Marcie Moore - Interview

SPEAKERS
Jordan Lin, Marcie Moore

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Jordan Lin:

Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me today. All right. Let's get into it. Would you mind sharing a bit about your background and upbringing? How has it shaped your perspective on life and work?

Marcie Moore:

I think it's always important context wise to share about place. Where that is, where home is. And so, I live currently, at 44 years of age, on the same bus route, and I'm talking school bus route, that I grew up on. My daughter rode the same bus route to school until she was driving. So I'm Appalachia, and family is family in Appalachia. And we work hard here. I was raised by two wonderful human beings who have worked very hard their whole lives. Neither one went to college. So I'm the first gen[eration] college student, first gen[eration] college graduate.

Fun fact that my sister actually graduated college at the same time from the same college. She had gone away and came back and went to the community college where I was. I had a scholarship to go to a four-year university, and it was only about 55 miles from home, and I couldn't leave home. And so I stayed here. I stayed at home with my parents, and came to the Community College, where I'm currently sitting because I came here 26 years ago and I never left. I graduated in June of '99 with my Associate degree. I was hired in May of '99 to be an administrative assistant to our director of developmental education. I did that for a year, and then the admin to the dean of business [position] opened up. I applied, got that job, worked that job while I was going back for my Bachelor's degree, and then a faculty position came open, and I applied for that and I was faculty from 2006 until 2017. I was appointed to the interim dean of business engineering and information technology. So I did that for a year, 2018 I got the job permanently. And here I am. So I don't know if you picked up on it or not, but I was once the administrative assistant to the dean of business, and I am now the dean of business at the same institution, so [I] kind of went full circle.
I go back to my parents about that where work has been something that's just ingrained into me. In Appalachia, you stay home, you have this friendly culture, your love of people. Education came into that as well because I realized that the work that we do here, at the college, sure when I first started working at the college, I understood what it did for me. But at that moment, when I first started working here, it had not yet been life changing in the fact that my life really didn't change a whole lot, except that I wasn't in school anymore. But I think as things progressed, that my education was life changing for me. I didn't do the traditional college route. I've always been one of those non-traditional adult learners. I've never lived on a campus. I've never slept in a dorm room and never shared a bathroom with other females. That's a different thing. I don't have that perspective. That's making it hard for me to help my daughter with thinking about her future and what works, what she's going to do. Because I missed that. But I don't regret that at all. I'm working on my dissertation. I'm very close to finishing my doctorate degree at this point. So I feel like I just bragged a lot about myself, but I think in context, it gives you a good picture of where I am, where I came from, and that I'm still here.

Jordan Lin:

Absolutely. You’re a true community leader, and your college is very lucky to have you. In your position as a higher ed leader now, what are your hopes and goals in terms of the work you're doing and for your career?

Marcie Moore:

I think what my hopes and goals boil down to is the difference that we are making in our community. It's not about me at this point [beyond] what am I doing to make an impact, make a difference. A lot of things that I've learned about with just my advanced education and all of these things, collective impact, what a difference we can make in the lives of those around us if we're all working toward the same thing. There's a project going on right now currently in Muskingum County, which is the county where I live, called Enterprise Muskingum. It's starting at the level of kindergarten readiness, and then going through the career, kind of a spin on a cradle to career concept. We have statistics that are showing us that 20% of the kids that are going into kindergarten at our city schools are not kindergarten ready. How do we start to make a difference in three year olds, four year olds, five year olds to then help them to understand what an impact having an education and being educated will have on their communities and on themselves in the future? You know, Appalachia is not really stereotyped as being a place that values education, or thinking into the future. A lot of people are content with following a traditional path, graduating from high school and going and working a Production Technician job at a factory. We need those people, AND some of them may be seeking to grow into other opportunities. So what's our place in that, to help them advance their skills, that way they can maybe become a supervisor in that role, or something to that effect, to help people see that [future]. I hope that we continue
as a college to become involved in projects like this, where we can have influence over the bettering of our community. Another example is one of our private family foundations in town. The president of that foundation is a former employee of Zane state, and she's going to be our board chair next year. She was an English professor, and then a dean of arts and sciences. She really recognizes the value of education. Last year, that foundation sponsored a community read and we got involved with it. All of our first year students read the book. The author was invited to come to our auditorium here in town. They hosted a writing contest for sophomores and juniors. And then the local schools came, I mean, it was a big deal. And so they read, they did it again this year. That event was this morning. It was a really cool event. And this year, it was freshmen and sophomores that were invited. Of course, community members were there. But one of the things that we're really focusing on right now are cultural activities, and ways to expand your horizons. To get out of this, “I only know the woods and the river,” you know, there's more out there in the world than what I grew up doing.

Jordan Lin:
That's amazing. Anything that's been keeping you up at night?

Marcie Moore:
[Large multinational company] is coming to Ohio. They're building fabs about 36 miles from our campus. Ohio is becoming the Silicon Heartland is what they're calling us. They're hiring an initial wave of 3000 employees in 2025, and 70% of those jobs will require a certificate or an Associate degree. The other 30% are the higher level engineering positions. They’re very concerned about how they're going to fill those jobs. And so right now, we are working really hard on a lot of different projects to beef up our engineering, we've adopted some new curriculum, and just all the things that go into all of that [are] my responsibility as the Dean over engineering that is keeping me up. And it probably will for a while. The paper and pencil pushing that I do, the “administrivia” gets in the way of being able to think big picture, the capacity for that sort of thing... that's the kind of stuff that's keeping me up.

Jordan Lin:
Very valid. Switching gears now, are you familiar with generative AI? What's been your experience with it?

Marcie Moore:
Great question. I was actually like, why is Don reaching out to me [for Humans of AI], does he know that I'm just fumbling around in this? So currently, we've been hearing about it and I read Inside Higher Ed almost every morning while I'm eating my breakfast. I've been watching it... I recently inherited the English faculty. This is something that we are at very early stages of educating ourselves and our faculty about. We did a
professional development this fall about AI, and it was the superpower and the good part of AI, not the, “I'm going to help every student cheat”, because that's instantly where people went when all of this started. Just in conversations that we've been having, I'm using it more now, to help me with those administrivia things that I have to do. I had to write a catalog description for a certificate [that’s] IT related, but I’m not the subject matter expert. We were taught how to give the AI assistant the right kind of prompt to get what we wanted back, and so I used Chat GPT with the prompt. And Chat GPT wrote a catalog description for this certificate. And then of course, you know, I massaged it and changed some things.

We've gotten back some curriculum ideas. We were talking about creating a leadership certificate. [And we were wondering] what’s in a leadership certificate? And we got a whole list of things. We've asked for help with writing course goals and objectives, learning outcomes. We have asked for help with testing or quizzing, doing assessments on certain learning outcomes just to help because we don't have all the answers even though we're administrators and we're finding that it's helping us be more efficient with our positions. That's kind of how I feel, you know, yeah, I still worked to put the prompt in, I still worked to massage the information. But when you're writing something, it's like, I've used the word ponder 12 times and why have I done that? Why did that word stick in my head? And so the chat GPT helps eliminate that problem.

Last week, I was at a meeting... we have an Appalachian STEM collaborative, a gathering of people in K-12 education, higher education, some employers are involved, job and family services people, coming together and talking about STEM. Last week, it was about women in STEM and how to get these young girls and women into STEM, which is a project that we’re working on pretty heavily right now at Zane State, because only 10% of our engineering students are females, which is difficult because one of the metrics that [large multinational company] has set goals is that 40% of their workforce will be females. We need to step up our game. We're doing a lot of things but... I was at this meeting and one of the presenters, I wish I could remember which one it was because it made a lot of sense in conjunction with what she was actually talking about, her program. But she showed us a YouTube clip that was a commercial from SoFi, the finance company. And it was AI generated,, they typed into the AI. Show me an image of someone who’s good with money. Have you seen this?

Jordan Lin:

I haven’t seen it, but I’m sure it’s going to be a biased result.

Marcie Moore:
So it's you know, it's white men. Right. And then the next question was, show me someone show me a picture of someone who is good at investing. And again, it's white men and all different white men... but that really underrepresented females. And so, the point of that was, it's our responsibility as humans to train AI to not be biased with gender stereotypes. It was pretty powerful. But there's a commercial where there's a girl sitting and she said I'm the face of childhood hunger in America... she was an AI-generated image. So why is the young girl the face of hunger and the white male is the face of being good with money? Because humans train AI, right. So we have to make sure that we're not training the AI in a biased way.

Jordan Lin:
I could not agree more. In what ways do you think about supporting developing your students or the people you lead to help them meet their goals and overcome challenges?

Marcie Moore:
I put my hat on with my daughter right now, just because she's a junior in high school. She is very independent, smart as a whip, you know, the whole nine. She's just a really cool individual and I'm trying to help her get all the tools that she can possibly collect that will help her make good decisions tomorrow and in the future. So I think that that's my job, not just from not just from a parent perspective, but when I'm here, these students are my students as well, even though I'm not in the classroom anymore. The choices that I make, have an effect on them and so bringing the student voice to the table when possible... whether that's literally bringing them into the room or figuratively talking about what they might think, when we're making decisions.

I've recently hired two new faculty, and one [is] completely new to higher education. He was a student 10 years ago, but never has taught. I have to keep reminding myself that I need to keep meeting with these faculty, to set them up to make sure that they're ready to take off to the next level. What do you focus on first? Do you focus on their teaching? Do you focus on the policies and procedures of the college because that's boring [stuff], but if they mess it up, they could really screw something up? They have to understand ‘don't push the red button’, right? I'll tell you why later. Just don't touch it. But here's what we can do now to get you onboarded quickly. But having good teachers is super important because the students aren't going to learn anything if the person has no ability at all to teach them something. And there's a difference between being a good learner versus being a good teacher and not every student in your classroom learns the way that you do.

I model professional behavior with the students as well. This morning, [with] my other Dean, we were talking about student opinion of instruction surveys. And I don't know if you've ever had the pleasure of reading the
comments that come back from students. But we get them all for every faculty member, every class, every comment, and if I were so inclined and had time I might read them. I typically don’t. I might just hit a couple highlights. My colleague was reading some yesterday, she had a reason to be doing it. She said, “As the Deans, wouldn’t it be cool if we went into the First Year Experience Class, and we presented to the students on how to complete the student opinion of instruction surveys, and what is meaningful feedback and what feedback will just be thrown into the trash?” One student clearly despised the faculty member… was just like, “he's an ass.” And my colleague said, “What am I supposed to do with that? How was that gonna help me help him be a better teacher?” It’s one student's opinion, obviously. But how to help them… we’re even thinking, we're not educators anymore. But there are opportunities for us to go into that classroom setting and still teach something to the students.A few years ago on our Welcome Day activity. A colleague of mine, we presented to the students on power skills. So aka soft skills, 21st Century Skills as the Lab calls them. Just the things that we went over with them about, how to write an email to your professor, what does the term Office Hours mean? Like those kinds of things that people who come to college for the first time don't have any idea how to be a college student. And so, you know, we’re helping in that way when we can.

Jordan Lin:
Great examples. In reflecting on those, do you think that AI could ever play a role in growth?

Marcie Moore:
I'm sure. As a matter of fact, I'm thinking about AI and teaching using [AI] for scenarios or prompts for how to write those comments on the student opinion of instruction. We have some really good ones that we could just use that are real. We could do that. I think too, I'm assuming it's going to be our job in higher ed, very soon... I'm sure we're late to this game if you were to look at the whole survey of colleges... but how to use it for good in a classroom setting or you know, in a class setting for the students. Again, I go back to my daughter was struggling... she wrote this big, long paper about a book. And then she had to do some kind of an adaptation about the book as part of her final presentation. And she's like, 'I don't know what I'm going to do. Am I going to do a skit? Am I going to make a collage?’ Oh, I mean, she had all these ideas. And I was like, 'why don't you just ask AI for some ideas? Particularly if you're gonna do a script, or something like that? You could get that from AI.’ And she's like, ‘huh, is that cheating?’ And I said, ‘No, you're not copying something word for word. It's, you know, it's giving you ideas. It's an idea generator, like a rough draft.’ I think helping people know how to use [AI] for good and not for evil is going to be the kicker.

Jordan Lin:
Absolutely. Do you have a perspective on what parts of growth should be human versus AI-led? What's the right role for AI to play?
Marcie Moore:
Well that's a good question. I had to write a letter not that long ago, to colleagues outside of the college, inviting them to an activity here for a specific reason. I wanted to show excitement around it, but I was staring at a blank Word screen. And I was like, 'I don't know what to do'. So I typed into ChatGPT my prompt, and it came up with some really cool things to use. Some of them are like 'Oh, that is not me'. These people actually meet me in person, they're gonna say, 'Oh, she used AI to write that', right. I mean, totally not the way I would have worded some things. My input into it, what I used for the prompt, Chat GPT gave it back to me in about three seconds. It took me about five more minutes to massage it, copy it, paste it into my document and format it. I think I'm more comfortable with AI, because I know I'm not going to just take what it says and use it. That's where my fear is, that people will not use their own brains to take that and use it as a starting point.

I feel like when the internet was born, it was all this new stuff, right? At one of our McDonald's locations at the drive thru, it is now an AI assistant taking your order. I have not experienced it yet. But a friend of mine has a younger daughter who's probably seven or eight. They went through the drive thru on their way to a basketball game and my friend said, 'Oh, my gosh, that's like a Siri... that's an AI voice. And her daughter from the backseat said 'I love it. That means there's not a human there to mess it up.' That's kind of interesting... do machines outperform humans? Sometimes? Maybe, I don't know. We have a coffee chain called Seven Brew, you pull up and there's a human being standing in the drive thru, and the human being takes your phone number onto the iPad. And that's your account. So the first time and only time I've ever been there, I ordered a certain drink and I had it made with oat milk, because I can't drink regular milk. My colleague in the office next door, she loves this place. And so she pulls up and they take her phone number and she'll say 'You know, I want a Blondie' and they say, 'oh, do you want that with vanilla milk and a shot like you did [before]' because all of that is stored in that system attached to her phone number. What I can envision is that the next step is going to be [that] the person is gone from that ordering, and it will just be typing in my phone number, and then there's my order. So I can see a lot of how it's just going to change the way we do everything.

Jordan Lin:
Switching gears to the topic of agency. How do you think that AI could enable or inhibit agency for either your learners or for your employees?

Marcie Moore:
Perhaps... AI would help our students or learners with learning about career paths and how to make better informed choices. Could your AI assistant get to know you well enough to help you by saying, 'You really struggled with whatever concept that's gonna be in this class. Maybe you should get tutoring early. Or hey,
remember, you got this with oat milk last time you didn't like it', like that kind of thing. I hope it's going to help us streamline our lives a little bit more and kind of make things easier for us.

**Jordan Lin:**
Do you have any thoughts on what should be the human’s role and what should the AI’s role be in agency?

**Marcie Moore:**
I am too much of a control freak to let a machine take over my life. And so there will always be a huge human element in that for me. I have this adaptive cruise control on my vehicle. And I hate it because I want to be in charge of how close I am to the car in front of me. And I want to be in charge of when I accelerate and decelerate based on what's going on. But my car does that for me, and I can turn it off and I normally do turn it off when I'm driving because it drives me insane. I'm just controlling like that. So like I don't think I could ever let, for example, the letter that I wrote, it was a perfectly fine letter. I could have just copied it, pasted it and sent it off. I might have been okay. I mean, somebody probably would not have known that I didn't actually write it. But I still feel that I have to do that. So I think that there are more people out there like me, than those who are unlike me in that regard [who might] let the machine do everything for them.

**Jordan Lin:**
I think that’s smart. Switching topics one more time, as a leader, in what ways have you intentionally created environments that foster connectedness and belonging amongst your students or your employees in your organization?

**Marcie Moore:**
It's about relationships, getting to know people. I'm a people person. I'll also go back to Appalachia family. That's the culture here. We are like one giant family at this institution. I feel like just fostering that relationship building [is critical], we have activities like our holiday party was Monday and we go to the local bowling alley, and the college pays for pizza and cookies, and we get two drink tickets to use however we want. And we have door prizes and we have prizes for the bowling games and we just have a really good time. And those are the kinds of things that we do that foster that sense of belonging. Our new employees, when we're hiring somebody, it's common for us to ask the question if they're a good bowler, and they're like, 'why, do I have to be a good bowler?' and then we explain what we do for the holiday.

**Jordan Lin:**
I love that. Are you a good bowler?
Marcie Moore:
I know where my strengths are. And bowling is not one so that's okay. I can throw a fun party and I can make people feel welcome.

Jordan Lin:
I get that sense from just talking to you. How do you think AI might impact the ability of folks to connect with each other and have a sense of belonging?

Marcie Moore:
Am I allowed to simply say, I don't know? I just said that the human element, the relationships... [are important]. I don't know if I have an example or even a thought about how AI can be helpful in [creating a sense of belonging].

Jordan Lin:
So some things are purely human. That's okay, not everything has to have AI in it.

Marcie Moore:
And I think it would be a really sad day in the world if we lost that.

Jordan Lin:
Do you have any last thoughts?

Marcie Moore:
No, I think it's a very cool conversation. You gave me some confidence that I'm using it in the way that... I'm not really far behind and I guess some encouragement to keep going.