TOPcast Episode #90: “The Job to Be Done Online is Increasing Opportunity”

Narrator: What will your future look like? The job you do today could be different than the jobs of tomorrow. Some see this as a challenge. At UCF, we see opportunity, a chance for you to grow your knowledge, and strengthen your skills from anywhere life might take you. With in-demand degree programs and resources for your success, UCF Online can help you prepare for the future and all the possibilities that come with it.

(musical transition)

Kelvin Thompson: From the University of Central Florida’s Center for Distributed Learning, I’m Kelvin Thompson.

Tom Cavanagh: And I am Tom Cavanagh.

Kelvin: And you are listening to TOPcast: the Teaching Online Podcast. Hey Tom.

Tom: Hey Kelvin. It is podcast time. That’s one of my favorite times.

Kelvin: You know what else it is? Coffee time.

Tom: It’s coffee time. Yeah. I mean, we get to have an interesting discussion; we get to, you know, take a step back and think about interesting things; I get some awesome free coffee, usually from you; and I can't do my email.

Kelvin: I guess you could.

Tom: I could, but it would be a boring podcast. Nobody wants that.

Kelvin: Here's the thing. If we have been successful, Tom, you will be so engaged in what we call the collegial conversation over a shared cup of coffee, that you won't be tempted to get back into your email. So, should I see your eyes darting over to your email monitor, I'll know it's time to get out of here.

Tom: My eyes dart over to our notes—to pull back the curtain a little—but yes, no, I am not doing email. I never have during an actual podcast.

Kelvin: I don’t think I have either. I hope not. That would be a shame

Tom: So, you have invoked the coffee reference.

Kelvin: Uh huh.

Tom: And I have sipped my first sip. What is in the thermos, Kelvin?
Kelvin: So, in the proverbial thermos, and in each of our cups, is a single origin El Salvador called El Batallón—I guess, “the battalion”—roasted by Methodical Coffee in Greenville, South Carolina. The particular coffee varietal—we've talked about coffee varietals a little bit before—that gave rise to this coffee was actually bred in El Salvador rather recently during the latter part of the 20th century: very late 50s up until the 80s. This coffee was bred to be of high quality, but also adaptable to diverse growing conditions, which opens up access to a wider variety of farms and growing regions. And the owners of this particular farm, Mapache Coffee, are committed to being accountable for sustainable farming practices and to serving their community through increasing opportunities for employment and whatnot. As we've noted before, single origins like this El Salvador are much more affordable than some of the over promoted coffee locations that we won't mention right now in this episode. So how is the coffee? And can you detect a connection?

Tom: *(chuckles)* Coffee's good. Thank you. I'm enjoying it. And as far as the connection goes, I'm struggling. I do know what we're talking about today and who we are talking to.

Kelvin: That helps.

Tom: It does, but it doesn’t. So, I'm not sure I'm seeing it. Now, you really hit that, “Can you detect a connection?”

Kelvin: That’s right.

Tom: And I think that may have something to do with it. But that's very on the nose and doesn't have a whole lot to do with the coffee. We have a guest today.

Kelvin: We do have a guest today.

Tom: And he makes a reference to sort of a framework using some alliteration with the letter “a.” So that could be your “a” but as far as the rest of it goes, it just sounded like a nice coffee story to me. I'm serious.

Kelvin: Well, I'm glad I think the story was nice. So, that's good. Yes. Hidden in the little monologue about the coffee were some “a” references that may show up again, like hidden Mickeys for our Disney aficionado audience members. But a couple other things that I tried to make a connection to is making a difference for people in the community through increasing opportunity. I think that's a connection.

Tom: Okay. I see that.

Kelvin: And then, I think also, I thought there was a little bit of a connection between latter 20th century time periods. The variety was bred in the latter 20th century, and the institutions and models that are referenced today are kind of late 20th century bridging into the 21st century kind of things.

Tom: Okay. I see that now. Yup. Okay. I just gotta let the scales fall from my eyes so I can see your references a little bit better.
Kelvin: Just don't pour the coffee in your eyes.

Tom: And I don't know, just as a quick little sidebar, is bred the right word for coffee? It sounds animal husbandry-like.

Kelvin: I don’t know. Cultivated?

Tom: Maybe that. Yeah.

Kelvin: I mean, is there plant husbandry? I mean, I don't know. Is there wife? Garden? I don't know. There's cultivating.

Tom: Midwifery. Animal husbandry.

Kelvin: I don’t know. I never understood all that. So, listeners, if you understand that, send us a note to topcast@ucf.edu.

Tom: We need the etymology of these words, please. Desperate, important for TOPcast.

Kelvin: That’s right, but before we totally digress or before our time elapses, I should say that, Tom, you interviewed our guest today, Dr. Gregory Fowler, who is currently president of the University of Maryland Global Campus. Recently, while our pandemic response is still ongoing, President Fowler came to UMGC just recently. I think, as we record this, we’re in May, just like four months ago, I think in January, I think he started. He came most recently from Southern New Hampshire University and previously held a variety of posts at Western Governors University, Hesser College, Penn State University - Erie, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. Fowler has been the recipient notably of two—count ‘em—two Fulbright Scholar awards. Is there anything you want to say about this interview prior to cutting to it?

Tom: Not much, because I think there's an awful lot jam packed into it that sort of stands on its own. I've had the opportunity to meet Greg a little bit. And we've been sort of social media followers of each other for a long time, and it was really nice to get the opportunity to spend, you know, 20 minutes or so going a little deeper into his journey and, you know, the way he thinks about things. I just really admire his career path and the work that he's done at all of those really innovative institutions, all three of the most recent ones, Western Governors, Southern New Hampshire, and UMGC—previously UMUC. I'm just a big fan of those schools and the way they think and how they don't rest on the past but instead sort of lean into the future. And I think you'll get a sense of that when you when you hear the interview with him. So, maybe we should just use that as our transition.

Kelvin: All right, through the miracle of modern time travel technology via podcast, here is your interview with Dr. Gregory Fowler.
(musical transition)

Tom: So, Greg, thank you so much for agreeing to be on TOPcast. This is a thrill.

Greg Fowler: Thank you for the invitation.

Tom: Yeah, so, maybe just to kind of get things started, perhaps you could kind of just describe a little bit of your career path, what led you to the presidency at University of Maryland Global Campus and, you know, maybe help people kind of understand your path, and this is maybe a little bit of foreshadowing, because I'll give you a little precursor. Maybe before we're done, I'm going to ask you what advice you might have for people who might want to have a similar sort of career path.

Greg: Sure. And I'll try to give a very brief version of this. I started college at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. So, it's an HBCU, a school very much committed to making sure that of course, historically, African Americans have not always had the same opportunities that others have had, and so, this school has a lot of cultural pieces built into the idea of how do we support people who need support in specific ways? That sort of inspired my life story since then. When I first left college, I came and lived here in DC at the time working for the National Endowment for the Humanities, so, my job at that time was outreach specialist where I continued that type of work. The job at that time was to help people who didn't normally get NEH grants, get those grants. So, I spent a lot of time on tribal reservations dealing with various types of organizations just trying to say there's a funding out there to help you get some of your story out there in ways that you wanted to. So, after that, I moved over and taught for a number of years at one of the Penn State campuses up in Erie, Pennsylvania. And then after I came back from my first Fulbright, which was in Berlin, I got really inspired by a lot of the things that Europe was trying to do. Europe at the time was very much focused on how do we take these various educational systems and unify them into something that allows for some type of standardization across all the countries that were trying to participate in the EU? So, when I came back, I was really caught up in this idea of how do you measure education learning in some standardized ways? Which led right into the work that I did with Western Governors when it came down to competency-based data education. In 2005, when I joined the school, it was about 3000 students and about 500 graduates. And over the next six years, by the time I left Western Governors, they were 10 times that size. So, a little bit over 35,000 students, but still very much focused on that work of reaching out to people who were not traditionally successful in higher education modalities, still reaching out to those groups of people to say, “How do we think about high academic quality at the same time as we want to come up with different types of learning experiences?” And that followed me when I got the invitation. After a year at Hesser, I joined SNHU when their online program was beginning to take off. Southern New Hampshire University. And I think they were somewhere around 12 to 13,000 students in their online program at the time, and over the last nine years, we've seen that grow exponentially, of course, but the work continued to be the same thing: affordable, accessible degrees in different types of learning experiences for students who education is not an absolute guarantee for. So, that work allowed me to spend
some time with different organizations around the country, including, of course, UMGC. So, when this came up as an opportunity, I was more than excited to be nominated for this position and the work that they do, certainly around the world, but just the different ways that they approach the idea, again, of what I call the sort of Four A’s—affordability, accessibility, academic quality, and finally, accountability—are the things that I think drive the work that we have been doing here and are going to continue to be doing moving forward.

Tom:

So, Greg, thank you for that very abbreviated career summary. You know, there's a theme that kind of runs throughout your Four A’s, which I think is a really interesting framework, a very interesting lens to look at it with. But you've been spending—at least since Western Governors—a lot of time sort of looking at online learning and how to best serve, you know, that particular non-traditional population. I'm a big fan of all three of those institutions, of Western Governors, of UMGC or UMUC even before that, and of Southern Hampshire. And I wonder if you can maybe share something that you learned along the way that helped prepare you. Like, for example, I'll prompt you with a question. I'm also a big fan of Paul LeBlanc and have followed his career as well, and I wonder if there's anything particularly you picked up from him or from the leadership at Western Governors along the way that you think has helped prepare you for the presidency where you are now?

Greg:

Well, it's interesting, because of course, the three institutions are very different in some ways. Western Governors was founded in 1995 or right around that time, and it was an institution that was starting with the opportunity and the challenges of not having a sort of historical legacy that it was trying to operate around. So, it was able to sort of build from the beginning, and it worked with online education in a way that didn't require it to navigate some of the other things that you would have come across. Southern New Hampshire University, of course, like a lot of the schools in that part of New England started off as a business school—a business training school—eventually became a college, and by the time it decided to get into the online space, it had been around for about 80 years. So, it had a campus that you see a lot in the commercials now. It had a traditional faculty structure, and all of the things that went along with that, and so you had to navigate a different space. So, Paul, one of the things that he did so well was to recognize that we want to keep doing this work that we're doing here and yet, we also want to do some work in other places. The BYU Pathways President Clark Gilbert wrote a book called Dual Transformations, and it's all about how you keep your core operating and at the same time, think about what tomorrow might hold as a leader. And he says one of the ways to do that is to give them a little bit of space from each other. So, the online side of Southern New Hampshire University is literally two miles down the Merrimack from the actual physical campus that people think about in the more traditional sense: close enough to be engaging with each other, but at the same time, enough space so they can think a little bit differently about things and learn from what they did with that to try to figure out what was going to come next. You have to give that space to breathe and at the same time value both, and I think one of the things that was very good about SNHU was appreciating what each was trying to do. One of the big mentors and former board members of SNHU was Clayton Christensen, who just recently passed away about a year ago, and he talked a lot about understanding the mission and the job you're trying to do and supporting
those things without getting distracted. So, when we talk about leadership, being able to understand what is it that we’re good at, what are we trying to accomplish, and recognizing where there may be differences in those various models was something that was very clear at SNHU. Not trying to place one above the other, and also not trying to say that one has to replace the other. There was room for both of those models to operate at the same time, certainly when College for America came along a couple of years later, the competency-based version of these things, for all three to say, “We're dealing with different students, and we need to value and resource each one of those things in the way that they need to, and at the same time not try to make any of those versions the other thing.” One of the big challenges for innovative leaders is to recognize that everything isn't broken, and that was one of the lessons we learned at Western Governors University. There are times where you need to innovate, and there are things that you really don't have to change because they're working fine as they are or there's a reason for them to operate the way they are, and leaders who want to come in and simply wipe the slate clean often find themselves having to go back and reshore things that they otherwise should have just left in place in the first place.

Tom: You know, that's interesting. And you're reading my mind, because that was sort of my next question, which was leading from an innovation mindset as opposed to what I think, you know, the temptation often is to lead from sort of a task mindset, like, “I got to get these things done, and I'm gonna...” If you're a leader, you sort of, like, you know, charge a team with getting this thing done. But I think it's a little different orientation than an innovation mindset, which I think is just as important, and in some ways, more important, because it's got one eye kind of on the horizon as opposed to just what you're doing right now. And I wonder because you've mentioned this just in your last answer about innovation and not necessarily having to fix everything, but I wonder if you have any insights on how to lead with an innovation mindset.

Greg: You know, Bob Johansen did a lot of work with the Institute for the Future out in California during my years at SNHU, and he said a phrase that I think about often. He said, “Leaders need to provide clarity, not certainty.” And understanding the distinction between those was we know what we're trying to do, we're not always necessarily sure how it’s going to transpire is one of the big challenges that I think any leader has to work their way through. So, we want to make sure that our teams and that our vision knows where the North Star is but recognize that you might have to tack left or tack right as you're trying to get on this course to do those types of things. And also that some of the other people in the room are likely—if you truly have an innovative culture going on—to be smarter than you on some of the things you're trying to do. A lot of this work, whether you're talking instructional design, whether you're talking content development, whether you're talking assessment specialists, learning resources, all of these things have things that at least at SNHU, we were working around. How do we sharp each of these areas and make sure they're as strong as they can be, and that their voice is part of the conversation and that we give that voice space to be heard? All of these are things that have to go into the process of what innovation’s going to be, without turning it into “I know every step along the way.” Because the bottom line is if we're innovating, there are lots of times where we have to be comfortable with failure, and how to learn from that failure, and to create the psychological safety for our teams when they're working in that
space to say, “We're going to learn, and we're going to keep moving forward, and we're not afraid to sometimes say we're gonna step back from that.” Some of the things that I was most impressed with were the times when the leadership at SNHU would say, “Yeah, we could keep going down this path, but we don't think it's going to end up where we want it to. Better to, you know, cut our losses from this, learn from what we did, and move on to the next thing that we want to try to do.” That takes a lot of courage, and it also takes leaders who are going to be willing to say, “I don't have to always be seen as the hero.”

Tom: Yeah, it's something we've talked about on this podcast, and I've talked about a lot with colleagues is this idea of we tend to hide failure. You know, you go to professional conferences, and everybody's talking about these wonderful projects and all these great outcomes, and you know there's more to the story than that. And I'd love to have just nothing but a failure conference where we go and we all just share, “Here are the things that just didn't work and what I learned from that.” This is Tom’s soapbox here for a second, but I think that that would be really, really valuable.

Greg: Well, I think that the other piece that's really valuable in that, Tom, is not just the study of the failure but what were the things you thought along the way that made you think that was the path to take? Because in many cases, when we study those types of things, you see assumptions that other people are making that something that you're doing is right, that you can actually help them not make the same mistakes you made. You know, I have four older brothers, and they are much older than myself. My next oldest brother's ten years older than I am, and my mom often said to me, “Greg, if you pay close attention to your brothers, you don't have to repeat their mistakes. You're gonna make your own, but you don't have to repeat theirs.” And I think that's the same thing that you have to think about when we're talking about higher education. If you've got several institutions that are trying to collaborate and learn, having one of them say, “You know, we tried this thing. It didn't work. Here's what we were thinking at the time,” and another one saying, “We were just thinking that yesterday.” And learning from that could help a lot of other institutions move things forward. One of the things I've seen that I've been very happy with in the sort of space we're talking about—UMGC, SNHU, UCF, and some of the others—is the willingness to pick up the phone and talk to each other because that allows other groups to move forward. In the end, as we all know, none of us serve even 1% of the United States college population. And I say college. I don't just mean 18-22 years old. I mean the full population of post-secondary. None of us serve more than 1%. None of us even serve 1%. There's plenty of room in here for us to learn and to engage with each other and to give each other the space to try their missions and understand different ways to work with people if we're willing to do that. But that again requires leaders who are both courageous and more committed to the mission than they are to the headline.

Tom: Yeah, yeah. Well, you mentioned Clayton Christensen and Paul LeBlanc. I've been fortunate enough to be in small group discussions with each of them, and that's where I first heard the “Jobs To Be Done,” you know, framework, even before I read it in case studies and things. What do you think the job is that UMGc is doing for your students now?
Greg: So, one of the things that really appeals to me about UMGC is that, of course, we have our historical work that we've been doing since 1947, certainly with the military and other things. One of the first things I did when I came here was watch this documentary called *Over There*, which was on the Maryland Public Television. It was all about the faculty members who were traveling the globe to go teach students who were in circumstances where they couldn't sit in a classroom. So, you have some of these wonderful faculty members in jungles. Sometime, in fact, one of them talks about there being bomb alerts going off, and they're trying to figure out how to move around in some of the places in the desert. So, one of the first things that became very clear to me was that UMGC is really focused on meeting students where they are both literally and, when it comes to the work we're trying to do, virtually now. So, I think this is one of the big opportunities. This is for us to think about the different populations that we are trying to serve. So, when Clayton and Paul and others talk about this, they aren't saying that there is a one size fits all. They're saying that for different groups of people, they have different purposes that they're trying to serve. For a lot of our military students who are getting out of the military, they are looking for what their next job is going to be. For a lot of the military families who are going with their spouses overseas, they're trying to make sure they continue their education. For any number of reasons, we have to be aware of all of the different types of products—and I'm going to use that word in the broadest sense here—that we are trying to put out there into the market space, these learning experiences that fit the various needs. Being clear about that and being clear about what needs to change about each of them and what can remain the same is an absolutely critical thing that we're trying to figure out how to do here at UMGC and make sure that we serve each of those populations well.

Tom: So, what do you think the biggest obstacles [are]? I know you're not that long tenure into the position yet. It's probably not a fair question to ask. But what obstacles do you see in front of you right now in sort of, you know, fulfilling that mission to serve those constituencies that you just described?

Greg: Well, I would say that the biggest observation I'd have—I wouldn't necessarily call it an obstacle—but everyone wants to sort of fight the last battle or have the last accomplishment. And one of the first things I said when I joined this team here is, “I did not come to UMGC to try to replicate SNHU, nor did I go to SNHU to try to replicate what WGU was trying to do.” In each of those instances, being clear on what we are trying to accomplish, who our populations are, and the ways that, in the strengths that we have that can help with that, are the things that I'm trying to think about. So, we have more than 170 locations around the globe where we are doing teaching for various populations. There's wonderful opportunities with DEI work that I think is going to play out in this. There are wonderful opportunities in different types of learning experiences, some of which will be microcredentials or certificates or other things. So, these are the big challenges that I think are in front of us. I think what we have to be able to do is work with those things as we move forward in a different way than we were for the things that we saw before. So, there was a period in the early 2000 teens, when it made a lot of sense to try to grow exponentially with certain types of strategies, and I think now those strategies will have changed. We are about to come out of a pandemic in which all of the 4000 schools—many of which we're not even thinking about online education have at least had some
exposure to it—and you've got a whole lot of leadership out there trying to figure out what comes next. So, for us, trying to make sure we, again, stay focused on what we are trying to do. Don't try to play keeping up with the Joneses. Try to do the work that we do well. These are some of the big challenges. I think the other big one is always going to be any place you go, you got to make sure you work on the culture and continue the culture of letting people try things that are new, celebrating their successes, but also again, creating that space where if they don't succeed at something, they feel okay about being able to admit that and move forward.

Tom: So, I warned you, I was going to ask you to offer some advice to maybe some people who might be a little earlier in their career who might aspire to college presidency. What would you tell them? How would you encourage [them]? What suggestions would you provide?

Greg: So, one of the biggest lessons, I think—and it sounds relatively obvious, but it's not, I think, for most leaders—is that you don't have to be good at everything. And that the best leaders do two things. One, they make other leaders. They help other people to, you know, aspire and get to the level that they need to, but they also surround themselves with people who shore up those areas that they are not necessarily the strongest in. I was just having this conversation yesterday with someone. What I said to her was, “You don't have to worry about being the person who knows everything in the room. In fact, if you're the person who knows everything else in the room, why do you need to hire anybody else?” So, how do we surround ourselves with people who are going to help us do those things that we don't necessarily do well? And how do we maintain our humility, to recognize that we don't do those things well? So, the first step is hiring, the second step is trusting them and allowing them the space to grow in the areas that they need to. That's a very hard thing for many leaders to do. So, if you're going to be a college president, I think, at least for me, I take great comfort in the fact that when I'm in a room with the people who are around me, I have faith that they know what they're doing, and that allows me to do what I do best so that they can also do what they do best.

Tom: That's great. I have so many more questions. If we only had more time. Maybe—I know you're a busy guy. You're a college president—but if the opportunity presents itself, I'd love to continue this at another time because I think that there's so much more that we could talk about.

Greg: Oh, absolutely. And of course, check back in with me in six months and I guarantee you I have learned something new. That's the nature of the game.

Tom: Yeah! Well, on behalf of Kelvin and myself, we're really grateful you did make time out of your schedule to talk to us and to be on TOPcast. Thank you very much, Greg.

Greg: Thank you again for the invitation. Good to see you.
Kelvin: Well, Tom, that was your interview with Greg Fowler.

Tom: It was my interview. Yeah, as you can see, he's a really thoughtful guy, and I can't wait to see what he does at UMGC.

Kelvin: Yeah, if he could find time, I think he should have a podcast.

Tom: Yeah. He should. Yeah. They had, as you can probably see, if you're watching this on video, they had kind of an interesting setup for him, and it seemed like they had some gear and a mixer. And so, he probably should.

Kelvin: He's got a good voice. He's got good delivery, right? And he's incredibly thoughtful. And you know, can I just say—I told you this before we hit record—what a rich set of background experiences for a university president! I mean, everybody has their own path to get to institutional presidencies, but, man, what a what a diverse background.

Tom: Yeah.

Kelvin: Rich.

Tom: Yeah, he was destined to do it, I think, or to end up where he is now. But yeah, I think there's a lot we could learn from that conversation. You know, like a couple of things jumped out to me. One was this this framework of the of the Four A's: the affordability, accessibility, academic quality, and accountability. As we were talking about earlier, that it is somewhat reminiscent of our Iron Triangle framework. It's slightly different. But because we've talked so much about that on this podcast, and it's been a lens through which we've used so much here at UCF, that resonated with me a lot. I really thought that was a really interesting way to approach the work through those Four A's.

Kelvin: Yeah, agreed. The accountability part’s an important thing that we don't talk about as much, right? At least in the Iron Triangle construct. So, that is a notable addition. To me, I think I mentioned this when we were talking before hitting record, I think I was really struck. I mean, it's not like this is a completely new concept, but I like the way he expressed the idea that no institution serves more than 1% of potential higher ed. students in the US. And so, you don't need to really com—I mean, we sometimes see or we talked about, I think, here before “co-competition.” You know, cooperating and competing. We talk about competing some, but really, you know, to what extent are institutions competing for the same sliver of a percentage point rather than trying to serve a different slice of the potential student pie? That's a head scratcher, right? You've gotta go, “Huh. Interesting.”

Tom: Yeah, I think only when you're at some very elite levels are you competing, but even then, you know, Princeton and Harvard and Columbia are turning down an awful lot of qualified students, so there should be plenty of students for all of us. And so, we ought to be helping each other.
Kelvin: Yeah. And even, too, within an institution, like he gave the SNHU example of kind of their three—at least the last time I was there anyway—kind of three distinct emphases: like the campus environment, the what I think they call now also the global environment, and then the College for America CBE program, how they're all distinct, and but you don't need to arm wrestle over them. They can be distinct on their own and live alongside each other. I think that's just a helpful and healthy perspective that I heard again and again in what he said.

Tom: I have often used SNHU as a kind of an example of an institution that kind of gets it on how to serve multiple audiences, like the parable of the three blind men and the elephant. We may have talked about [that] in this podcast before, but each one of those students is a different person feeling a different part of the elephant, and it's different to each of them, but it's still one elephant. It's that institution. And Greg was instrumental in establishing that there and making it successful.

Kelvin: I just, I mean, to me, that's a theme I heard a lot about collaboration, and kind of there's room for everybody. Even the whole kind of quick quip toward the end about some institutions, and he generously included UCF in that. You know, you pick up the phone and you call, you talk. I mean, that's great.

Tom: Yeah, that's true. That's true. It's something I value in this community, and I'm happy to do it for others when they call me, and then I'm sure glad they are willing to take my call when I pick up the phone and ask them questions. I've done it actually not that long ago, called a whole bunch of people and asked them questions about online budget models and organizational structures and other kinds of things. Because as we're thinking about what we want to be when we grow up, whatever that might be. You know, speaking of which, one of the things he said that I thought was great was his thoughts on leadership, and, you know, not being the smartest person in the room, but leaders growing other leaders. That's critical, and I think too often we don't think about that. Within higher ed, too much of the culture is dependent or there's an expectation, maybe I should say, that you need to bring somebody in from the outside always. Or if you want to advance in your career, you're gonna have to move or go to another institution. I don't think higher ed is as good as industry in succession planning, in promoting from within, and developing people. And I think an institution that, as he said, kind of makes other leaders is one that probably is setting itself up for sustainable success in the long term.

Kelvin: I like that. And then I think we'd be remiss if we didn't call back to TOPcast Episode 80, the interview that you did with Luke Dowden—“'Carism' in Leading Online Learning Teams”—because I think Fowler and Dowden make similar kinds of points about first step is hiring, and then second step is developing, or as Greg Fowler said, trusting them, which I think is really an important point.

Tom: Yeah. Yeah. So, I enjoyed it. We did sort of say that maybe we'll check in with him after he's had a chance to be in the seat a little bit longer and see what he's learned, what insights he can share, and I would welcome the opportunity to do that.
Kelvin: Yeah, that's great. You want to try to land the plane so we can get out of here before, I don't know, the cleaning crew kicks us out of the office?

Tom: *(chuckles)* Sure. So, framing our institutional missions and the place of online learning within those missions as Christensen’s “Jobs To Be Done,” which Greg talked about, within an Iron Triangle—*(softly)* Iron Triangle? Iron Triangle type of framework helps us all serve the greater good and create opportunities through education.

Kelvin: Mhmm.

Tom: Wow. What’s in this coffee?

Kelvin: You want to do that one again? *(laughing)*

Tom: *(laughing)* No. As TOPcast listeners will know, you get us in all of our worst.

Kelvin: That’s right. You had that look like, “Yeah, I want to do that one again,” but okay. You know, I like the Iron Triangle. I think we ought to start using that.

Tom: *(laughing)* The Iron Triangle.

Kelvin: *(laughing)* The Iron Triangle.

Tom: There you go.

Kelvin: That’s it. And on that note, *(laughing)* until next time, for TOPcast, I’m Kelvin.

Tom: And I’m Tom.

Kelvin: See ya.

*(musical outro)*