Introduction

This is not your typical “book”. This is written by a student, just like you. I don’t change my words for the sake of sounding cool or highly academic. I have written this exactly as if I were having a conversation with you. This can be a personal experience for you. I have shared some personal details about myself so that you know where my background is and what my life was like at the time of my attending OSU.

And speaking of OSU (go Beavs!), what a great school to start this journey. I hope that when you’re reading this that great people like Don Johnson are still there, working to build up students like you into amazing people. Whether you are confident or terrified, these people will help guide you to understanding who you really are inside and how you can demonstrate that amazingness. I only wish I were there to help you, too. But maybe this book can help. I also invite you to find me on whatever social media platform is popular right now because I’m probably on it somewhere. I’m more
likely to be found on whatever is considered the professional networking site of the times because that's where my passion lies.

Thank you for wanting to read this. I hope my story can help build yours. Go be amazing!
Chapter 1: Raw Potential and Uncertainty

“You are the only person in existence who can use your potential. It is an awesome responsibility.”

- Zig Ziglar
When I think about how I imagined leadership before I started my college career, I never really considered much more than a few history classes I had taken who talked about “great leaders”, but I never really thought about what made them “great” except for maybe being on the “right side of history”, that they won some battle or were the monarch of some country or something like that. I never really considered the practical, everyday leader. I never considered that there could be leaders around me today, and I certainly never considered the possibility that I would ever be one of those people.

I never really had much consideration for myself or my abilities about dealing with people. I liked helping people, but I never really considered that to be a “leadership quality”. Now that I think about it, I really did have a pretty vague definition of leadership. I just thought it was something that went along with a title. King so and so is a leader, Alexander the Great is a leader, Napoleon is a leader. Things like that. I had never really thought about people Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, or Mother Teresa as leaders. I’m not really sure why except that I probably just lacked a broader perspective. Call it a lack of knowledge or education, or just a different world view, but I can see now how my definition of leadership has certainly changed, even in just a relatively short amount of time.

When I started the leadership certificate program, I was asked to write about my personal definition of leadership. I had the hardest time trying to figure out “the right answer” to write down. I looked up dictionary definitions and tried to figure out which definition I most identified with. What an analytical way of looking at it! It was a nice starting point, though, because it started me thinking about how I really defined leadership. Was it something like a mentor or guide? Was it someone inspirational? A role model? Maybe it was just someone who did something worthwhile, someone who made a difference. It was definitely a tricky assignment, but I was determined to power through
it. I used the time I spent writing my personal definition of leadership to really try and understand what it meant to me to be a leader and how I fit in that picture.

When I think back on my time at OSU, I first think about my goals for coming here. I took a very practical approach to my education. I wanted to improve my professionalism, develop a strong academic background, and make myself irresistible to employers. I did everything I could to make that happen. I went to any networking events I could, trying to practice and develop my professional image. I knew that I had to push myself and I wouldn’t have normally considered myself to be shy, but I was already fairly intimidated by attending such a big university. I had it in my head that I was barely worthy of such an accomplishment because of the years I spent trying to make this dream a reality.

College was always pushed in my family and I often thought of myself as a future UCLA Bruin, but I had been attending community college because my mother couldn’t afford to pay for anything else, and it gradually became something that I never really moved beyond. When I was informed that we would be moving to Oregon, I thought my college dreams were over. I expected to get my mother and grandmother settled in Oregon while I worked and saved every penny I could to move back home to Los Angeles and live out the rest of my life. Little did I know that I would be moving to Oregon during a 13% unemployment rate and that finding a job would be nearly impossible because of where we ended up living: a small town of 1800 people more than a half-hour from any sort of civilization. When I was turned down for a full-time job because of where I lived I knew that my original plan was out the window. I knew I had to do something, so I started attending a local community college to try and take a few classes that might transfer back to my old school in California. Little by little, it became clear that I wouldn’t be moving back home anytime soon. I
established residency and got myself on track to transfer to one of the local universities: Western Oregon University, Oregon State University, and University of Oregon.

When I think about my choices for universities, I think about the Goldilocks story a lot. There are just too many parallels to ignore it. Western Oregon had a great program that I was interested in but it was definitely the baby bear. Thinking about attending a school with only 6,000 students was kind of amusing because my community college in California had 19,000. I always imagined that I would be attending UCLA which is a rather large school, so I always had the “ideal college experience” be something that involved a large student body. So Western Oregon wasn’t my first choice, but it had a lot going for it. It was the closest campus to my house and it had already given me a conditional acceptance (I had one remaining class to take at the local community college). So it was on the list. The next choice was U of O. Big campus, big student body, good business program. But it had some drawbacks, it was the farthest from my house and offered the smallest financial aid package. I just couldn’t afford to pay anything to go to college, so it was over almost as quickly as it began. But then that brings us to Oregon State. Good sized campus, good sized student body, and a financial aid package that covered everything except gas. I could handle that. It was farther than WOU, but closer than U of O, so it was right in the middle. It had a great business program and everyone that I met was absolutely amazing to me. Everyone was kind and supportive. I never got a “sales pitch” to attend which made me feel like a human being and not a commodity. The campus was everything I could have hoped for: an East Coast Jeffersonian look with red brick and white columns, but only 45 miles from my house with a full financial aid package. The choice was clear from the moment I set foot on campus.
I remember taking a rather, for lack of a better word, academic perspective to my education. From nearly the beginning of enrolling in school in Oregon, I was constantly checking course equivalencies, course sequences, bacc core requirements, major requirements, etc. and mapping the path of my education. What I didn't really consider, though, was extracurriculars. I knew that if I went to Western that I would only go through the motions of getting my education. I would keep my head down and plow through classes as quickly as possible so that I could move back home as quickly as possible. But when comparing OSU to WOU, it occurred to me that I had two very different paths laid out before me.

I knew that a path through WOU would be purely academic, based solely on a short time-to-degree duration. Or I could go down another path that would take a little longer, but gave me the campus size and diversity to really throw myself into the college experience. An experience that I had been dreaming of, but thought was gone forever. Once I compared the two, it was an easy choice, and boy did I embrace it. I scheduled my START session as quickly as I possibly could, but because of my needing some additional courses to be completed, my START session ended up being one of the last to be offered. In the meantime, I scoured the Oregon State website to gather as much information as I could. I discovered Connect Week and mapped out an entire week’s worth of workshops and events to attend. I thought about clubs and organizations that I could be part of and started scanning around for how to join various organizations to really dive head-first into the college experience. I couldn’t wait to get started and September just couldn’t come fast enough for me.
Your journey may start differently than mine did, but we all experience similar feelings and apprehensions about where we want to go, what we want to do, and who we want to be. Understand that these feelings are normal. Just because you graduated high school doesn’t mean you have all the answers. And if you do know exactly where your path is going to take you, be warned, sometimes life can throw you curve balls that you’ve never even imagined possible. Make sure that your plan is flexible enough to roll with the punches of life. I never imagined that I would have to cope with two family deaths and serious family illnesses all within my short time at OSU and it took me a while to get back in the groove and rediscover what really drives me. Make sure you take some time for yourself and explore this new phase of your life. You will start seeing things differently if you wake the time to push yourself beyond your own expectations.
Chapter 2: Discovering the Leader Within

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”

- John Quincy Adams
When classes at OSU finally got started, I ended up being literally dragged to a class which was the first in a three-course sequence that included an internship aspect to help out with ASOSU, the student government on campus. I was not particularly interested in taking another class, especially not one where I would be dealing with student government as I have never been political, quite the opposite in fact, but I was coerced into thinking it would be an “easy A”. I thought, “oh, why not?” and tried it. I am so incredibly glad that I did because this class was the first class I took at OSU that forced me to step out of my comfort zone, despite my best protests. I had to not only help with political things that I had, up to that point, hated, but also had to be a visible representation of the campus and engage strangers in conversation. I thought this was going to be a recipe for disaster, but as it turns out, it was the first domino to fall in what would be the path to my new role as a leader.

This class gave me the perspective to see things differently. Through the many task forces available, I found several that ignited a passion in me that I never even knew existed. It was my work with the Non-Traditional Affairs Task Force that led me to create a club to address the social aspects of Non-Traditional student life. It was serving as this club’s president that forced me to not only participate in public speaking, but to embrace it. I knew I had a story to tell and that people would listen. I knew my story could help people as they first came to OSU and struggled to navigate its confusing nature and Traditional-Student leanings. I could help people. I knew I always loved helping people, but I was discovering that I was actually making an impact. It was a remarkable feeling to have people approach me after a workshop and thank me for making an impact on them.
Little by little, I was starting to broaden my extracurricular activities. One of the first things I did to focus on my major was that I joined the Management Club. I had joined the club part-way through the term and I’ll never forget that the first thing I did with Management Club was to attend a networking event presented by Sandy Neubaum. This single event was the kick-start to my networking and professionalism. It lit a fire in me because it gave me the confidence to know that I didn’t look out of place, I knew proper etiquette, and could effectively describe myself in 30 seconds or less.

Now with this newfound confidence, I wanted to practice as much as I could. I wanted to be expertly proficient with talking to people because I knew that I had to do this in order to get a job. I had heard the saying “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know” and I wanted to make myself so marketable and so proficient that employers would be fighting over me at graduation. I devoted myself to self-improvement and professional development every free moment I had. I was constantly revising my resume, read every networking blog I could find, and I created a Linkedin account years ago when it first started to gain popularity on the social media scene. I loved the premise of creating a way to stay connected with professional contacts and to keep it separate from your personal life.
Chapter Advice

Your priorities and goals for yourself while you’re in college may be different than mine, but it’s important to have goals. If you wander through your academic years not having any idea what you want to do or where you want to go, I suggest that your first stop should be the career services facility on campus where they can help you assess what you’re good at, what you really enjoy, and how you can tailor your academic experience to pursue that path. I can assure you that every career services staff member I’ve spoken to has been nothing but kind, supportive, and encouraging. It’s okay to not know what you want to do, but you shouldn’t waste a lot of time trying to figure it out.

Once you know where you generally want to end up at the end of your undergraduate career, you should start looking around at things that can help you along the way. Some find that joining a club in your career field or major can be helpful (future veterinarians, management club, etc.) and you can usually find classmates who are studying in the same classes as you. This usually leads to an instant study group. These are important as you travel through your academic life, and if you thought group work was over, think again. Joining a club can also help you diversify your resume and allow you to gain much-needed leadership experience through the various officer positions available in a club. My leadership in a club was immensely helpful for me when I was interviewing for various internships I’ve been offered.

In addition to finding a club in your major, I challenge you to do something that really pushes your boundaries and sets you firmly outside your comfort zone. You may have heard the phrase that failing at something is the true learning experience and I would venture an opinion that this is because it forces you to reevaluate your previous assumptions and makes you think and see things
differently. Why not try it without failing? Take a class you’d never take otherwise. Have fun with it.
It didn’t take me long to understand how important networking was and how I really need to work on my networking abilities. I don’t know if it was the networking event with Sandy Neubaum or just something I had read in a blog or article somewhere, but somewhere I had heard a statistic that more than 70% of people who get a job get it because they knew someone in the company. I wanted to make sure my odds of job success were in my favor, so I tried to really broaden my “network” – or the group of people connected to, either by a direct conversation or by a friend of a friend – or a large pool of similar connection like a friend of a friend – so that I would have a large pool of resources to call upon for help. And the help could manifest in any number of ways, whether it be something like an informational interview where you basically just ask them about what it is they do for a job and how they got to where they are, etc. or by actually working in a company that I might be interested in working for where they could introduce me to the hiring manager.

I knew from reading some articles that you shouldn’t be a “user” – someone who only takes from connections, only communicates when they want something, etc. – so I tried hard to maintain my relationships through some sort of mutual benefit, although it was really hard to find something I could offer a lot of the time. My mentor would eventually point me in the right direction, though: when you’re a student and you connect with someone “important”, sometimes just telling that connection

Chapter 3: The New World of Networking

“I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people.”

- Mahatma Gandhi
how they have impacted your life is all the reward or gift they need. Think about if someone had come up to you after a presentation you made on something you were really passionate about and that someone told you that what you had just said had touched their heart somehow. You would feel pretty fantastic and wouldn’t really mind helping them out if they had asked.

At the same time as I was developing my professionalism and personal development, I was seeking out opportunities in my field. I was the embodiment of impostor syndrome before I even knew there was such a thing. I would later learn that impostor syndrome is a psychological phenomenon in which people are unable to internalize their accomplishments. Despite external evidence of their competence, those with the syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and don’t deserve the success they have achieved. Proof of success is often dismissed as luck, good timing, or as a result of somehow deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent and competent than they believe themselves to be. I felt so inferior because I literally had zero professional experience with technology and I felt like I was at a disadvantage. I was constantly trying to gain this experience so I tried exploring clubs and organizations on campus devoted to various technologies and one of the first things I found was OSU Systers. I would find out later that Systers is a worldwide email community of technical women in computing and that the OSU chapter was established for the express purpose of getting girls together to go to the Grace Hopper Celebration for Women in Computing. Participants in the list were sent an advertisement for a scholarship to go to the GHC conference, and even though I didn’t quite have the grade cut-off, I applied anyway.

I was thrilled when I was selected as one of the few women able to attend. The conference was a great kick-start to forcing me out of my comfort zone again, especially since I had never been
to a conference before and didn’t know what to expect, nor did I know a soul who was going, so I was completely on my own. The School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science had arranged for all scholarship recipients to have a quick preliminary meeting with someone who had attended the conferences before and had really great advice on how to make the most of it and reduce the nerves. She also introduced me to the term imposter syndrome and I finally had a name for what I was suffering from. Once I knew what it was and more importantly that I wasn’t alone in feeling the way that I did, I really pushed myself harder to move beyond the intimidation and demonstrate who I really was.

The conference helped to boost my confidence about all sorts of things: career paths, ways to get experience as an undergraduate student, what various paths in technology looked like, and just how to talk to professionals in the field without being nervous. Everyone I met was fantastic to me and it just cemented into my mind that I could move past the impostor syndrome and really embrace my love for technology. It was great to find a place where I could step out of my comfort zone, but wasn’t really in danger of anything. I literally had nothing to lose from trying something new. What would happen? I would make a fool of myself from fumbling around with my introduction to a new person. Who would know? One person. It wouldn’t be the entire world looking at me and pointing and laughing, so I took some chances. As the conference went on, I gained more and more confidence. The more and more confidence I had, the easier things became. By the end of the conference, I was actually walking up to speakers after their events and talking with them about what they were passionate about.
Chapter Advice

Some of you may be suffering from impostor syndrome, where you can’t really trust that you are as brilliant as you actually are. Some of you may even find excuses for every success you have ever had. It will take time to get over these feelings, but what really expedited the process for me was talking to people that I really respected, in the types of fields that I wanted to go into, and having them tell me compliment after compliment. At first I would dismiss these as just pleasantries used at social events, but when I would hear the same compliment time after time, event after event, and from different people, it really started to click for me that maybe there was actually some truth to it. If you are suffering from impostor syndrome, just know that you are not alone. Everyone has some apprehension about themselves, and if you’ve ever met a perfectionist, they are crawling with them. There wouldn’t be the phrase “you are your own worst critic” if there wasn’t some truth to it.

And if you aren’t suffering from impostor syndrome, fantastic! Just make sure you stay humble. No one wants to talk to the person who can’t seem to understand that they don’t, in fact, know everything. High school is behind you now, welcome to being a small fish in a big pond again. You get to have a fresh start on a new campus with thousands (yes, thousands) of people who have no idea who you are. Welcome to Personal Branding, Day 1. You now get to establish a new reputation. If you were always the kid who was late to class and never had their homework done, you now can become the punctual student who is setting the bar with how prepared students can be for class. People want to talk to these people. The professional people who demonstrate a good work ethic. And networking is everything nowadays. Build a good brand, set a good reputation, bring confidence and charisma to every interaction, and you can build a powerful network that can take you anywhere you want to go. The world will be at your feet, if you play your cards right.
Chapter 4:
Professional Development

“Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where excellence is expected.”

- Steve Jobs
Once I was back on campus after my newfound confidence, having made connections with professionals at Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Intel, among others, I began taking a required course for business majors focusing on professional development. Among the usual information about resume writing and cover letters, this again gave me an opportunity to compare my level of professionalism to my fellow competition. I was gaining more and more confidence with each passing week. I felt incredibly prepared from the course because of how strict the instructor was with his standards. It made me work harder and really played into my increasing passion in professional development.

I’ll never forget how during the same term, there was a Backpack to Briefcase event hosted by the Student Alumni Association that I had signed up for and wasn’t really feeling too well, but went anyway. There was a component that included a “speed mock interview” component and I was a bit nervous about that portion of the event, but hoped I would be feeling better by the time it would roll around. I think going while I didn’t feel too well was actually the best possible thing I could have done for myself because my barriers were down. I wasn’t trying to be perfect, I was just going with the flow. I knew it didn’t really matter about the outcome, so I just answered their questions with the first thing that popped into my head.

I remember sitting down at the first table and hearing a question about my passion or what I saw myself doing in the future or something like that and I had said something about helping people with technology, marrying my triple major (information systems, finance, and management) together. I’ll never forget how over three tables with three different people asking roughly the same question,
my answer evolved to be “I want to be CIO or CTO of a major corporation”. I had never considered
the possibility before. Me? Head of a major department within a major corporation? Dream on. But
through the course of taking the professional development class, and understanding where my true
passions lie, helped me to understand just how I wanted to proceed with my life.

It hit me like a bolt of lightning when the light bulb finally lit up for me. I’ll also never forget how
only a few days later I had to create a Gap Analysis for the professional development class and I
decided to go for broke and I created a plan on how to become a CIO. Once I really started to do my
research, I realized just how serendipitous it was that I was already pursuing the type of academic
background that CIOs need to be successful and laying the foundation for the type of job that would
lead me toward that eventual goal.

Through this assignment and the happenstance of a networking event, I discovered just how
real my dream could be. I started to develop and refine my technical knowledge by seeking out
individual courses (thank you edX!) that I could take to enhance my learning and give me additional
skills to make me marketable without the added cost or pressure of an additional OSU course. I
started taking courses on programming and general computer science classes, courses that would
give me a good jump-start on my OSU coursework like introductory courses on SQL, management,
marketing, operations management, and others. I found that these additional courses helped add to
my confidence with the coursework and really helped give me a new dimension of understanding.
Gap Analysis

My ultimate goal for my future career is a position as a chief technology officer or chief information officer for a major corporation. This would require at least 10 years of IT management experience which can include anything from project management, people management, IT security management, or financial management. Common requirements for this position include a degree in information systems or computer science and a high emphasis on business skills, but actual business degrees are considered highly favorable. I feel that pursuing three concurrent degrees in information systems, finance, and management will eventually lead me to this type of position.

One possible path to this career is to start as a project manager, ideally with a major corporation to establish years of experience within a large company. Qualities that an employer would expect to see for this position are experience with object-oriented programming languages such as C, C++, or C#, familiarity with data structures and algorithms, ability to solve complex problems with consideration of customer experience, excellent verbal and written communication skills with a particular ability to communicate with a variety of audiences, and a B.S., M.S., or PhD. degree in engineering, computer science, or related field. Working as a successful member of a team, as well as good delegation skills, interpersonal skills, leadership, strategic thinking, vision, influence, budget-mindedness, scheduling, and prioritizing are all considered highly desirable skills for program managers.

The skills I currently possess to help me to succeed in this role are a familiarity with C# as well as excellent verbal and written communication skills. My previous experience of working in a customer service position for The Walt Disney Company allowed me to hone my communication skills with a particular emphasis on sensitivity to a variety of audiences. This work experience also allowed me the flexibility to create solutions to issues that may arise, with the number one concern being to ensure customer satisfaction.

I have also developed and refined my leadership skills through the establishment of an organization for non-traditional students to help level the playing field of underrepresented groups on campus. I have held the position of president for two years and as such, I lead an organization of over eighty members and manage four other officers. This position has allowed me to exercise my leadership skills with building morale and focusing on a vision and future goal of the organization. My management skills have been refined by this position by implementing various conflict-resolution methods, delegation, scheduling, prioritizing, working with team dynamics, building communication skills, and enhancing my public speaking skills.

I am also currently pursuing a degree in information systems which will also offer me the opportunity to take classes such as ACTG 378 this coming spring, which will enhance my familiarity with data structures and algorithms. Other skills and attributes that I hope to enhance and develop while in school include taking courses such as BA 352: Managing Individual and Team Performance which will help me to refine my interpersonal skills as well as leadership skills necessary to delegate and motivate. Taking BA 364: Project Management this spring will also help me to develop skills in planning, scheduling, organizing, and managing technical projects.

I have also pursued a leadership position in Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business
Fraternity as the Vice President of Finance which I will begin starting spring term. This position will help me develop and implement leadership skills as well as hone the financial and technical skills necessary to pursue a position in management. Skills such as analyzing budgets and funding sources, delegating responsibilities, public speaking, and working in teams are all integral components of working as vice president of finance.

I have already received an invitation to interview for an internship this summer with Microsoft as a program management intern, which will give me on-the-job experience of what a program manager does. If I am successful with this internship, I will be offered the position permanently which will allow me to start building the practical experience necessary and gain the years of experience that will allow me to eventually pursue the position of chief technology officer or chief information officer with either Microsoft or another large corporation.

This is my Gap Analysis for BA 353: Professional Development, a required course for business majors. The project required us to analyze our current skills to that of a job we would like to pursue. We were to evaluate our deficiencies and then state a plan of action to develop the skills or experience necessary to put ourselves in a better position to eventually fill that role.

**Chapter Advice**

Professional development. A serious passion of mine and a passion that I love to convey to others. I will talk your ear off about how beneficial it was to devote myself to self-improvement and professional development. I have been given so many gifts through my combination of networking and professional development. When you are able to carry on a professional conversation with a new contact about how much you would love to learn more about their field, you are demonstrating maturity, grace, eloquence, and curiosity. All skills that are essential to building a career once you graduate.

I wanted an internship at a company so badly that I devoted hours to writing up just the right cover letter for each of the four positions I applied for. I had three people read over my cover letters, I reread them, tweaked them, and essentially poked and prodded it so much that it looked like a cover letter written by a current, passionate employee. I used the key words from their job descriptions in my resume and cover letter with examples of how I exemplified those traits and ended up having a recruiter begging me to come work for them. They talked about how my resumes and cover letters topped their search results time and time again. Now I was the one with the power
to decide which position I wanted to go for because I had put in the extra work required to really make it shine. Seriously, use your career services people. And read articles about professional development for undergraduates. I recommend subscribing to Youtern, all of the best tips I ever got was from this blog.

The key here is not to wait until your senior year to develop professionalism. Every classmate you have is your direct competition. Why are you going to let them get your job? Fight for it.
Around this time in my college career, I started having people come up to me and ask me for help on their resumes and cover letters and found that I really enjoyed it, so I didn’t mind helping them out, and because of the work that I had done for myself and the fortuitous events that had happened to me to help guide my professionalism, I was able to give them good advice to assist them in their endeavors. I had just started to think that I had a real knack for it when I saw an advertisement about a conference that would be held at OSU called "Confidence Conference", but I noticed a notation about seeking presenters for various workshops to be held during the conference and because of my love of helping people, I decided that it wouldn’t hurt to submit a bid to host a workshop on building confidence through professional development, so I volunteered.

I was heavily engrossed with my schoolwork a few weeks later and had forgotten about submitting a bid, honestly thinking that they would find someone better to host such a workshop or that it was a hokey idea, etc. - basically anything that meant that I would not be chosen because I was still fighting off my impostor syndrome - when I received word that I was selected as a presenter! I was so incredibly honored and floored that I had been selected. I had put on various workshops for the non-traditional club I founded, but hadn’t really thought it made that much of an impact, but I thought I would do something similar for

Chapter 5: I Think I Might Just Be a Leader

“Be careful the environment you choose for it will shape you; be careful the friends you choose for you will become like them”

- W. Clement Stone
this workshop. It was a great success for me as it was just one more step in my leadership journey: being confident enough to speak in front of complete strangers and give a presentation.

I again tried to think of ways to get involved and get more substance to my knowledge and ended up going on what I call a group joining binge. I joined several groups in rapid succession and had essentially exhausted many of the options within OSU so I began looking elsewhere and joined the national division of Future Business Leaders of America (Phi Beta Lambda), ISACA, and also had found a leadership honor society called The National Society of Leadership and Success or Sigma Alpha Pi. I had chatted about this organization with various people around me as it intrigued me so, and they had an online chapter for those students without a chapter on their campus, but you had to be nominated by a faculty member in order to join. I never thought I would have the opportunity to join because I wasn’t confident enough yet in my connections to the faculty, but my old advisor ended up nominating me! I was thrilled because this organization gave me the outlet I was really looking for.

Part of the initiation process for the Society is to participate in Speaker Events so I got to listen to really amazing speakers like Stephen Covey (writer of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*), Rudy Giuliani (mayor of New York City during the 9/11 attacks), Jack Canfield (writer of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series), and even Alton Brown (celebrity chef & writer, host of *Good Eats* television show) gave a talk. These talks were all centered around some sort of leadership theme like following your passion, putting yourself in the success mind state, how to inspire others, or be a leader in difficult times, etc. In addition to these speaker events, initiation required regular goal-setting meetings called Success Networking Teams (SNTs), based off of Napoleon Hill’s model. I think it was the combination of these speaker events and the SNTs that really took my leadership to
another level. It was through these various speaker events that put me in the right mind-state to really kick-start my servant leadership mentality.

I love helping people and I knew that one of the best ways to influence change was to be at the top of the pyramid, not the bottom. The base of a pyramid is strong, but vast. Throughout my business classes, we always learn about flat management structures, which are good, but even flat structures have pyramid, it just happens to be a shallow one. It’s at the capstone of the pyramid that real change happens, from the top-down, not the bottom-up, and with much less energy spent. It’s much easier to communicate to a handful of people rather than a mob. I feel that the world of business will be changing to be more people-focused and the future of business will need leaders, not managers.

What I find really interesting about my leadership journey is just how everything seemed to fall into place exactly right to boost me to where I am now. I almost think of it like those racing video games with the little “boosters” in them, just when your acceleration starts to fade, you hit one of those booster blocks and now you’re flying past the competition. My leadership journey is just such a race, except that I’m not sure where the finish line is yet. Maybe there isn’t one. Maybe it’s just a journey I will be on until I pass away, retire, who knows.
Chapter Advice

I know now that I always had a passion for helping people, I just never knew how that related to anything else in my life. It wasn’t until I started working a little that I realized just how much helping people was a valuable skill in the workplace. Almost every single job has some sort of “customer service” component, even if you never see a “customer”. You are always working with other people unless you are an artist that shuts themselves away from the world to paint landscapes. If you are the next Van Gough, congratulations. I wish I could be that talented. But for the rest of us, we will be working with other people. Even computer programmers work with other computer programmers or have bosses they will need to please. Customer service is everywhere.

Why do I mention customer service so much? Well, when you are a student without any work experience, it may seem like you don’t have a lot of opportunity to build up this valuable skill. And this is where you would be wrong. Customer service is everywhere, remember? Even if you don’t work at a job while going to school, if you join a club, you will be engaging in customer service. You will be working with other students or faculty or administration. Anytime you work with another human being, you are demonstrating customer service. You should put this down on your resume.

Which brings me to my point. You have skills that you don’t even realize you have. Did you think you were a leader? How? You should be able to articulate what types of skills you have just by going through your everyday life. Like I said, customer service is everywhere. Write it down. Do you have brothers or sisters? I bet you have mediation skills. Only child? I bet you have great communication skills with people from a wide variety of backgrounds because you had to talk to adults all the time. Think outside the box. You have more to offer than you think.
Chapter 6:
The Journey’s End?

“Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and in actions.”

- Harold S. Geneen
I definitely see my journey as a series of boosts, first with my internal drive and desire to help people and coming to terms with that being okay. I next see my journey boosted by my admission and subsequent attendance to Oregon State University. It was at university that the boosts came in rapid succession. First with my internship class with ASOSU, then the Non-Traditional Affairs Task Force leading to the establishment of a social club for non-traditional students, then getting the confidence boost from the networking event hosted by the OSU Management Club and presented by Sandy Neubaum, then the courage to seek out a scholarship for a conference I had never heard of before called the Grace Hopper Celebration for Women in Computing, this conference led to diving head-first into networking in a technical field and coping with my impostor syndrome, then taking further refining my leadership and professionalism with taking a required professional development course, then finding my passion and desire for corporate leadership through the speed mock interview session at the Backpack to Briefcase event, then the Gap Analysis paper I had to write to really force me to analyze the viability of my dream to be in corporate leadership, and then being selected as a presenter for the DIY: Confidence Conference.

It was at this point that I consider myself to be a “solidified leader”, finally acknowledging myself as a competent leader, but being the obsessive person that I am, I would never be satisfied with stopping. I’m a perfectionist and I wanted every opportunity to further refine my leadership abilities, so I constantly sought out additional opportunities. It was around this time that my polishing began with the external acknowledgement of my leadership abilities through my nomination to the leadership honor society. Going through the initiation process further refined me into an even better leader, supervisor, mentor, and guide. It was during this process that I started to really develop a passion for leadership and sought out opportunities to develop, refine, and prove my competency,
and managed to find a leadership certificate program offered at OSU where I could get exposed to additional leadership opportunities.

While pursuing the leadership certificate and following the process for initiation to the Society, I was taking an elective course that all this leadership and confidence building had given me the courage to apply for. It would be a class based around the Harvard Case Study Method and ever since seeing a documentary on this method, I had been wanting the chance to learn from such a method because of how I take in information. I'm much better without textbooks and standard assessments. I'm a conceptual learner with a natural talent for business. A perfect combination for just such a teaching method.

This course, more than anything else at OSU, is what I consider to be the culminating point of my leadership journey at the undergraduate level. This course resonated with me on so many levels: the ability to learn from practical case studies, interacting with top business professionals, the learning environment that forced you to work with groups of strangers to come up with ideas of “what would you do?”, “how would you handle this?”, and other such questions. It was this group collaboration that forced me out of my deep impostor syndrome.

I was looking around the room on the first day, seeing MBA students and other top-performing students that I admired, as this class was only offered to MBA candidates and students of the Dean’s Student Leadership Circle, and I had to look at myself and wonder why I was there. I felt inferior in every way, I wasn’t a straight-A student, I wasn’t a graduate student, I didn’t have anything grand or special to offer. Or so I thought. Once I was forced to work with complete strangers, I realized that I had ideas they hadn’t considered. I was contributing! I'll never forget my first face-off
with the first case presenter, thinking hard about what I was going to say, to say it just right and not be offensive as I was about to say what a foolish move they had made, but instead of a grimace or scowl, I got a smile. And not only a smile, but a “wow, what a great insight!” Me?! Wow!

Every class after that one became less and less intimidating and I even found myself developing a camaraderie with each of the 20 or so students I worked with over the course of the term. They were all terrified to face down CEOs and tell them they had done something less than perfect. I wasn’t alone. I was just like them. And if I was just like them, I must be smart too. I just had to let myself believe it. And if it weren’t for the constant hammering of that thought from my soon-to-be mentor who was the instructor for this class, I would probably still believe that I wasn’t worthy. Through his guidance and frank nature, though, I am the confident and polished leader that I am today.

I am not a leader because of him, because I always feel I was on that path, but he probably shortened my journey to that actualization by at least a decade or two. The greatest compliment he ever gave me was “I’d hire you over any Harvard grad I went to school with”. Who says that? Someone who is no-nonsense and sincere, that’s who. He has given me many gifts over the year I’ve worked with him, but I know the greatest gift I can give back to him is to be who I am: a leader.
Chapter Advice

As I start to leave my undergraduate life, I find myself looking back on my time at OSU with mixed emotions. It was a rollercoaster ride of emotions with highs and lows. Times of grief and joy, elation and sadness. I’m one of the lucky ones that knows exactly where I will be going after Commencement, but too many have no idea what they’re doing. And what’s worse, they have spent all this time in school just going through the motions. They never found anything they were truly passionate about, never found something that they loved doing, and now are walking around with giant question marks above their heads looking terrified to look mom and dad in the face and say “Plans? Oh yeah. I forgot about that.” Don’t let this be the example for your life. Chances are if you are reading this that you are already a leader. You are already someone who has decided to take a path to get somewhere. Maybe you have questions, maybe you have answers. Either way, you are exploring and have gained valuable knowledge. You may not understand how valuable right now, but you will. If you’ve gotten this far and I can convince you of doing something more, take my advice: join a club, push your limits, build your professionalism and personal brand, and take stock of your skills. You are unique and can offer the world amazing things. Trust yourself to deliver.

Thanks for reading and enjoy your journey. It will be an amazing story to tell someday.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the people who have influenced my leadership journey for taking time or taking a chance, or both, on a student like me. Even though I have made tremendous strides toward becoming the leader I have always wanted to be, without the help of these people I would not be the person that I am today.

First, Christian Matheis for always coercing me to come out of my shell in that first ASOSU class. He tried so hard to get me to speak up and voice my opinion, and a few times he even won that battle. By the end of the class, though, I was able to freely speak my mind on taboo topics and even engage complete strangers in dialog. If I hadn’t been involved in the class, I wouldn’t have been exposed to the various task forces that would later influence my journey as well, and I will be forever grateful for that.

Next, Lyndsay Toll for her hard work with Management Club and letting me take a chance on a new club and hug the back wall until I worked up the guts to actually say something to someone. Lyndsay, you have always shown me kindness and I will not soon forget it.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the girls who put together OSU Systers to persuade EECS to fund them to go to the Grace Hopper Celebration when it was hosted in Portland, Oregon. Without that scholarship, I would never have been able to attend and it had such a monumental impact on me that I have been forever changed from the lessons I learned during those short three days. This was my first taste of my future career can be like and I’m so grateful that most of the conference talks are online because it was such a blur that I’ve had to go back several times to remember some of the information.
Thank you. I hope you are able to give someone else the same gift you were able to give to me and continue to offer opportunities for girls to explore STEM disciplines and really embrace it.

Next I simply would not be the staunch professional I am today without the guidance of Gene Young. Gene, you’re crass and voice way too many of your personal opinions in class, but you know your stuff. I have recruiters hunting me down because they desperately want me to work in their companies because of your polishing. Your strict grading was exactly what I needed to guide and refine my professionalism. Thank you!

I also have to thank the Student Alumni Association for hosting the Backpack to Briefcase events. I know that you guys don’t get very many people attending, so maybe some better advertising is in order, but for those of us that do attend, it gives us a great opportunity to break out of our shells and talk to people we have never met before. Thanks for all your hard work and dedication, keep it up!

Alan and Doug, (and recently Kirk), you guys gave me a great opportunity to spread my wings and learn how to be a good manager. You let me flounder a little in the beginning and didn’t rush in to try and fix it, and I appreciate it. You gave me support when I needed it, advice when I craved it, and encouragement and validation when I was desperate for it. Thank you so much for everything. I know that you’ll be in good hands with Haley taking the reins.

Don Johnson, thank you for creating the leadership certificate program. Even though I had already done many of the things required for the certificate, you always encouraged me to explore and dive deeper into myself and understand who I was, what leadership really meant to me, and how I can become the leader I want to be. This program gave me the structure I needed to feel confident and
validated about who I saw myself becoming and the leader I would eventually be. Thank you for those weekly sessions of getting to know myself better through our conversations. I came to a lot of decisions during those talks and really shaped my path in this life because of them. You will always be a big impact on my life. Thank you.

And lastly, but certainly not least, Bob Mayes. You once called me a rose waiting to bloom. I know now that I have bloomed beyond my wildest dreams. You have given me tough love, but I always came back for more. It feels like I’ve known you forever; that you’ve somehow always been there to give me advice when I needed it most. You have said I have given you gifts of joy and I only hope that those gifts can somehow be comparable to those you have given me. You have given me the permission to trust myself, to believe in myself, and to know that I am on my way. I am the only thing that stands between me and my dreams, nothing else can stop me, and you have allowed me to believe that. You will always be a major impact on my life and I cannot thank you enough for everything. I know that I will be keeping in touch with you, encouraging other students to take your class, and give you more and more students to mentor so that you can have even more work to do so that every night is a night where you stay up until 3 AM. You say I started this whole thing with that walk right after class. You might be right. But you started this whole thing: who I am today. I may be your rock star, but it is you, my friend, who rock. Rock on!
About the Author

Jaina McGregor is a recent graduate of Oregon State University with a degree in Business Information Systems and a graduate of the inaugural Leadership Certificate Program. She will be pursuing an Information Technology graduate program from both UMass Lowell and Harvard University specializing in IT Management and Information Management Systems. She will be pursuing upper-level management within a major corporation through hard work, dedication, and the skills she gained from pursuing the leadership certificate.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Jaina loves big, laid-back cities with lots of museums and other cultural pursuits like theatre productions. She enjoys working with computers in any capacity, spending time with her family and two dogs, traveling, astronomy, reading, and learning. She is deeply passionate about archaeology, particularly with regards to ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. She looks forward to continuing to connect with people, learning from them, and helping them in any way that she can. She encourages people to look her up and connect with her anytime as she loves meeting new people and believes that every person can teach us something new.