

Cheryl [00:00:07]:
Hi, I'm Cheryl Broom, CEO of GradComm.

Cheryl [00:00:10]:
And host of Higher Education Conversations, sponsored by Edtech Connect.

Cheryl [00:00:14]:
Today's guest is a name many of our listeners may already be familiar with. Jeff Julian is the president of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, NCMPR, which is an organization that focuses exclusively on serving community colleges. And he's the chief of staff at Harper College in Illinois. Jeff has a refreshing take on leadership, including how to serve other leaders at your campus, how to prepare yourself to be a better leader, and how to battle impostor syndrome. Jeff has a fantastic take on how also to bring your authentic self to work. And he has just such a contagious enthusiasm. Our conversation was so much fun, and I know you're going to love it, too. All right, Jeff, well, thank you so much for being here today.

Cheryl [00:01:05]:
I really appreciate it.

Jeff Julian [00:01:07]:
Absolutely. Glad to be here, Cheryl.

Jeff Julian [00:01:08]:
Thank you.

Cheryl [00:01:09]:
Now, you've had such a great career. You've been an executive director of communications, a director of public awareness, among other pr and marketing type of jobs. But your current job is chief of.

Cheryl [00:01:22]:
Staff at Harper College.

Cheryl [00:01:24]:
And I'm really curious to talk to you about what that position is because it's not something we see very common in community colleges.

Jeff Julian [00:01:32]:
Right? Yeah.

Jeff Julian [00:01:35]:
Well, that's a great question. And I do wonder that some days when I'm sitting there, what am I doing here?

Jeff Julian [00:01:43]:
No.

Jeff Julian [00:01:43]:
So I call it affectionately chief of staff, because you never know what kind of stuff you're going to be working on any given day of the week or even from moment to moment. I think that's why I enjoy it, because I like a challenge and I.

Jeff Julian [00:01:58]:
Like to keep things fresh and exciting and so kind of being able to.

Jeff Julian [00:02:03]:
Go from thing to thing to thing versus a comms director or marketing director, there are crises and challenges within that, but there's a very cyclical kind of approach to the position as well. Right. You got your semesters starting and ending, and you've got graduation and those sorts of things. So everything seems to rinse and repeat, right.

Jeff Julian [00:02:22]:
Where this job is pretty different each.

Jeff Julian [00:02:25]:
Day and throughout the year.

Jeff Julian [00:02:27]:
So I think it's a very unique.

Jeff Julian [00:02:31]:
Position to higher ed, but I think it's becoming more common because I think that the modern presidency really needs a chief of staff or someone in that role supporting the president.

Jeff Julian [00:02:43]:
And my guess is that if there isn't a chief of staff, someone on.

Jeff Julian [00:02:47]:
The senior team is being hacked as a chief of staff without even knowing it.

Jeff Julian [00:02:52]:
Right.

Jeff Julian [00:02:52]:
So you're taking someone and you're relying on them in that role.

Jeff Julian [00:02:58]:
Right.

Jeff Julian [00:02:58]:

The advisor role, the trusted confidant role. Someone to be your proxy when you're not there, someone to help keep your team on track. And so that's sort of my initial take on that.

Cheryl [00:03:12]:

Well, I'm interested to know kind of what the chief of staff does. But before we dive into that, something you said triggered a memory for me. One of the reasons I left my community college, so I had a very long title because they gave me like 4000 different job descriptions acted to one was that my role effectively became like a 75% chief of staff to the president because she needed speeches written for me to sit in on community meetings for me to liaison with the board. And then less of my job became what I really love to do, which is marketing. And so that kind of led me to start thinking about another career move. But you're right, I think, on so many campuses, because the comm director works so closely to the president, with the president, that, in effect, becomes part of their job. So I'm really interested in how your college has split it up and then what you do. Like, what are you doing now as chief of staff and what role do you play on campus, separate from the communications?

Jeff Julian [00:04:21]:

Think there's a website or an organization.

Jeff Julian [00:04:25]:

Called AGB, I'm sure you've heard of them, but they've also got like a subgroup called prime chief of staff. And I thought that they described the role of the chief of staff best.

Jeff Julian [00:04:33]:

And there's like six potential sort of.

Jeff Julian [00:04:37]:

Mini roles within that.

Jeff Julian [00:04:39]:

I maybe won't remember them all, but.

Jeff Julian [00:04:41]:

Advisor, proxy, goalkeeper, and those I really.

Jeff Julian [00:04:47]:

Think are really specific to what I do, which is I spend a lot of time with the president in supporting, in being a sounding board, in being.

Jeff Julian [00:05:04]:

Maybe the last line of defense on a particular idea.

Jeff Julian [00:05:11]:

Maybe defense isn't the right word, but.

Jeff Julian [00:05:13]:

I may be the last person that she hears from that may give her the most objective opinion on something because of that sort of closeness that we have and that trust. And that's sort of.

Jeff Julian [00:05:28]:

I see my role as well is allowing her to kind of let her.

Jeff Julian [00:05:34]:

Guard down or defense mechanisms and have a conversation to be herself. Because when you are the president of an institution, you are the president, no matter where you're at. There might be two places where you're not the president, and that would be in your car or in your house alone. Everywhere else, you are the president. And that is a very difficult job. It's a stressful job, it's a taxing job from what I can tell. It's also an incredibly rewarding job, too, to be able to lead an institution that's changing people's lives for the better and offering these educational opportunities.

Jeff Julian [00:06:10]:

And yet you are always the president.

Jeff Julian [00:06:13]:

You're in the grocery store.

Jeff Julian [00:06:15]:

You're the president because someone may be.

Jeff Julian [00:06:17]:

Asking you, why should I send my child, or why should I myself go back to study at your institution? And so I think that's very stressful and takes a lot out of someone. So to be able to close their.

Jeff Julian [00:06:30]:

Office door and just kind of be.

Jeff Julian [00:06:33]:

Real for a second is a role that I feel like I can also play in that regard.

Jeff Julian [00:06:39]:

And then a lot of eyes and.

Jeff Julian [00:06:41]:

Ears at different meetings come out of a meeting. What did you think of that? I often joke that I'm part of our senior leadership team, but during our meetings, I'm in the meeting, and then I'm also floating above the meeting and sort of observing and watching. And what happened here as we're debriefing? Something like that. So, again, very interesting. It is complicated.

Jeff Julian [00:07:06]:

I think when I got into the.

Jeff Julian [00:07:09]:

Role I was put in as an.

Jeff Julian [00:07:10]:

Interim because we had some different, one.

Jeff Julian [00:07:13]:

Person left the organization, and that sort.

Jeff Julian [00:07:15]:

Of set off a chain of domino effect for folks moving into positions. And then at that point, I had.

Jeff Julian [00:07:22]:

Been the president's chief of staff longer than anyone else, I'm assuming, because I maybe did a decent job. She was like, hey, do you want to do this permanently? And so I did. My point in bringing that up is I am a much better chief of.

Jeff Julian [00:07:33]:

Staff with three years under my belt.

Jeff Julian [00:07:35]:

Than I was when I first got the job. And I still have days where I.

Jeff Julian [00:07:39]:

Think, okay, that was a good day.

Jeff Julian [00:07:41]:

I think I know what I'm doing. And then I have days where I'm like, I don't know what the heck I'm doing and what happened today.

Jeff Julian [00:07:47]:

So that's probably very normal.

Jeff Julian [00:07:49]:

I'm sure everyone has that feeling. But certainly when you're doing something that you didn't train to do, necessarily, you have those moments.

Jeff Julian [00:07:56]:
Yeah.

Cheryl [00:07:56]:
And this is a job where you don't go to college to become a chief of staff. I don't know of any programs.

Jeff Julian [00:08:04]:
Right.

Jeff Julian [00:08:04]:
And have you ever talked to anyone.

Jeff Julian [00:08:06]:
Who's like, oh, when I grow up.

Jeff Julian [00:08:07]:
I want to be a chief of staff.

Jeff Julian [00:08:10]:
Right.

Cheryl [00:08:12]:
Well, I think it's such an important position for a number of reasons. It is a lonely job being the president. I mean, you're on all the time, and there's not a lot of people who you can talk to, who you can trust. I know, that was something my president used to tell me. The first president that I worked for was said, I love it when you come in my office because I can tell you anything, and I can be honest. Where other division heads are always kind of angling for their own divisions. Right. They want to serve the college, but they're beholden to instruction or to student services.

Cheryl [00:08:44]:
So you're kind of on this island where you can really be neutral and think about the college and the president themselves, separate from everything else.

Jeff Julian [00:08:52]:
Yeah, absolutely.

Jeff Julian [00:08:53]:
And then also just to think about the leadership team and how we're working together and where I can help support the different vps or senior leaders on projects that they're working on.

Jeff Julian [00:09:06]:
And that was something that the president and I spoke about at the very.

Jeff Julian [00:09:10]:

Beginning about what type of chief of staff she wanted me to be, because I think even when you tell folks.

Jeff Julian [00:09:18]:

That or you say that title, people.

Jeff Julian [00:09:21]:

Think a lot of the political realm and they think of a Ram Emanuel sort of, or I'm trying to think of other chiefs of staff in the political realm, but for some reason, he.

Jeff Julian [00:09:31]:

Always jumps to mind, maybe because of the Chicago connection, but this sort of.

Jeff Julian [00:09:36]:

Quasi president or quasi CEO who's telling others on the team, here's what to do. And that's not the sort of chief of staff that I am or that our president wanted. She wanted me to be, appear to my peers and be a part of the team and a collaborator and a colleague and someone who is helping and bringing resources and providing support. And that fits my own leadership style, I think, or my approach to my work. So I'm not saying, why isn't this getting done? But I may be saying, what's going on here?

Jeff Julian [00:10:11]:

That where can I help you?

Jeff Julian [00:10:13]:

Or what other resources do you need?

Jeff Julian [00:10:15]:

Or give me an update on where.

Jeff Julian [00:10:17]:

We're at on the progress. And certainly I can also serve.

Jeff Julian [00:10:20]:

As for my colleagues, where does she stand on this? And could say, well, I think this.

Jeff Julian [00:10:26]:

Is what I don't always know. And if I don't know, I say, you're going to have to talk to her on this. She and I have not talked about it yet, but many times I could say, well, I think, here's what I would think. This is where she's at, or this is what the college's position is on this.

Cheryl [00:10:39]:

I love that question. What type of chief of staff do you want me to be? Because even for people listening to the podcast who are in different jobs, what a great thing to talk to your boss about. You're almost asking them how you can succeed in a position or how you can best serve their needs, which is a very servant leadership type of thing to ask. That's such a fantastic thing to ask your boss. How do you want to be in this position, or what do you need out of it?

Jeff Julian [00:11:06]:

For me, it was survival at that point. I'm new in the role and part of this executive cabinet team that I wasn't a part of before folks that.

Jeff Julian [00:11:15]:

I either reported to or by position.

Jeff Julian [00:11:19]:

Of where they were at, I was a subordinate to. And so I just needed to understand what I should be doing. And maybe by default, it was also a good servant leadership demonstration. And I appreciate that, Cheryl, but I wasn't thinking about that in the moment.

Jeff Julian [00:11:35]:

I was like, I have to survive.

Jeff Julian [00:11:38]:

And let's not screw this up.

Jeff Julian [00:11:41]:

But, yeah, I think it is important.

Jeff Julian [00:11:43]:

Because you have to be careful for a couple of things. In my mind. Number one, I am not the president, and so I am not the ultimate decision maker. Everything that happens ultimately is my president's responsibility. Anything that happens at that organization, good or bad, and it's always the bad stuff. That is the things that you worry about. But it's all ultimately up to her. And so I want that to be incredibly clear to my colleagues or anyone else.

Jeff Julian [00:12:14]:

I don't want there to ever be.

Jeff Julian [00:12:16]:

The thought that here's this other decision.

Jeff Julian [00:12:19]:

Maker or this other center of gravity within the organization. That is not the case. And so publicly, there is very little distance between myself and the president. And when I do disagree, I

typically will do that when she and I are having a one on one, and I'll share my opinion and then we'll talk about it. And ultimately, I'm behind whatever the decision ultimately is.

Jeff Julian [00:12:46]:

But I feel like outside of those.

Jeff Julian [00:12:49]:

Doors, that's not my role. Right. So I felt it was important to understand that. And then I need my colleagues to.

Jeff Julian [00:12:54]:

Understand that, too, so they know the.

Jeff Julian [00:12:57]:

Way in which we're working together.

Cheryl [00:12:59]:

You're in an interesting position because you do have, I think, some probably agency to be able to disagree in private with your president, because that's probably one of the things that she likes about you, is the ability to bring your opinion. And I found a lot of people I work with struggle with that and struggle with being able to be, I guess, authentic with their opinions, with their boss. They have a hard time saying I disagree or I want to bring another perspective forward. Do you have advice for people when you do dissent, how to do that or how to bring that forward?

Jeff Julian [00:13:33]:

Yeah.

Jeff Julian [00:13:33]:

To me, it's always about right place, right time and respect in how you're doing it.

Jeff Julian [00:13:41]:

To me when we're in that executive.

Jeff Julian [00:13:44]:

Cabinet room or I'm in the room with her, one on one. If we have a great concern about something, that's the time to do that.

Jeff Julian [00:13:55]:

And to wrestle with that and then settle on it. Right. And we may not always all agree on the decision, but as long as.

Jeff Julian [00:14:06]:

It'S the right decision for the institution and the only time, and this has.

Jeff Julian [00:14:11]:
Never happened to me, but if it's.

Jeff Julian [00:14:13]:
Unethical or illegal, then obviously you're walking away no matter who you are.

Jeff Julian [00:14:17]:
Right. But once you've settled that decision in.

Jeff Julian [00:14:20]:
That one on one room or in.

Jeff Julian [00:14:22]:
That executive cabinet room, then you go.

Jeff Julian [00:14:24]:
Out into the organization and you back that decision and you don't question it. And again, this is my philosophy, my opinion, but I think that makes everyone look bad. When you go into a larger venue.

Jeff Julian [00:14:40]:
And the executive cabinet member raises their.

Jeff Julian [00:14:44]:
Hand and says, now, I'm not really sure I understand why we're doing this.

Jeff Julian [00:14:47]:
It's like, no, this is not the.

Jeff Julian [00:14:51]:
Time anymore to be asking that question, because we're a unified leadership team that.

Jeff Julian [00:14:56]:
Has decided upon this decision. But I think that doesn't fully answer your question. I think it's about the time and.

Jeff Julian [00:15:04]:
The place, and then I think it's about how you do it. Right.

Jeff Julian [00:15:08]:
And younger version of me probably got.

Jeff Julian [00:15:12]:

Very passionate, too passionate, and didn't understand that there's more than one battle to fight. And what's really important, an older, slightly wiser version of me is able to see, like, okay, this one, maybe this one doesn't matter. So save your energy for the next battle. Right. And then you just have to do it respectfully. You have to remember that this is about the issue and about the students ultimately. Right. It's about serving our students and about the issue.

Jeff Julian [00:15:44]:

It's not about me personally. It's not about my idea versus this person's idea, because you get caught up in that, and then it's wins and losses, and then you get way sidetracked from what you really need to be focusing on. And I am not saying that's easy.

Jeff Julian [00:16:00]:

There are plenty of times where I'm.

Jeff Julian [00:16:01]:

Sitting there trying to remind myself, like.

Jeff Julian [00:16:03]:

Okay, this is not. Let's just keep it together here.

Cheryl [00:16:09]:

I love younger version versus more wiser, older version. Because I can tell you, my younger self was very confrontational, more aggressive with my opinion, wanted to be heard. I had to be heard. You have to hear me.

Jeff Julian [00:16:28]:

I can't see that.

Jeff Julian [00:16:29]:

I don't believe that at all.

Cheryl [00:16:30]:

Oh, it's very true. I learned to tone it down. Right?

Jeff Julian [00:16:34]:

Yeah.

Jeff Julian [00:16:35]:

Well, I don't think you get rid of what? You don't get rid of the passion because there's times when we're talking about things, especially when we're talking about students.

Jeff Julian [00:16:45]:

That maybe traditionally the whole system hasn't.

Jeff Julian [00:16:48]:

Done a good job of serving. How do you not get passionate about that? How does that not bother you? Or you should feel a sense of urgency, but it's about distilling it. Right.

Jeff Julian [00:16:59]:

And it's about focusing it and again, about doing it in a way that.

Jeff Julian [00:17:05]:

Everybody at the table still feels like.

Jeff Julian [00:17:08]:

They're understood, their ideas are heard.

Jeff Julian [00:17:12]:

This is a safe space for us to have these discussions, and we might beat each other up a little bit.

Jeff Julian [00:17:17]:

In a debate, but at the end.

Jeff Julian [00:17:19]:

We're doing it for the right reasons and it's not personal. So I think that's the respect piece. And everyone has to probably check themselves at some point because they've maybe gone over the line and hey, I believe in an apology. Just own that sort of stuff. I'm sorry.

Jeff Julian [00:17:35]:

And I'm going to do better moving forward.

Jeff Julian [00:17:37]:

And I think that's a good way to lead or to be a colleague.

Cheryl [00:17:43]:

Well, we've talked a lot about how to serve your college and serve your presidency. And when we come back from this quick break, I want to talk to you a little bit about how you position yourself to be a leader and some things that you are doing and would recommend to others to help them along their career.

Jeff Julian [00:18:01]:

So we'll be right back.

Cheryl [00:18:03]:

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Cheryl [00:18:28]:

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Cheryl [00:18:30]:

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Cheryl [00:18:41]:

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Cheryl [00:18:43]:

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Cheryl [00:18:55]:

All right, Jeff, we're back from our break. And before break, we were talking about your amazing role as chief of staff and how you're supporting your college and your presidency, but you're also doing a lot of things to position yourself in a leadership role as well. So tell us a little bit about your recent accomplishments and some of the things that you're doing outside of your chief of staff role.

Jeff Julian [00:19:16]:

Well, you're right down a path.

Jeff Julian [00:19:18]:

I love Cheryl. Just love to talk about myself. Can't get enough of that.

Jeff Julian [00:19:24]:

No, it's the worst.

Cheryl [00:19:26]:

It's like that job interview question when they're like, about yourself, right?

Jeff Julian [00:19:31]:

Go on a podcast, but listen, I won't talk about myself. All right. How does that, does that make me a good guest?

Cheryl [00:19:36]:

You are doing some very interesting and accomplished things I think people want to hear about.

Jeff Julian [00:19:42]:
I'm happy to share, but mostly because.

Jeff Julian [00:19:44]:
I think that what I learned over.

Jeff Julian [00:19:47]:
The years is that especially in higher.

Jeff Julian [00:19:50]:
Ed, and I think everyone knows this.

Jeff Julian [00:19:53]:
There'S not a lot of room to always move up. Right. And you're going to hear that phrase.

Jeff Julian [00:19:58]:
Of, you need to move out to.

Jeff Julian [00:20:01]:
Move up, and then you might be able to come back.

Jeff Julian [00:20:03]:
Right. And so I think folks, especially early.

Jeff Julian [00:20:06]:
In their career, and I know I did this, too, I just was like, when am I going to get my shot? When am I going to get my chance? I can't manage if I haven't had experience managing. But this position calls for experience leading a team, and I'm not leading a team.

Jeff Julian [00:20:20]:
So you have that anxiety.

Jeff Julian [00:20:24]:
And thankfully, I had a couple of.

Jeff Julian [00:20:25]:
Mentors who were like, take a deep breath.

Jeff Julian [00:20:28]:
You're going to get there. Your time will come. But also realizing that there's things you can do outside of your own organization that will prepare you for these opportunities, and you can go in with that selfish mindset of, I want this experience. But you're also going to get this really good feeling because you're usually volunteering.

Jeff Julian [00:20:45]:
Right?

Jeff Julian [00:20:45]:
So something like the National Council of Marketing and Public Relations, NCMPR, you and I are both very familiar with that. That's an opportunity to lead and to maybe take on a committee role and lead a team, do some great work. And then you're building this wealth of experience. And beyond that, you're building this network.

Jeff Julian [00:21:06]:
And to me, that network is one.

Jeff Julian [00:21:10]:
Of the most important things that I've ever developed in my life, in my career.

Jeff Julian [00:21:15]:
So I think about those.

Jeff Julian [00:21:18]:
So that's why I've been involved as I am in NCMPR and now lucky enough to be the president of NCMPR. And what a fulfilling and opportunity that is to help position the organization and work on policy and figure out how are we going to support our members, because ultimately, in supporting our members, we're supporting our students, right. The better prepared our members are, that means they're going to help our students. And then I also got the opportunity to be a part of the Aspen Rising president's fellowship.

Jeff Julian [00:21:53]:
Now talk about what am I doing.

Jeff Julian [00:21:55]:
In this room kind of moment. You're sitting around with 30 other amazing people who many of them are very clearly on a journey to being a president of a community college. And they're just like one checkbox away from that.

Jeff Julian [00:22:10]:
And here I am going, hello, how.

Jeff Julian [00:22:13]:
Did I get here? But again, to me, it's the network.

Jeff Julian [00:22:19]:
Now I've got 30 plus incredible people who believe in the mission of community colleges.

Jeff Julian [00:22:28]:

And they're all over the country and their colleges are all doing, they're all serving students in a different way. And for example, I just went to visit my family in San Antonio for the holidays.

Jeff Julian [00:22:40]:

And while I was down there, I called up one of the folks who's.

Jeff Julian [00:22:45]:

In the Aspen program with me who's at San Antonio College, and I said, hey, can I come get a tour.

Jeff Julian [00:22:50]:

Of the tour campus?

Jeff Julian [00:22:51]:

She took me all around campus. I went through their amazing food pantry student help center, and I was like, oh, this is a great idea. We can do this and that. And so all of that comes from putting yourself out there and taking a chance. So in my presidency role, that's what I've told members, especially young, newer members.

Jeff Julian [00:23:10]:

Just say, volunteer, get involved, raise your.

Jeff Julian [00:23:13]:

Hand, because I don't think I did that enough. I think I did a lot more.

Jeff Julian [00:23:16]:

Of when are they going to call on me?

Jeff Julian [00:23:18]:

When are they going to come get me? And the truth of that is they're never going to call you. They desperately need you, but they don't have time to call you because they need your help. So you've got to step up and raise your hand. And so that's what I've tried to do.

Cheryl [00:23:32]:

Yeah, I think that is such great advice. And obviously, joining an organization like NCMPR and volunteering gives you a great experience. But even volunteering on your own campus, and you're right, so many of the job descriptions are like, requires three years of policy or three years of this or two years of that. And when I moved in my college from a coordinator to director, I had volunteered to run a big committee on campus. So that actually checked the box for some things. Application.

Cheryl [00:24:05]:

Yeah.

Jeff Julian [00:24:07]:

Because you can say, well, I haven't managed a team. I managed this college wide committee that.

Jeff Julian [00:24:13]:

Accomplished this big thing, and that's exactly what you need, right?

Cheryl [00:24:18]:

There were faculty on that committee, so I had to manage them, too.

Jeff Julian [00:24:22]:

Right.

Cheryl [00:24:25]:

But it's true. You have to put yourself out there. And you mentioned a little bit about impostor syndrome, feeling that yourself in this leadership program, how do you get over that? What do you tell yourself?

Jeff Julian [00:24:38]:

Oh, boy, if you figure it out, give me a call and let me know. It's been very humbling, and I'm sure folks are like, oh, well, that's just something you say, and maybe it is, but to me it has been very humbling, but it's also very invigorating, because how often do you get this opportunity.

Jeff Julian [00:24:59]:

Right, to sit in a room with other folks and pretend to be the.

Jeff Julian [00:25:05]:

President and have mentors who are presidents or who have been presidents sit in a room and wrestle with these very back to what we talked about before. These are very difficult jobs.

Jeff Julian [00:25:16]:

So to be able to say at.

Jeff Julian [00:25:18]:

Some point you're going to be faced with a decision like this, how would you handle it?

Jeff Julian [00:25:22]:

And then to demonstrate that, and then have folks come back and say, okay.

Jeff Julian [00:25:25]:

Nice approach, but don't forget about this. Or someone would probably say this. What's your answer to this question?

Jeff Julian [00:25:32]:

So to be able to go through.

Jeff Julian [00:25:34]:

Scenarios like that with a net underneath you and to be able to practice that.

Jeff Julian [00:25:40]:

So I think I have been able.

Jeff Julian [00:25:42]:

To get over the impostor syndrome just.

Jeff Julian [00:25:45]:

By saying what an incredible opportunity. And if I don't go headfirst into.

Jeff Julian [00:25:50]:

This, I'm going to miss something because it's only a year long, and then it'll be gone. And so I've tried to tell myself that, too, with the amount, because folks will say, well, how are you managing this? You're the chief of staff. You're doing Aspen. You're also the president of NCMPR.

Jeff Julian [00:26:06]:

And yeah, it's a lot, but I also know that someday I'll be sitting.

Jeff Julian [00:26:11]:

On a rocking chair somewhere and my phone's not going to be ringing. Maybe it won't even be phones then. So my hologram inside of my head won't be knocking to no one will be calling me, is basically what I'm saying. So you might as well enjoy the ride while it's happening, and there'll be a time to rest, and I find my moments to recharge and get back.

Jeff Julian [00:26:31]:

Into my good headspace.

Cheryl [00:26:34]:

And I think there's two big takeaways listening to you. First of all, leadership is practiced, and it's not just something you're born with. I mean, you think, oh, they're a natural born leader. Well, most people have to practice leadership, and you have to continue to practice it. So getting in these positions is important because that allows you a safe space to really hone that leadership skill 100% because. As I listen to you, you're so passionate, like, mind doing all this because you like it?

Jeff Julian [00:27:05]:

Yeah.

Jeff Julian [00:27:06]:

No, you got to love it, right? Because you will be busy and there will be the challenges of. Even the volunteer stuff has its own challenges, depending on what you're working on and what the issue is. And so you do have to love it, you have to be into it, and you have to be invigorated by it. And I do think that not every single moment of every single opportunity is.

Jeff Julian [00:27:28]:

Joy, but you know that the reward is there for the hard work.

Jeff Julian [00:27:34]:

And to me, that reward is the community of people that you get to.

Jeff Julian [00:27:39]:

Be with and the idea that you'll.

Jeff Julian [00:27:42]:

Be able to look back and say, oh, during this era in time, I.

Jeff Julian [00:27:47]:

Helped us get, I was part of a team that got us here, right? And then we handed it off to.

Jeff Julian [00:27:53]:

The next team, and then they took it a step further and so on and so forth.

Cheryl [00:27:58]:

Well, so besides all these amazing things you're doing in your professional career, you also have quite a vibrant personal career, too, or hobby.

Jeff Julian [00:28:10]:

Yeah.

Cheryl [00:28:11]:

For those listening, we started the podcast downstairs with some cool records and a brick wall, and it felt like a music studio. I felt like I was a musician, but the Wifi was bad. So now he's in the kitchen.

Jeff Julian [00:28:27]:

It was a perfect location, except for the Wifi. Other than that, only just the things you need to do a podcast over Zoom, right, is just the Wifi. He doesn't understand wifi. See, that's the one thing that's not in cheap of stuff is the technology aspect. So, yeah, I play music. I've been in a band for a long time. I've been playing in bands like little indie rock bands, original music, and I love music. I love going to see concerts.

Jeff Julian [00:28:59]:

I'm a record vinyl collector. And so music has always been a.

Jeff Julian [00:29:03]:
Very big part of my life.

Jeff Julian [00:29:05]:
It is a place to recharge, but it's another thing, right? Because I'm kind of managing the band and we're working on an album and writing songs, and so I guess that's another place to practice leadership.

Jeff Julian [00:29:18]:
Cheryl, even though I'm probably a very.

Jeff Julian [00:29:21]:
Different leader there than I am when I've got a tie and a suit jacket on. But no, it's fun. And I can't imagine not doing it.

Jeff Julian [00:29:31]:
And I think you and I talked before that.

Jeff Julian [00:29:35]:
When I was younger in my career.

Jeff Julian [00:29:37]:
I was very self conscious about being.

Jeff Julian [00:29:40]:
In a band because I didn't want.

Jeff Julian [00:29:42]:
Folks to think that this guy doesn't.

Jeff Julian [00:29:45]:
Take his day job seriously. Because a lot of times Friday night would roll around 05:00 would hit, and.

Jeff Julian [00:29:53]:
I would jump in my car and.

Jeff Julian [00:29:54]:
Drive over to the bass player's house and then jump in a van.

Jeff Julian [00:29:57]:
And then we would drive to the.

Jeff Julian [00:29:59]:

Place we were playing on Friday night, and then we would go to the place we were playing on Saturday night, drive home on Sunday, and get up on Monday morning and go to work.

Jeff Julian [00:30:06]:

And I didn't want anybody to mistake.

Jeff Julian [00:30:08]:

That for not being serious about the day job.

Jeff Julian [00:30:10]:

Now, that was stupid. But that's my own brain getting in.

Jeff Julian [00:30:14]:

My own way and telling me things that don't really matter or don't make sense. So eventually, I got more comfortable with it.

Jeff Julian [00:30:20]:

And I don't not tell people about it.

Jeff Julian [00:30:25]:

Obviously, I've just told everybody on your podcast about it, so it's out there now.

Cheryl [00:30:30]:

Cheryl, I have another podcast guest. Her podcast came out in January 2024, so we're recording this in December. So this podcast would have been out. She is a mom and also a director of communications and also a mayor of a city. So she's like you. She does all these cool things. And we talked a lot about authenticity. And when you're early in your career, you don't want to talk about being a mom or being in a band or you don't bring your authentic self to work.

Cheryl [00:31:03]:

You're compartmentalized. But I think as we get older, we see, like, that's our whole self. Work is part of our whole self, and there is a place for that. And I love hiring musicians because these are people who work hard, who are artistic, who have a craft that they dedicate time to, used to making no money at all. They're grateful for any, oh, my God.

Jeff Julian [00:31:30]:

Pay me for this.

Cheryl [00:31:34]:

Yeah. At Granacom, a lot of our team members are musicians for those reasons. And I love that.

Jeff Julian [00:31:40]:

I think to what you said before.

Jeff Julian [00:31:42]:

For me.

Jeff Julian [00:31:45]:

I think it was mostly me, but I think that's something that we have to think about as leaders of our organizations, is what is the.

Jeff Julian [00:31:54]:

Culture that we're setting for the organization.

Jeff Julian [00:31:58]:

That we want people to be able to bring their whole selves to an organization, that we want them to feel comfortable that they can be a parent or they can be whatever your hobby is or your side gig or whatever, that you can be those things and not feel like you have to hide that, that there'll be some sort of penalty or repercussions. Do a good job and be yourself, and that's what we want at our organization.

Cheryl [00:32:29]:

Well, speaking of not hiding, are you going to perform for NCMPR ever? Are there plans for a big.

Jeff Julian [00:32:40]:

Plenty? There's enough to do.

Jeff Julian [00:32:42]:

Just being on the know, I try to keep all my energy and time there. I did during the pandemic when we did our first virtual conference. James Walters, the executive director, he's a musician as well, so I think he pulled his ukulele out and played a song. And then I wrote a little riff on the hotel California by the Eagles, but I redid it as the hotel conference bar. So is anyone missing the hotel conference bar? So I did play live or some version of that. You know, I feel like the box has been checked, but certainly available for bookings or the next gradcom holiday party.

Cheryl [00:33:34]:

Well, it's been such a pleasure talking to you. I just love your energy and enthusiasm. You have so much to offer aspiring leaders. I know you're really active on LinkedIn, so I'd like to encourage our listeners, if it's okay with you, to connect, please, that way.

Jeff Julian [00:33:50]:

Absolutely.

Cheryl [00:33:51]:

Anything else you'd like to leave out there as we wrap up our conversation?

Jeff Julian [00:33:55]:

No, I just appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about leadership. It is something that I do care deeply about and really think that it's our opportunity as leaders to help develop and to support the next generation of leaders. So to your point, anyone can reach out, and I'm happy to have a conversation. So thank you so much.

Cheryl [00:34:17]:

Thank you.

Cheryl Broom [00:34:25]:

And that wraps up this episode of the Higher Education Conversations podcast. I'm host and GradComm CEO Cheryl Broom. A big thank you to our sponsor, Edtech Connect. Edtech Connect is free, so anyone with a email address can sign up and list the software and services they use and their role at their school. So visit edtechconnect.com and set up your free profile to get a pulse for what's happening with higher ed technology today. And while you're online, take a few minutes to leave our podcast, a five star review. It will help other colleges and find us and learn from the great experts we have on the show. That's it for now.

Cheryl [00:35:05]:

Until next time.