

My leadership Journey

Melissa Parlade, DO

Educational/Work background

- I graduated from high school at 16 years old
- I started working full-time at and going to school full time
- From ages 17-26 I worked in Human Resources
- Why HR?
- I eventually switched from Pre-med to Communications and completed my Bachelor's degree in Mass Communications with a minor in Finance
 - Why the switch? To sum it up in one word: Inexperience/young age
 - No mentorship – I didn't even know a doctor! My parents didn't finish high school, I didn't know anyone that had gone to college.
 - Self-doubt, was I good enough to be a doctor? I didn't think so.
 - Other priorities - 2009 I got married, 2010 we bought a house and by this time we both had flourishing careers – I liked human resources!

Career in Human Resources

- Started as an HR assistant at FIU
- Moved on to a full-service human resources agency as a benefits coordinator
- In 2011 I began working at For Eyes Optical as a benefits coordinator and moved up through several promotions until my final position of Manager of HR and Payroll Operations
- HR was a necessary step in my life: it showed me my capabilities
- It wasn't long before I started to look back at my decisions and consider, maybe I could have been a doctor.

Why words matter and why seeing potential in other people is important.

Going back to school

- I had been out of school for about 4-5 years.
- I had several pre-requisite courses to take prior to being eligible to sit for the medical school entrance exam.
- Same roadblocks as before – first obstacle came almost immediately
 - “What kind of mother would you be?”
 - “What does your husband say about all this?”
 - “Why would a medical school choose an old tattered sweater, when they can have a brand new one”
 - “Sometimes, you’re just a horse that can no longer race.”
 - “You really should consider doing something else with your life, this is not for you”
 - The endless expectation of failure
 - You probably won’t get in
 - You probably won’t get through the first year
 - You probably will fail your boards – that’s the equalizer
 - You probably won’t match into residency and it will all have been for nothing
 - You probably won’t survive the residency
 - Where does it end?

What came next?

- Matched at my number one site in preferred specialty
- Chief resident for the program
- Hired as a nocturnist at WKBH
- Numerous research projects, quality improvement projects
- Continued search for leadership positions and continued involvement in hospital management
- Things to consider:
 - What different outcomes my own grandparents would have had if at that time, there were more people in healthcare that could represent them or that would speak their language?
 - “Everything is fine”, until it isn’t.
 - Who can go with them to appointments? No one. Everyone has to work.
 - Cuban immigrants that faced the unthinkable to die of preventable diseases in the USA.
 - What is the health literacy of our community?
 - Why aren’t patients taking their medications? There is always a reason.
 - How many are of us are discouraged from pursuing medicine before we even start?

What did I learn?

- Sometimes you have to create a path for yourself, there will always be nay-sayers
- You don't have to take all the advice given to you, but you should hear them out!
- Uncertainty is part of the process, there are a lot of unknowns
- Change is necessary
- Others are watching: Fun fact – my husband left his career in Advertising and is completing his PsyD at NOVA Southeastern University