

# The MEMorandum

## Master of Engineering Management



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

MAY 05, 2010

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- A TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH PROFESSOR TED RYAN** 2-5
- MEM STUDENT GOVERNMENT FALL 2010:** 6
- MEET THE NEW BOARD**
- PHOTOS FROM RECENT EVENTS!** 7-8



MEMers Support Duke at the NCAA Basketball Championship at Indianapolis

We are pleased to present the second Spring edition of the MEMorandum. If you have any questions, comments and ideas for newsletter content in the future, please send them to [ss374@duke.edu](mailto:ss374@duke.edu). We hope you enjoy this issue and wish you a wonderful summer.

Gbolahan Shyllon  
Communications Sub-Committee



Spring Formal has always been an extremely popular event



Staff and Faculty also enjoyed the Spring Formal

**Graduation 2010**

MEMP Hooding Ceremony  
2:00 PM May 15, 2010  
Griffith Film Theater

Duke University Commencement  
10:00 AM May 16, 2010  
Wallace Wade Stadium

Diploma Distribution Ceremony  
2:00 PM May 16, 2010  
Duke Chapel



## A TÊTE-À-TÊTE: PROFESSOR TED RYAN

ASHA SUNIL AND SHRUTI SENAPATI HAD A CHAT WITH THE INCREDIBLY COMFORTING AND APPROACHABLE MANAGEMENT PROFESSOR ABOUT WHAT MAKES HIM THE PERSON THAT HE IS.

### On *Aha!* moments that defined his life and career

One of the fun and challenging things I did both in undergraduate and during my masters degree at Princeton seminary was that I worked with youth in cities in the US. They were mostly minorities in very challenging life situations, and I was mentoring them, helping them, encouraging them. In New Jersey, my work was supported by a Presbyterian Church. They had a youth group and the minister felt that there were a lot of youth there who didn't have good role models. They were just wandering around basically by themselves. He wanted us to get them involved with activities that might help them figure out something positive to do with their life. So, the way I got to know them was through playing football with them. I used to play quarterback in high school. So, through that and some basketball, through sports, I became friends with a number of these young men. I did a lot of mentoring. I got some of them to go back to high school and into vocational work and that was an *Aha!* moment for me.

I had always gravitated towards leadership but I didn't know what kind or

what context. I realized that I really like to see people become who they could be. We humans have freedom – we have the free will to make good choices and bad choices and really helpful ones and not helpful ones. And we have a lot of fears. I think one of our greatest fears is acting as though we were truly powerful and could make a difference. Sometimes we assume that people fear failure, but I actually think that many people fear really succeeding, becoming their best self. Maybe we sense that it's going to take courage and it's going to require of us uncomfortable things - we will have to take risks, to really discover who we are and what we can do. And for me, working with those kids was one of those moments when I realized that I have some gifts and that it's very worthwhile to see people reach their potential.

After seminary, I went to teach at a preparatory school in Massachusetts. One of the young people I was working with in New Jersey showed up at this school, in my dorm. I was a resident advisor, and he showed up in the very same dorm. It was like a miracle to me. He had not planned it, I had not planned it and we showed up

at the same place in Massachusetts. That was so confirming. What a wonderful experience it was to see him in the hallway. And that was an *Aha!* moment.

Another *Aha!* moment for me was when I was in a PhD program at Princeton University in ethics and I was really enjoying it and it was very challenging intellectually, very stimulating. I was in a seminar with a professor and just five other students, and we talked hour after hour, until midnight. It was, intellectually delicious and fascinating. But then this inner voice just came to me – I had an awareness so clear in my mind that this particular path was not for me. This was a frightening realization to me because I was making good progress and I loved being at Princeton. I had a scholarship; everything was paid for. It was beautiful, it was wonderful, I was enjoying it, but something inside me said this isn't the way I should spend my life. It was too purely academic and theoretical. I resisted the awareness for a couple of weeks, but it wouldn't leave. So, long story not too short I started rethinking and re-discerning, what am I supposed to do and what do I want to do. I thought of my



Dr. Theodore Ryan  
Adjunct Professor of Management,  
Fuqua School of Business

“..I think one of our greatest fears is acting as though we were truly powerful and could make a difference...”

distinctive gifts again. My gifts are much more people-oriented than just pure idea work.

I transferred to Columbia in clinical psychology because I wanted to understand human behavior at a fundamental level. I spent two years working in a psychiatric ward. It was relevant because I was deeply motivated to understand human behavior, including what happens when our mind goes very wrong. And why does it go wrong? I learned so much from that clinical rotation and then I moved from clinical to vocational-counseling psychology. This branch of psychology focuses on careers. This has been extremely valuable for the whole rest of my life including now, given that I mentor students in their careers.

One of the root meanings of the word career in Latin is the word “careen” – bouncing around from guardrail to guardrail. I really think that that’s been my career. It’s not at all been linear, it’s very non-linear and I think almost everyone’s career from now on will be that way unless they are in music, for example, where you are just a virtuoso at something. Other professional careers such as medicine used to be quite linear and predictable, but they are not anymore. So, I encourage students to not worry about the unpredictability and un-

certainty of their professional futures, but rather to embrace the possibilities. Focus not so much on “What will I do?” but rather on “What core capacities am I developing, including self awareness?”. So I really learn what I am good at and I keep allowing myself to give myself internal feedback - do I really want to be doing this and how can I use my own gifts? Make a decision right now that you will learn from and *enjoy* yourself. Life can be hard, so don’t be too hard on yourself. Life is too short to be grim.

#### **On the craziest thing he did as youngster**

Honestly I was probably disgustingly well behaved. Really, it’s almost embarrassing! I also think that I was more mature than the average young person, because I started supporting myself when I was 15 or 16. I also saw some kids do some drug stuff and they got into real trouble. A couple of these kids literally lost their minds, with acid, they went crazy. There was also a very bad car accident when someone was high and that was very sobering to me. And then my own religious beliefs kept me from doing things that I now don’t regret not doing.

The worst thing I did I suppose was during my senior year in high school, in Colorado, There was a custom for seniors to carry out a prank against our dear Eng-

lish teacher. Several classmates and I rounded up a couple of pickup trucks. I lived on a ranch, and there was an old, huge double-seater outhouse [outdoor toilet]. It was very heavy, and after a lot of effort, we put it on a truck in the middle of the night. Then we drove over country roads and back streets into the town, and dumped it on the teacher’s front lawn.

I was so frightened because I had never done anything like that. One of the guys panicked and put on the truck lights by mistake and couldn’t find the switch to turn them off. Evidently, no one saw us. Even with all of my guilt, I was “proud” of myself and so were my classmates – they couldn’t believe that goody Ted partook in this evil deed! The worst thing was sitting in his class the next day. Our teacher didn’t say a thing and he just looked at us. I am sure that, since we were not hardened criminals, our guilt gave us away. He could probably just look at each one of us and figure out who did it. That was the worst punishment. He never said a thing. He was a good man, a great teacher. One of my friends said they saw him take a little wagon and piece by piece he was taking this huge outhouse apart and hauling it away. Probably took him weeks to get that thing off his front lawn. Afterwards we wanted to help him dismantle it be-

cause we really liked him as a teacher. He was one of my best teachers – he taught me both English and Spanish – and this was his reward!

This reminds me of one of my most fun activities during my senior year of high school. We lived close to the Continental Divide, in the Rockies. The peaks are about 14,000 feet in altitude, and it’s very cold in the middle of winter. Four of us went up the mountains over Christmas break, and we camped out for almost a week up at the top of the

**“...I was “proud” of myself and so were my classmates – they couldn’t believe that goody Ted partook in this evil deed!”**

divide – probably at about 12,000 – 13,000 feet. We had sleeping bags that we dug into the snow and it was way below zero degree Fahrenheit – really, really cold. To sleep we would put straws in our mouth and close the sleeping bags around the straw, so we could breathe through, without freezing ourselves. One of our very experienced guys, who had lived in the mountains for

## A TÊTE-À-TÊTE: PROFESSOR TED RYAN

WE CONTINUE TO DISCUSS PROFESSOR RYAN'S LIFE EXPERIENCES AND THOUGHTS ON BEING AN EFFECTIVE LEADER.

many years, told us how to do that so we could survive. We cooked on a little gas heater, and I remember cooking French toast. By the time we got to the syrup it was brittle. So we would pick up the pieces and crunch! We made toboggans and would go down mountains. Then we realized we have to walk up the whole way, and while we did have snow shoes on, it seemed far longer walking than tobogganing. We heard wolves at night circling closer around us, which was creepy, so one of us shot a rifle to keep the wolves quiet. That was a great adventure.

### On times of internal struggle between core values and ambitions

One that comes to mind is a time in which I not only struggled with my core values but, for a while, I lost, the battle. It had to do with a client. A new executive joined the client organization. He was head of leadership development, and he and I formed a good professional relationship. There were internal people whom I had been working with extensively. They were great people and they had been supportive of me and my work. But in my eagerness and probably ambition to advance my relationship with the new

executive, and to be able to get some really good assignments, I realized later that I didn't treat those internal people with full respect. It only became fully clear to me towards the end of a two-year period of intense activity. I had pushed the internal people aside. I never said anything negative, I just didn't apply the golden rule. I didn't support them as they had supported me. I pushed for change in a way that didn't fully honor and respect the work that they had done and the legitimate interests they had. I did struggle with my core values, because I think I was lacking full awareness of what I was doing. I think I could have had more awareness but I didn't really want to at the time. It was willful lack of awareness. So for that period I have to be honest, I really think I failed my core values. Finally after many months I started to realize clearly what I had done. I felt guilty about it and I felt real remorse. I've been able to reach one of them. I tried with the second person, but I haven't been able to make contact. With the first person, I had a wonderful reconciling conversation, and he appreciated it. He was still with the client, and I don't think that his career material-



Professor Ryan with students at the MEM Spring Formal

ly suffered because of how I acted. But I realized then that some of what happened was humiliating to him. I really learned a lesson. I regret it to this day and I hope and believe it will never happen again. I think I have that awareness now.

I could probably think of scores of examples as a parent. I immensely value being a parent. If one is engaged as an ethical parent, children are constantly challenging you to live one's core values. Constantly! And what a gift that is! I mean to have these people that you care so much about, infinitely, and you realize that this is no small matter, to not live up to your core values, right in front of their eyes. It may not be something awful in the eyes of someone else, it may

be just a little sarcasm, something petty, such as not paying respectful attention. Day after day children are watching and growing, and they are picking up everything.

Here's one experience that I remember vividly and I am ok about it now, in part because of how my son turned out. I had had a very difficult day, consulting in New York. I was a fatigued and unhappy person. My emotional tank, as they say, was empty. Little Alex was probably 3 or 4 years and he did something mildly wrong and I lashed out at him. He was wrong but he was still just a puppy! And I was angry and I realized I was in effect "kicking the dog." I was taking it out on my little son. Alex burst into

tears and that was like a knife into my heart. I realized what I had done. And so I stopped for a moment and I said, “Alex, please come here.” He was almost afraid of me at the moment, and that was another knife. And I remember getting on my knees and apologizing to this little person. I said, “You did not deserve that; that was my own problem. Daddy’s not happy today and you do not deserve what I did that to you, please forgive me.” He said, “That’s ok, Daddy!” I will never forget that. So that’s another time when I learned to say I’m sorry.

I believe that it’s absolutely as important to apologize when we are managing and leading. The most effective managers and leaders, whether they’re on Wall Street or in technology, that’s what they do, they own up to their mistakes. They’re human and they don’t try to hide that fact. And of course, their people appreciate that very much. If one acts that way, then one can legitimately set very high standards for one’s people about how we want to do work together. There are so many additional positive benefits, including that you get really good information from your people. It’s not varnished; you know they aren’t keeping the bad stuff from you. If there’s a problem brewing, your people can bring it up without having their heads bitten off.

### In conclusion

It’s a privilege to be invited by Dean Glass and others to teach here at Pratt. I regard it as an awesome responsibility because I know that for many students it’s their first and it might be their last opportunity to deeply engage in the study of management and leadership. And while I feel good overall about our class, I do know that some students still do not fully embrace human beings – including themselves – as the subject matter, I believe that they have a responsibility to open up their minds to something that is not expected and is not comfortable for them.

I also realize that there may have been a better way to get even some of those students to be able to make the leap from the way that they have been trained in engineering, to the way that I believe they must approach management and leadership, if they want to be truly superior. It’s interesting to me, and I say this with respect for these students, but when I run management/leadership workshops, often there will be a few managers who don’t like the workshop. But guess what: these are the very managers that my clients most hope will get something out of the workshop. The staffs of these managers are back in the workplace, and their manag-

ers are in the workshop, and they are hoping and praying that there will be an *Aha!* moment. I know some people don’t get it and I respect the difficulty in seeing this in a very different way. All this so-called touchy feely stuff can be almost repulsive to some people and very uncomfortable. It’s not what they were trained for, and it’s not what they are good at. But that still doesn’t change the properties of the material they are working with: human being.

In the best companies and in the best human resource functions, coaching has become extremely popular and no longer has to be justified to anybody. Why? Because the people at the best companies see the difference coaching makes. I don’t know many CEOs or senior executives who don’t understand this. The best ones *insist* on getting coaching. Why would a top athlete not have a coach while all of that athlete’s competitors have coaches? Since coaches help one perform better what possible justification can there be for not using a coach?

Business is so much more competitive now. What’s happened in the last ten years or so is that companies have had to get closer and closer to what really works. They find that of course you have to have the right techniques, you have to have the right processes, but

what they find is, all that good and important stuff doesn’t even work anymore unless you have great leadership. And great leadership is still one of the scarcest resources.

There are three core values that I cherish and try to live by: integrity, courage and compassion. Those are my big three, and the fourth is humor – which is another way of saying that I am not going to take myself or anyone else too seriously. And that there is so much in life to smile and laugh about and to enjoy. My fifth core value is imagination. Imagination means that I have a commitment to seeking and envisioning what is possible, what I and others can be, not what we are right at this moment.

*The Golden Rule*  
*“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”*

## MEET THE NEW STUDENT GOVERNMENT BOARD

AS WE REACH THE END OF ANOTHER SEMESTER, APRIL ELECTIONS FOR THE FALL STUDENT GOVERNMENT BROUGHT FORTH NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE PROGRAM. WE HOPE THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED BY THE CURRENT BOARD AND COMMITTEES IS REPLICATED AND FURTHERED IN THE FALL.



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The MEM Student Government collaborates with administration to ensure the quality of the MEM program at Duke University by working on all developmental aspects of the program. It seeks to enrich the MEM experience for current students, as well as increase the future value of the MEM degree.

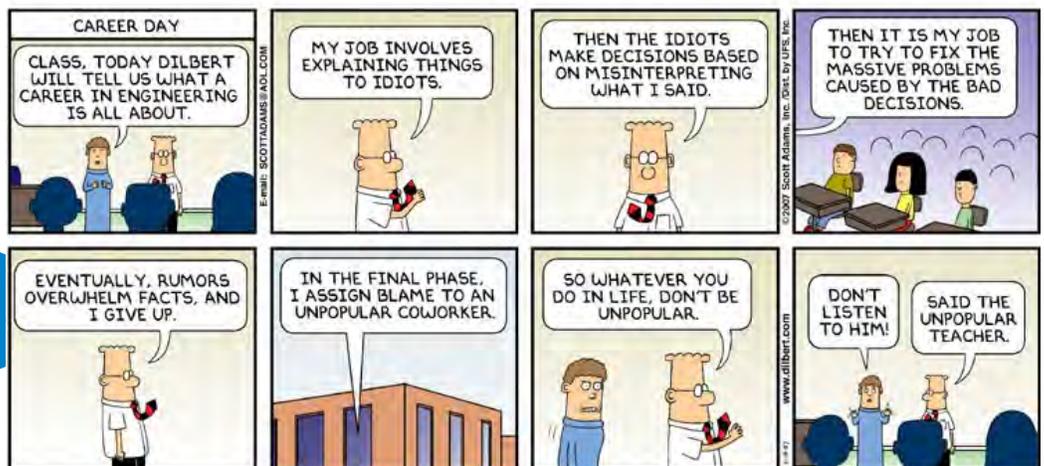


### MARCH MADNESS: SMELLS LIKE TEAM SPIRIT

1. Students cheer as Duke defeats West Virginia University in the NCAA Final Four Game
2. Students at Indianapolis get their Duke spirit on at the Championship game
3. Bench-burning after Duke wins the NCAA 2010 Championship
4. "We're the Champions!"

### DILBERT

Interesting (funny? inspiring?) quote from your summer internship? Send it to [ss374@duke.edu](mailto:ss374@duke.edu)

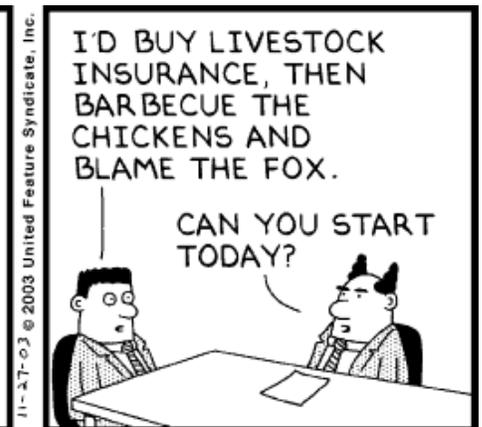




## MEMORIES

1. Paintball left a few bruises and several great memories
2. Students enjoy LDOC festivities
3. Spring formal at Pop's was a huge success
4. Mini-Golf at Frankie's Fun Park

## DILBERT



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