

Cheryl Broom (9s):

Hi everyone. I'm Cheryl Broom, CEO of GradComm, and this month's episode I'm actually recording at the California Community College Public Relations Organization Conference. So I ran away from the booth, came into my hotel room to conduct an amazing interview with just a fantastic woman, and we talk a lot about mentorship and professional development. So it's actually pretty funny that I'm at like a professional development conference and skipping out to talk more about professional development. But anyway, Lisa Takami is today's guest, and Lisa is just an amazing leader who has successfully helped private and public organizations build their brand and messaging, helped them build professional development opportunities, and has just been a staple in California's higher education scene for many, many years.

Cheryl Broom (1m 1s):

And Lisa has a new accomplishment under her belt. She has just finished writing just a fantastic book on women leaders, women, C-suite leaders in higher education. So she interviewed higher education leaders across the nation and found some common themes that I think will help women and men frankly grow in their careers and be better leaders overall, I just absolutely loved having this conversation with her. She brings so many fantastic tips and resources and things for us all to consider as we grow as leaders in, as we mentor others to grow as well. So this is coming out in May, so it's May when this episode is live.

Cheryl Broom (1m 42s):

And her book is actually gonna launch in July, but this month listen to her brilliant advice and her great takeaways, and then make sure to come back in July and get a copy of that book and learn more from women across the nation. I hope you enjoyed this podcast as much as I did and I'll let Lisa take it away. Well Lisa, thank you so much for joining me. I am so excited to have you on the podcast.

Lisa Takami (2m 9s):

Well, I'm thrilled to be here, Cheryl, thank you so much for having me this morning and to be able to discuss this really important book upcoming.

Cheryl Broom (2m 17s):

I I feel like it was so serendipitous that you and I connected for the people who are listening. Lisa reached out on LinkedIn, which is my favorite platform for networking, and had said, Hey, I just wrote this book on women leaders in higher education and I said, Hey, I'm holding an event for women leaders in higher education. Will you come moderate?

Lisa Takami (2m 38s):

Right. It was, it was a moment of total serendipity. Couldn't agree with you more.

Cheryl Broom (2m 44s):

I'm like, this is perfect. So this all happened during Women's History Month, so we're now a, a month later. The event went off beautifully. You are a wonderful moderator, so thank you. Thank you so much for joining

us. And now I'm thrilled to have you on today to talk about the book. So I just wanna start off by asking you to give the listeners a little overview. What's the book about and tell us what inspired you

Lisa Takami (3m 6s):

To write it. Yes. Well the book profiles 11 women in higher education, C-suite leaders, both CEOs, presidents, chancellors, depending on the type and size of the institution, as well as senior level of cabinet members. And the book is diverse in all ways, diverse in terms of the women that you see behind me, diverse in terms of the institutions in which they serve and the type of institution which they serve, public, private HBCUs and the tribal college. So it gives the, it should give listeners and, and prospective readers a very good sense of where women are succeeding in the higher education workplace today at the executive level.

Lisa Takami (3m 49s):

Great. And in terms of what inspired me to write the book, there were, there were several different things. I had been fortunate to be writing for Women in Higher Education, which is a Wiley owned journal for, for women working in higher education administration. I had always had the goal to write a book with Wiley. And in the years that I had been writing periodical articles for them from 2014 until 2000, basically 22, Wiley grew by leaps and bounds and became this fabulous global company through acquisition. And so my goal to be able to publish a book and their objectives in order to be able to reach target audiences with high level, high interest books matched.

Lisa Takami (4m 34s):

And so it was a marriage made in heaven. So that was certainly one reason. The second reason is that at the height of the pandemic in 2020, I was headhunted for chief operations officer role, was very excited, left a very comfortable, happy environment at a California community college and pivoted in my career to go into an executive role in the private education sector. And it was tough. I got in there and there were a lot of things that I could not have anticipated from the outside, working with a head hunter in Chicago and an environment that was vastly different from the one that I had come from.

Lisa Takami (5m 16s):

And discovered that along with several of the women who were profiled in the book, that I was really in a situation of what's referred to as the glass cliff, where you have men who are invested in positions at the C level or C-suite level, CEO, CFO and so on, who are provided with excellent resources in terms of personnel, in terms of budget, in order to be able to execute their work at the top level. That was not the case for the position that I was in. And again, we often don't see things clearly until retrospect. And so I made the difficult decision to leave that position and transition into a new role.

Lisa Takami (6m 1s):

And in doing that, once I had time to reflect and integrate, I really began to wonder and think about what can

I learn from this experience in my career trajectory and what could be learned by profiling those women who have navigated all sorts of circumstances in order to reach the pinnacle of their career. So it was really a combination of a few different circumstances.

Cheryl Broom (6m 27s):

That term glass cliff, I haven't heard that before. I've heard glass ceiling. Yes. But what, so what you're describing is you were brought on as a woman and then not given the resources that you needed to succeed.

Lisa Takami (6m 40s):

Correct? Correct.

Cheryl Broom (6m 41s):

So you were like basically run off a clip.

Lisa Takami (6m 44s):

Yes. And it was a term that I was also not familiar with until interviewing two of the women who appear in the book. And there's been some citations that are in the book that refer to it. And I think it's a term that is gaining traction as women are more able and free to articulate some of the realities of navigating at that level. Now, that certainly was not the experience of all of the women of the book and it's certainly not been my experience in my career up until this time. And again, in retrospect, if I had asked certain questions, if I had negotiated more firmly in my offer letter, a variety of different things, circumstances may have been different once I got in there.

Lisa Takami (7m 37s):

But you know what, how we say hindsight is 2020 and we make the, the best decisions with the information that we have at the time. And sometimes even with the best information that we have and even things written down on paper, day-to-day realities of culture. And gosh, I would harken to say patriarchy, sexism and patriarchy is, is alive and well and sometimes more so in some industry than others. And this was an industry where that was particularly strong.

Cheryl Broom (8m 12s):

Well, it actually makes me, it makes me think of, I remember when I was at a community college, I got promoted and the superintendent wrote a new job description for me and it was a way for me to get a promotion cuz you know, you don't really get promoted in a college. You can apply for a new position, but Right. So he wrote this position and we went to negotiate salary what step I was gonna be on.

Lisa Takami (8m 35s):

Okay. And

Cheryl Broom (8m 36s):

He was like, I wanna offer you a two step increase. And I was like, that's great, I'll take it. And I'll never forget, I was never taught to negotiate. I was never taught to push back. I was just like, that's great. And he goes, Cheryl, this is the point in the conversation where you negotiate. Ah. He said, what do you wanna see? And I was like, oh, nobody's ever told me I'm allowed to do, I'm allowed to do that. So I think as women, we're not taught, we're not taught to self-advocate, we're not taught to ask those questions. Yes. And we should be. We need to. Yes,

Lisa Takami (9m 13s):

Exactly. And I, I mean, I will say that I had negotiated salary and terms, so it's not as if I was presented with an offer and took the offer exactly as it was. That was not the case. I just realized once I got in there that I should have negotiated harder and more specifically. And negotiation for women, in fact is one of the themes of the book, Dr. Catrice Albert for example, talks a lot about how she has longterm negotiation skills in a variety of ways. One of the citations, one of the resources in the appendix of the book is a negotiations book. And she spoke interestingly about learning from men.

Lisa Takami (9m 56s):

So I think it's okay that we acknowledge, and this was one of the themes that came out at the herstory event in which I had the privilege to moderate, is it's okay for us to look to men and see what they have done. And it's also okay for us to unlearn some of the patterns that we may have internalized over time to make sure to ensure that we are receiving our value and that we are recognized for what we were worth. So good for you that you had a superintendent who recognized that and was mentoring you a little bit, even in a moment of negotiation.

Cheryl Broom (10m 34s):

Yeah. And, and, and I was grateful for him because, you know, he's trying to get the best bargain for the college, but he was, you know, serving as the mentorship role. And I think that's why your book is so important is because by learning from other people and their mistakes and their experience, we're able to grow. So I love that there's a theme of negotiation and resources for people to look at in the book. Yes. What were some of the other themes as you were talking to these women?

Lisa Takami (11m 2s):

Yeah, so it's definitely the presence of family and mentors. This power of, of mothers, the power of mentors at all different stages of their careers. The power of professional development. And since I managed a professional development and learning department at a community college for more than five years, clearly it's something that I value as well. So it was fascinating to learn the ways in which these women had intentionally sought out mentors in a formal way to professional development programs and or net mentors and sponsors along their career path.

Lisa Takami (11m 43s):

Some of them have had the same mentor or mentors through the, the majority of the arc of their career, which was amazing. Others in, in different ways. So clearly the power of mentors, sponsors, professional development, the support of family, the messages from family around education, around high aspirations. Several of the women in the book are first generation college students themselves and came from families that valued education who may or may not have gone to college themselves, but impressed upon them to always reached for their highest aspirations.

Lisa Takami (12m 27s):

Dr. Joanne Lee, chancellor of University of Nebraska at Omaha talked about her father and how he always taught her. And she came from a background in finance, was a dean at the University of Florida, Florida International University. Always taught her to teach and learn, teach and learn at all levels of her career. So I would say humility, that the ability to stand out front strongly and to advocate for oneself as we're also advocating for students. But to remain humble that wherever we are, we, none of these women, women could have reached the positions that they're in without tremendous communication skills, tremendous relationship building skills and humility from their own backgrounds, from their families, and from the advice of others that they had seen lead the way.

Lisa Takami (13m 26s):

So those are some of the themes. I would say. Another one certainly is the significance of emotional intelligence and political savvy academic institutions are political places and collaboration in their leadership success. Another really important theme was their ability to self-reflect, self-correct and admit mistakes. I know that in speaking with Dr. Gina Maloney, who was a president superintendent at El Camino College when I was there, was very humble in acknowledging how she was challenged by some of the communication circumstances that came as a result of the pandemic because she's such a warm, relational type of person.

Lisa Takami (14m 13s):

She thrives in that. And having come back and, and managing an entire, leading an entire campus in front of a, a computer screen, how challenging that was for her. So the ability to self-reflect, self-correct. And depending on the circumstances to admit wrong, you know, to admit a mistake and acknowledge it as a model, as a, as a leadership trait. But also I think as modeling for everyone else that that reports up to them.

Cheryl Broom (14m 44s):

Yeah. And this, this idea of mentorship came up in our Women's Day event.

Lisa Takami (14m 49s):

It did indeed.

Cheryl Broom (14m 50s):

Yeah. A big, I mean, everybody on the panel had been mentored or had a mentor, whether it was a formal relationship or an informal relationship. And I think some of the younger women who were there, I could tell in the audience were really interested by that. Like, how do you find, what advice did the women in your book, or what advice do you have for women early in their careers to find a mentor? Like, yes, just love to someone and be like, waw my mentor. Like how do you, right. How do you build that relationship?

Lisa Takami (15m 21s):

How do you build that relationship? I think one of the most important phrases that I learned in an earlier point in my career, also by Dr. Catrice Albert, who I had interviewed for my dissertation, and I had also interviewed her for women in higher education, is the notion of we lift as we climb, right? As we climb, we lift others with us. And I have always been one to seek mentors, but I've also been one to mentor others. I just, it's a value that I hold. And I would say that was pretty ubiquitous through all of these women. They spoke Dr. Judy Sakaki, who is president emeritus from Sonoma State University, spoke about how she has, whenever someone asks her for help, she has said yes because there have been so many others who have helped her.

Lisa Takami (16m 15s):

Dr. Erica Andra Hoes, who's president, superintendent of Pasadena City College, spoke specifically about a structured way in which she had partnered with the career counseling career center at P C C. And if participants in a leadership program filled out a particular rubric, she would meet with them. And so I think how do you develop that relationship? It depends on the circumstances. I think, yes, coming up to someone and saying, will you be my mentor? Probably is not the most successful approach. However, so much of success in higher education, as in any field, is built on relationships that having good listening skills, taking a sincere interest, being an interested and interesting mentee candidate is certainly one of the ways that I would identify.

Lisa Takami (17m 9s):

And I would venture to guess that most of the participants in the book would, would agree with that.

Cheryl Broom (17m 16s):

I love that saying, I just wrote it down. We lift as we climb. Yes. What a beautiful saying.

Lisa Takami (17m 21s):

Yes, we lift as we climb.

Cheryl Broom (17m 23s):

We, we, those of us who have employees or you know, work with women across campus, you're in a

position to lift. I mean, yes, you be a mentor without having a formal relationship.

Lisa Takami (17m 37s):

Very good point.

Cheryl Broom (17m 38s):

Help and help and teach and guide rather than correct and take over. Right. Give people the opportunity to fail and learn and grow. And you can be that person who, who lifts others up as well.

Lisa Takami (17m 53s):

Yes, exactly. Another conversation that I had with Dr. Maloney more recently was just the importance of when a leader whom we respect says or does something that we admire. I remember she was getting ready for her first major campus address, and I checked in with her by email the night before and I said, how are you feeling? And she said, I'm excited and I'm practicing with my husband and Dina. And I just had a conversation recently about the impact that that had on me. And this was like seven, eight, probably about seven years ago now.

Lisa Takami (18m 33s):

I thought, what a clever way to frame the natural nervousness that anyone would have in a major public speaking engagement as excitement. And then the other piece of preparation that if we are excited and we are prepared, we are setting ourselves up for success.

Cheryl Broom (18m 54s):

Wonderful. Oh my gosh, so many great things. So many wonderful things. I I also love this idea of emotional intelligence. Explain to me what that means. Like how do you define emotional intelligence?

Lisa Takami (19m 7s):

So I define it as, first of all, having an acute awareness of self in different situations. So I see emotional intelligence and cultural competence actually as intricately related. So if I am going into a particular situation, how am I likely to act? What might be my triggers and how am I going to be aware of those triggers so that whatever happens in a given room will come out to be successful. So I think the ability to read a room, to be aware of where others are coming from on a particular topic or situation.

Lisa Takami (19m 49s):

Who are the different stakeholders in the room? I'm reminded of some of the things that Dr. Alex Davis said at our event in March. Her ability to be able to come in and read a room and be able to assess who is in there, what are the dynamics and how can I appeal if I'm trying to persuade. And when I say I, I mean a collective. I, if I am trying to persuade stakeholders to get on board for a particular initiative, I need to understand where they are coming from. So I think it's that combination of being aware of one's own

reactions in a particular situation, but an acute awareness to be able to cue in to others' perspectives, their particular emotions, how they want and need to be communicated with in order to establish by it.

Lisa Takami (20m 47s):

And that's just one example. I mean, I think it's a lot more than that, but that's certainly some of how I, I would define it.

Cheryl Broom (20m 53s):

Yeah, I think it's such a key point because especially as a college president, as a leader, you are on stage, right? Yeah. You are. When you walk in the room, you are the leader and all eyes are on you.

Lisa Takami (21m 5s):

Yes.

Cheryl Broom (21m 6s):

And, and you're being judged.

Lisa Takami (21m 8s):

Yes.

Cheryl Broom (21m 9s):

Constantly. You're constant. And I think as a, as a woman, I feel like we're judged a little bit more harshly. Right. Women. And that's just from my personal experience, I've definitely felt that there have been situations where had I been a man making the same decision, I would've been treated very differently. Yes. So I, I think it's such a great point and such a great skill for someone to have that ability to read the room, to be prepared to know which emotions to, to use and to not use. Right. But I think it's a, it's an innate skill, but it's a skill you can build. I'm wondering if any of the presidents gave any tips or if there's resources in your book about there are that, can that Yeah.

Lisa Takami (21m 55s):

Yeah. There are. And I, the point that you made a minute ago about how women are judged and perceived is certainly something versus how men are perceived in in higher education settings or other executive settings was certainly another theme that they talked about. There are, there is a, a comprehensive appendix at the end of the book. I actually asked each of the participants to share with me some of their, their favorite books, their favorite resources. Most recently, for example, Dr. Gilman Danley, who is the president of the Higher Learning Commission, who wrote the forward for the book, sent me a list of learnings that she has developed former community college president.

Lisa Takami (22m 44s):



And now the Higher Learning Commission is an accreditation commission in the Midwest. And so just lots of tips from the trade right. Dos and don'ts. And so I think readers will find there are a lot of resources both in terms of what the participants said during the interviews themselves, as well as the appendix of resources at the end of the book.

Cheryl Broom (23m 6s):

That's great. And you don't have to be on a college leadership trajectory to learn from these amazing women.

Lisa Takami (23m 14s):

Absolutely.

Cheryl Broom (23m 15s):

These are things that will help you in your everyday life inside of work and outside.

Lisa Takami (23m 21s):

Absolutely. And part of the reason that I wrote the book is the data shows, statistically the data shows it is easier for women to reach a c e o or cabinet role in higher ed than it is in the private sector. So we have approximately 8% of women's CEOs in Fortune 500 companies, whereas we have have nationally about 30% of CEOs or women. And in California, the number goes up to 42% in higher ed. So California is, we are, we are leading the way Yep.

Lisa Takami (24m 1s):

With access for women to reach these highest roles. And that's exciting. That

Cheryl Broom (24m 6s):

Is interesting. And some

Lisa Takami (24m 7s):

Very exciting. Some of these women had trajectory straight through higher ed. Others have come from the private sector. So that's an important point for readers to consider as well, is that, for example, Dr. Linda Ure, she's the president of Whittier College. She had had a significant career in finance at Disney and other places. And then higher ed was sort of a second career for her. And here she is the president of a college. So this book really appeals to anyone at any level in higher ed, but it also appeals and is important for women, as you said, shell personally and professionally in navigating a successful career trajectory.

Cheryl Broom (24m 55s):

So was there any favorite part of the book or any favorite story that you had? What was, oh, that's, I know it's a hard question, but what pops in your head? Like what did you love to learn about the most? Cuz you

must have learned so much talking to these people.

Lisa Takami (25m 10s):

I, I learned a tremendous amount of things and I, I have to sort of pause for a minute and think about what was, what was the most significant learning? Gosh, I would probably say, I'd say one of the things that really stood out in my mind was, again, Dr. Joanne Lee, chancellor of University of Nebraska at Omaha, who talked about the mentoring of her then president at Florida International University. She was the dean of business.

Lisa Takami (25m 51s):

She was working very hard and he said to her, you need to look up, you need to look up. And she said, well, what do you mean I'm working really hard at my job? And he said, yes, that's great. But he said, I want you to look up and consider where else you can serve. What is your next role? That set off for her, a series of, in very intentional professional development programs at Harvard, university of Pennsylvania. But I think it was the mindset that was so important that we look beyond what we're doing successfully.

Lisa Takami (26m 34s):

And we always wanna lead from where we are, as Dr. Maloney would say, do the best that we can do for the teams, for the institutions where we serve, but to look up in order to reach our highest aspirations. And here she is, the first Asian American woman serving as a chancellor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. And I find that exciting.

Cheryl Broom (26m 58s):

That's fantastic. And isn't it true that sometimes we just need someone else to tell us so true. Like you, you are, you can do great things, you can do more. I don't, we should be telling others that too. Because sometimes people don't recognize that in themselves or they're so hard at work. They haven't Yes. They haven't looked up, they haven't Yes. Looked forward. So yes, we as women need to, to be that to other women too. And I don't remember the book's name, but years ago I read a book and Yeah. About professional development leadership, and it said, you need a, women need a tribe. You need a tribe of other women who can say things like this to you.

Cheryl Broom (27m 39s):

Like, yes, you really great at that, or who can nominate you for awards or recognize your achievements Yes. And be your cheerleaders. Yes. And you should have a tribe and you should be part of a tribe because we can build each other up.

Lisa Takami (27m 53s):

Right? Yes. In fact, that reminds me of something that Dr. Billy Garcia talked about. She quoted a book that is in the app penance. And she talked about, she's a different word than tribe, but she talked about the fact

that you need an audience sitting in the front row of a theater who are there to applaud you, support you, hold you up, push you forward. The same idea that none of us get to where we are in our particular careers. I certainly would've never been able to write this book without a ch huge time, a team behind me at Wiley, but the encouragement of the theater of people who are in my life.

Lisa Takami (28m 39s):

And I can, I'm looking at Dr. Jevon Adams, Gaston, who's the American woman, I guess to my right, I believe. And she talked about the profound impact of her family when sh when I asked her, what do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment? She said, my family. And she is president of an H B C U Norfolk State University. She talked very intentionally about when and how she made career moves because she considers her family to be her greatest accomplishment. So I love that word, tribe, Cheryl. I think it really describes that metaphor of the village. And as I said, Dr.

Lisa Takami (29m 19s):

Garcia referred to it as those who are sitting in the front row of a theater. We all need that support. And as you also said, we all ought to lend it. Right. It's the lift as we climb metaphor that I talked about at the beginning.

Cheryl Broom (29m 34s):

Beautiful stuff. So let's talk about how we get your book. So we're supporting this in April, so it's not printed yet.

Lisa Takami (29m 42s):

Yes. So,

Cheryl Broom (29m 42s):

So we have to wait

Lisa Takami (29m 43s):

A little bit. We gotta wait a little bit. Thank you very much. It will be available on wiley.com for pre-order in July, and it will be available on all platforms, Amazon, all, all platforms in September, mid to late September. And again, the, the title of the book is Women in the Higher Education, C-Suite, diverse Executive Profiles, and Wiley's offering a 20% promo code. The wiley.com site will be available soon, so Right. The formal pre-order is in July, but the, the wiley.com site for the book should be available fairly soon.

Cheryl Broom (30m 29s):

Great. Well make sure to send me the promo code.

Lisa Takami (30m 32s):

Yes, I will.

Cheryl Broom (30m 32s):

And I'll put it in the show notes.

Lisa Takami (30m 34s):

Wonderful.

Cheryl Broom (30m 35s):

When you are live in July, we'll email at everybody who listens to the show because I That's great. But this is gonna go alive in May and people are gonna wanna buy the book.

Lisa Takami (30m 44s):

Oh, well

Cheryl Broom (30m 45s):

I wanna buy the book. I'm ready for it. I wanna read it.

Lisa Takami (30m 47s):

Well, I, I'm, I'm excited to be able to share it with the world and just really, I think women and men will find, women in particular will find the stories themselves fascinating, but will also find lots of tips and tools of what to do if your goal is to make it to the C-Suite position. But even if just traveling up your career trajectory, everyone will find something in this book that will be of value for where they are and where they would like to go.

Cheryl Broom (31m 24s):

And last question. That's all about lifting each other up.

Lisa Takami (31m 28s):

Yes.

Cheryl Broom (31m 29s):

Wind's volume two coming out.

Lisa Takami (31m 31s):

Well, interesting. You should know that. Yeah. As I was fortunate to have a number of very successful and committed higher education and private sector leaders write endorsements for the book, I began to realize there's a second volume here. Yes. So I'm in discussions and we'll, we'll look for that. Hopefully not too long right now, we're focused on getting the first volume out, but I think there are so very many women who are

doing such important work across the country that I look forward to readers being able to learn about them.

Cheryl Broom (32m 12s):

Awesome. And, and not just higher education. I mean, in every factor there's amazing women doing great things, so

Lisa Takami (32m 19s):

Absolutely. And as I, as I mentioned at the herstory event in March, that I suspect that readers will see themselves in these women's stories. There's something that everyone can relate to, whether it's been a job interview or whether it's been balancing family and work, or whether it's been overcoming particular obstacles, leading through the pandemic, leading through the returned work since the pandemic. So many different situations. How do we hire, well, what do we do when we realize we've made a bad hire and we need to address that.

Lisa Takami (33m 1s):

I know Dr. Jane Connolly, who's the president of Cal State Long Beach taught, and she's a psychologist by training talked about now, she's been in her role about eight years and talked about how different she reacts or responds to hiring situations or just team situations, personnel situations that may come up now versus earlier in her career with her psychology background, she thought that she could help everyone, that she could coach everyone. And she realizes now that that's not necessarily the best leadership decision and was articulate in explaining that. Yeah.

Cheryl Broom (33m 38s):

Well, great. Well, thank you so much for joining me today, Cheryl,

Lisa Takami (33m 42s):

You

Cheryl Broom (33m 42s):

On the book. I, I've loved our conversation. I'm really excited to read it. Thank

Lisa Takami (33m 47s):

You so much

Cheryl Broom (33m 48s):

And you've been a great guest. Thank you, Lisa.

Lisa Takami (33m 51s):

Thanks so much, Cheryl. Just wonderful being on the podcast today.

3 (33m 57s):

That wraps up this month's episode of Higher Education Coffee and Conversation. I hope you enjoyed the discussion and learned something new. And if you like the podcast, I would love it if you would leave us a review and make sure to take a screenshot and email me or hit me up on LinkedIn and I'll send you one of our fantastic grad com shot glasses and a little something, something to go with it. On behalf of all of us at grad com, thank you for listening and thank you for working hard to make higher education a reality for students across the nation. Until next time.