

The secret sauce

Relationships key to success

By Sara Tariq, M.D.

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If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that relationships matter. How we connect to one another makes a difference. For those of us who study both leadership and relationship-building, we know that the two are deeply interconnected.

Despite our state being labeled nationally as poor and under-educated, so many of our leaders have stepped up in the face of a deadly virus to bring transformational change to Little Rock and the state as a whole. In my circle, I want to call out University of Arkansas at Little Rock Chancellor Christina Drale, Mayor Frank Scott Jr., and my own boss, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Chancellor Cam Patterson, as a few of the key leaders who have navigated this season valiantly.

They all have one thing in common: They understand that leadership is a relationship.

Research shows that when team members feel a strong relationship with their leaders, they feel more engaged. This results in a measurable and transformational impact on the organization. Relationships are the "special sauce" of our ability to attract and keep the very best people. Leadership is not the simple transaction between managers and employees; it is a dynamic that is created through intentional acts of investment in people.

I was brought into the UA Little Rock fold as a young person in need of belonging. Through my own experience as a student and now as an engaged alum and Donaghey Scholar, I know the level of care, caliber of education and community investment possible at UA Little Rock.

Over the years, I have felt a change in the culture of this institution, and this rebirth comes from the top. Chancellor Drale's humble and reflective approach to addressing areas of access to education and the wrap-around services to support student success creates a sense of place, a place to belong. As a result, the relationship I have with my alma mater—like many of my fellow alumni—continues to this day.

This is the type of leadership that will open doors for innovative collaborative partnerships and see Arkansas reach its fullest potential. And as we slowly emerge from this global pandemic, we can come together again to enjoy the tangible relationship benefits.

This is yet another reason I am honored to be part of the 2022 Taste of Little Rock event coming up on March 29.

Taste of Little Rock raises funds to support scholarships while introducing guests to some of the best food in the city from the finest restaurants in Little Rock. I hope you will join us to celebrate the relationships that propel our community forward. After all, it takes engaged community members to open doors for students like me, who turn into lifelong investors in the state's economy, creating success for the state as a whole.

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