dinner theater, athletic events, continuing education for teachers. So, it’s the epicenter of education, economic development, and JOY for the culture of the community.

Q: There are ongoing studies on aging. OLLI recently participated in some UTEP student research projects. Do you foresee OLLI as a potential part of future research at UTEP?

Our research is almost always driven by faculty interests and expertise. So, the fact that you had one research study there, in the cognitive sciences, I assume, means that you have faculty interested and I would build on that relationship. The last thing I want to do as a leader of the University is to tell faculty what they should be researching. And as it happens, we have quite a bit of expertise at UTEP on neuroscience, particularly the neuroscience of learning. It started out as the neuroscience of learning language and dual language acquisition. So, I would not be surprised if that research continues, but I’m not going to be the one who directs it because that usually does not work.

Q: The town hall meetings that you have held have been very informative. It has become very clear that UTEP leadership has a monumental task at hand. What opportunities do you see coming from the flexibility and initiatives evolving now?

I read a lot about what’s going on around the country, and our university as well as people from outside of higher education tend to talk about, is this being a transformative moment and a shift to more remote leaning. But I actually think it’s going to be different. There are a couple of things you learn:

First, higher education, UTEP, can move quickly; the elephant can dance. And that’s something that higher education is not known for. And as a result, people will become aware of other things that maybe should change and can change. One example is the freshman experience. Another example is making it easier for students to transfer in and making their credits apply. We don’t need to take two or three years to make those decisions. We can move it. We have to.

The second thing you learn is then you have new skills and abilities that have been developed by having to move to remote education are going to be applied, but not in a way that says, okay, we’re just shifting to remote education--it’s much more subtle. We would use remote education where those tools are the best and save that valuable face-to-face time for things that couldn’t be done remotely. For example, I think it might be less and less common for a faculty member to stand up in an auditorium of 700 students and lecture for an hour. You can distance enable those types of large classes and then spend the time with students in smaller groups---reflecting, talking, writing, doing projects, much more active learning when you’re face-to-face.

I do a lot of continuing education, and there are huge advantages of distance learning to that kind of lecture. First you can do it in smaller chunks, and second the slow kid in class can go back and listen again or a student who didn’t understand the first time can go back. So I think what we will have is a lot more tools in our toolbox for better education and as a leader, my responsibility is to try to lead UTEP out of the pandemic and to be even better than we were before.
Q: Outside of the brain power needed in your role at UTEP, what keeps you refreshed and mentally engaged?

Here’s the funny thing—I’ve been getting more exercise every day in quarantine than before when I was going to the office. And I’m eating better so I’m being better to myself in quarantine. There’s something wrong with that! I go walking or ride a bike every day, something I’d not done in ten years! Intellectually I’d say there are three things: I’ve been studying Spanish for over a year; I’m a general aviation pilot and I’m keeping my skills up, and I continue to study things related to aviation. That’s the way I keep learning. I’m a voracious reader and read pretty much every day.

Q: You grew up around aviation and experimental aviation and served in the Air Force. How have those experiences shaped your leadership style as a university president?

I grew up around aviation; my father was an aviator; my grandfather was an aviator. My father and mother rebuilt an aircraft together. And my father built an experimental aircraft in our little two-bedroom house, a 1600 square foot Cape house in New Hampshire. The den was supposed to be my bedroom, but I had to share a bedroom because my father was building an experimental open cockpit bi-plane aircraft inside our house! My mother was very tolerant…so I grew up around it. Of course, you got an airplane in the house! And I thought about that when I had my kids—the fact that my mother had three small children under the age of eight, and she said “Sure, let’s build an airplane in here!”

So I grew up around aviation and that’s one of the things that caused me to think about going to the Air Force Academy when they opened it to women, which didn’t happen until I was a junior in high school. Probably the thing about the Air Force and the Academy that I took with me is and that really affects my leadership is the Air Force is a values driven organization: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. That doesn’t mean perfection; it means a commitment to excellence.

I don’t expect perfection on this side of the new Jerusalem, but I do try to commit myself to be better today than I was yesterday. And I do believe the most important value as a leader is integrity. If you don’t have that foundation of values, nothing else is built on solid ground. I think the honor code at the Air Force Academy is something that is formative for everyone who graduates from that institution, and it’s something that marks you. It’s marked my leadership ever since I left.

Q: If you were to take a class at OLLI, what would it be?

I’m always learning things, so I’d continue my interest in language study and I do that every day—today was Day 467! I actually came close to doing a graduate degree in physics, so I would probably go back to learn some science and engineering. Today I listen to things outside my field of study—I just finished a book by an astrophysicist. Part of the reason for that is that as a leader you have to realize there are different ways to approach problems and one way is to add tools to your box and think about different ways from the perspective of different disciplines in order to get some type of better answer. I encourage young people. Be master of your craft but read widely outside of your discipline. That gives you empathy and perspective which is hard to develop if you just become a narrow expert. So, there’s a lot of stuff on the list of courses I’d take. And I’m not waiting to retire to study—just since January I’ve read about twelve books on all sorts of subjects.
EXTRA REMARKS

Dr. Wilson: You asked me a question about how my experience in aviation has affected my leadership—there are phrases that I use that I have to stop myself from using, and find other words, because the team that works with me starts laughing!

I think those of you around higher education will understand—cultures of different organizations are quite different. I've worked in industry, international laboratories with scientists, higher education and with aviation with the military.

The culture in higher ed, or parts of higher ed, it’s a bit different in the health sciences, tends to be a bit more circumspect in making corrections or giving guidance. They tend to be a bit more roundabout. It’s a leadership style fairly unique to higher education. As a leader, I tend to be direct sometimes—not mean, but just “OK, I don’t think this is going to work”, as opposed to saying “Hmmmm, that’s interesting…we might think about possibly….” I don’t want to crush their will to live, so I try to change it with a little bit of humor. I have told the Chancellor, and he’s very good about it, that I’m used to a much more direct culture and it doesn’t bother me at all. I’ve told our team that if they think I’m making a mistake, they need to walk in and say “You know you really need to rethink this because you’re making a big mistake and let’s talk it through.” That doesn’t bother me at all.

I think if we want to make things better, we’ve got to push each other, and sometimes that’s in direct conversation. I know that’s unusual in some parts of higher education, so I have to be a little careful. In the Air Force it’s called the ‘culture of the frank debriefs.’ High performance aviation is a ruthless, unforgiving environment. So, no matter what your rank, if you’re an instructor pilot, you debrief every flight; you sit down and go through what went right and what went wrong. Even if I were a junior person, and you went low and slow on final, I’m going to say, “You do that again, you’re going to kill yourself. Knock it off!”

Q: Can you share a few of those aviation terms you occasionally use, that might not be widely understood?

One is ‘throttle forward’ (she didn’t explain that one.) The other one is “I’ve lost the bubble,” which means “I don’t understand.” It refers to the little bubble spinning in the heading indicator, which means I can’t tell where I am. So, the team is tolerant with me…

As we concluded this wonderful interview with Dr. Wilson, these were her parting words to us: “While you’re at home or working remotely, take care of yourselves.”

Interview Link: https://minersutep-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/varreola1_utep_ediEdpA5QvCKCtlobJINbSQb6lBDIgLST3xLk6Hz4osu5AGF0A?e=NH8Y7e