

Interview with Duane Reynolds, MHA – February 13th, 2015

Conducted by Anton J. Johnson, MHA Candidate '16

1. Can you tell me a bit about your current position and how your career path led you to where you are now since graduating with your MHA?

I graduated from the MHA program in 2004, upon which I worked for OhioHealth as a project manager in their organizational development department. It was very similar to a fellowship in that I worked in the corporate office amongst executive leaders. My role was to help implement “Corporate University”, a virtual structure used to integrate learning opportunities with the strategies of the organization. I also helped with the implementation of an e-learning system. These roles gave me a good 30,000 foot view of the organization and allowed me to develop good mentorship relationships with a few of the executives at OhioHealth.

My next position was at Johns Hopkins as a Division Administrator for the Division of Rheumatology, a role I held for about 3.5 years. This role provided good experience in faculty practice management, within both the university and clinical operations. During my tenure with Johns Hopkins, I was selected to complete the Johns Hopkins Medicine Leadership development program, which proved very beneficial to my career back then and today.

While at Hopkins, I was recruited to Emory. My first position with Emory was in the Department of Internal Medicine, managing six Internal Medicine Specialties, focusing on clinical operations, which is where I honed clinical operations skills. I spent three years implementing new processes that allowed for greater standardization of practice and financial stability. This led to a promotion into my current role as Clinical Department Administrator for the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. In this role, I once again assumed responsibility for the business, financial and strategic operations of both the university and clinical operations, including academic and research functions.

2. After graduating you decided to go the job route rather than the administrative fellowship route, did you find that there were unique challenges with that, and any do you do have any advice for current students looking to do the same?

I think it depends on the experience you had prior to coming into the MHA program. If you worked previously you may not need the fellowship experience, but what the fellowship does offer is that 30,000 ft. view and the ability to build relationships with executives in the system who can become your advocates later on in your career. However, you can certainly still be successful despite not doing a fellowship. With my experience, I was ready to go right into a full-time position.

- 3. You've spent a good amount of your career in academic medical centers, and very reputable ones at that. What unique challenges and opportunities do you think Academic Medical Centers present, and what advice would you give students who are interested in working in a university health system?**

Although some Academic Medical Centers are bureaucratic and sometimes political, there is definitely a notion of innovation, discovery, and energy that circulates in an Academic Medical Center making it a very unique operating and learning environment. There are different missions in an academic medical center, which can sometimes be in conflict with each other. The role of an academic medical center administrator is to try to understand the balance and to find synergies between those missions. It's a very challenging place to work, but one that's rewarding and allows you to have a bit more entrepreneurship in working directly with faculty to build programs.

Academic Medical Centers are going to be challenged in the future because of the cost structures and silos that exist. AMCs that thrive in the future will have figured out how to align missions and reduce cost structures such that they add value and lead in new models of education, research translation and clinical outcomes.

- 4. In general, what has been the most rewarding and challenging aspect about having a career as a healthcare administrator?**

I think the challenges are the complexity of the environment and figuring out how to work with various groups, and, more importantly, how to get various groups to work with one another. Healthcare is a highly regulated environment and so we're continuously scanning for compliance and safety risk that might arise in our operating environments.

The rewarding part of it is the flipside - the complexity and diversity of challenges is what keeps the job interesting.

- 5. What do you know now that you wished you had known before you started career?**

Personally, I wish I would have understood how challenging and different my path to success would have to be as an under-represented minority in the field. Despite the success I've achieved, it hasn't been as clear-cut to navigate being a African-American, gay executive but it has allowed me to create a level of awareness and guidance for others, with similar diversity, seeking to advance in the field.

- 6. What opportunities would you tell current students to take advantage of while their still in school and at OSU?**

As a student you have a unique opportunity to ask questions and reach out to our alumni for advice and career coaching. The alumni of the program are invaluable and the first point of making connections with someone who may be able to help you later on in your career. When you start your career, you won't have the same opportunities to connect with people as you did as a student. Even after graduating, stay connected to the HSMP Alumni Society. Your goal should be to retain and strengthen connections you made within the program. Several of the positions I've held were due in part to alumni relationships - they're critical.

- 7. My classmates and I are entering a healthcare world that's still very evolving and somewhat uncertain. What would you say are the need skills and tools to stay relevant and marketable in this environment?**

New graduates should focus on understanding new payment mechanisms for value-based care, process improvement and how to move metrics in an organization and the patient experience. Success in these areas often relates to organizational culture, so as an administrator understanding how to develop culture and high performance teams within the culture are essential.

- 8. What are some of your most memorable moments at Ohio State and what does the University mean to you now?**

The interaction between my classmates and the faculty during classes is extremely memorable. We all enjoyed our time together. Clearly learning was our goal, but enjoying each other along the way made our education that much more rewarding.

And when I think about The Ohio State University, I think about having pride in my alma mater, being loyal and giving back to a University that really invested in me.