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Spotlight on Linda D. Woodard, Ed.D., MBM, CPRW, CWDP, GCDF, CDFI
NAU Roueche Graduate Center
Community College Leadership Program, Doctorate of Education, 2016

Being Prepared for Change:
“Bent Arrow” Journey Leads to Career and Education Success

Dr. Linda D. Woodard spends her days at Florida State College at Jacksonville providing oversight of corporate engagement, Continuing Education programming and apprenticeship affiliated programs.

She is also the President and founder of the LDW Group LLC, a small business that provides career and workforce development services for professionals, agencies and organizations. She serves clients on evenings and weekends.

Her journey to workforce development, however, has not been direct.

“I consider myself a bent arrow in that my path to community college workforce development is likened to that of a bent arrow,” she says.

Dr. Woodard received her Bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. Her first job out of college was as a sales engineer for a major oil company.

“While I enjoyed determining lubricant-related failures of large equipment, I longed for opportunities to help people.”

After a few years of selling industrial lubricants, she bent her arrow to technical writing where she joined a team of engineers to write articles for a welding publication.

“I still had not found my niche.”



In 1990, she landed a position with The Ohio State University's Young Scholars Program where she managed a pre-collegiate program that targeted economically-disadvantaged students from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). Participants received nurturing supports throughout high school to ensure successful matriculation.

"Eligible 6th graders were identified, and if they maintained at least a 3.0 grade point average through to high school graduation, they received a full scholarship to Ohio State," said Dr. Woodard. "I enjoyed helping students realize their potential and see college as a reality."

Working in a higher education environment was also appealing to Dr. Woodard. Her "bent arrow" career journey took her next to the United Negro College Fund where she worked as a development director; raising money for student scholarships, but it is was at her next position where it all clicked. "I was hired as a program coordinator in the workforce development division at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), helping to empower adult learners find their path to satisfying careers," said Dr. Woodard. "I loved what I was doing and worked for a phenomenal executive vice president." In her seven years, she was promoted to an executive director and then the Executive Vice President (EVP) retired. A new person was hired to replace the EVP which resulted in a reorganization of the workforce division and her position was eliminated. She became a dislocated worker.

Acquiring transferrable skills throughout her career allowed Dr. Woodard to once again bend her arrow to work in Atlanta for a national internship organization as a regional director that targeted minority college juniors and seniors and matched them with corporations throughout southeast United States. An opportunity with CMSD brought her back to Ohio and for 4 years, through 2011, she worked as the District's executive director of the Strategic Communications department. There she managed all department operations to include the call center, website, publications, and audio visual services for more than 100 schools.

She was happy in her position when her former boss from Tri-C called.

"She had been called out of retirement and had committed to serving three years to once again provide strategic direction of Tri-C's workforce development division. She asked if I could come back to help. It was a risk," reflected Dr. Woodard. "My job at CMSD was secure and I knew that in three years, I could be dislocated again."

She called on her own counsel to make her decision.

"In wearing my career development hat, I always stress to my clients to view every job as a temporary assignment, to proactively seek opportunities that help you grow professionally, and be prepared for change," shares Dr. Woodard.

So in 2011, Dr. Woodard returned to Tri-C to once again work for a leader that she greatly respected. It was during this second tenure at the College that she began pursuing her doctorate through National American University's Roueche Graduate Center's Community College Leadership Program (CCLP).

"This was an opportunity that I just could not pass up. I enrolled into the CCLP so that I could hone my skills to become an even more effective leader within a community college."

As she predicted, three years after returning to Tri-C her position was once again eliminated while still enrolled in the CCLP. She was prepared for this change, however, and had some time to search for the right opportunity.

She didn't have to wait long. In March 2015, she interviewed for her current position as Associate Vice President for Workforce Education and Economic Development at Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ).

"It has been a good fit. I work directly with teams of talented educators who are tremendously focused on student success. In addition, I have the great opportunity to engage the business and industry community to make connections for career opportunities for our students who are just beginning their career journey, and develop training for incumbent employees who need to upgrade their skills," said Dr. Woodard.



Dr. Woodard continues to stress to individuals not to be afraid to be a "bent arrow" by pursuing new opportunities to make maximum use of the transferrable skills acquired throughout a career. She also encourages FSCJ students to do whatever it takes to earn their degrees, certificates, and professional certifications.

"Always keep your resume updated, and stay relevant so that you can be prepared for change," expressed Dr. Woodard.

Dr. Woodard's own list of credentials is long, including Certified Workforce Development Professional, Certified Career Development Facilitator Instructor, Global Career Development Facilitator, Certified Professional Resume Writer, Certified Program Planner, and most recently, in 2016, she successfully earned her Doctorate of Education in Community College Leadership. Her dissertation is entitled *Navigational Strategies Employed by Non-academic Community College Leaders to Ensure Leadership Effectiveness*.

"When I went into the NAU doctoral program, it was not my goal to be the president of a community college," she said. "Now, however, thanks to great mentors at NAU, my leadership skills have been enhanced. I am excited to put into practice all of the great knowledge that I have acquired to move the community college agenda forward into the future."

"I am very grateful to NAU and the faculty and staff at Roueche Graduate Center, and am now a proud alumnus."