

President Sullivan's Remarks on Her Lecture to UVA Students in the Fall 2017 course *Resilient Leadership for Teams and Teammates*, Nov. 30, 2017

1. *What led you to accept the invitation to speak on resilience, and what did you hope you communicated effectively to the students about the value of resilience in leadership?*

I accepted the invitation to speak in Tim Davis's class because I always enjoy interacting with UVA students—hearing their ideas and learning about their interests and passions as well as the challenges that they face. I've taught a COLA class myself for the past several years and occasionally a J-term course, and I've participated as a guest-speaker numerous times in the classrooms of faculty colleagues. The topic of Tim's class—"Resilient Leadership for Teams"—appealed to me because resilience is an essential element of leadership, and it's a critical skill for students to develop at UVA. In my remarks, I talked about different leadership styles, principles of effective leadership, and some of the defining qualities of resilient leadership.

2. *Is toughness a synonym for resilience, and how do you see it as an essential virtue or quality in your work of leading a major public university?*

Being tough is part of being resilient, but a resilient leader needs to have other qualities as well. A resilient leader knows how to build trusting relationships, take bold risks, and be receptive to feedback—both positive and critical feedback. To lead a university effectively you need to have those qualities. Having the ability to gather and synthesize information—both positive and negative—is another important quality, because a university leader receives information and advice from so many sources and directions.

3. *Is resilience simply an approach to endurance or perseverance, or is there more to it as you map out the road ahead in leadership?*

Being resilient means more than simply enduring or persevering. It means more than surviving in the face of challenges; it means thriving in the face of challenges. For example, because of the commitment of faculty, students, staff, the Board of Visitors, and others, we have achieved a great deal through implementation of the Cornerstone Plan over the last five years, and we've achieved these things while contending with numerous challenges. Because of our focus and commitment, we have great new programs such as Total Advising, the Meriwether Lewis Institute for Citizen Leadership, an improved Career Center, the Global Internship Program, and the Tri-Sector Leadership Fellows Program, which brings together Batten, Darden, and Law students to work on solutions to real-world problems. If we had been content with merely enduring or persevering in a challenging environment, we would never have

achieved so much together. The word *resilience* in its Latin origin means to leap or spring back. Resilience means action.

4. Please address any other aspect of your talk...

While bold action is part of leadership, sometimes resilient leadership requires a leader to choose not to act. To illustrate this point in my remarks to the students, I shared a story about Abraham Lincoln. During the Civil War, Union Army General George Meade won a major victory at the Battle of Gettysburg when his army crippled the Confederate forces fighting under Robert E. Lee. Meade had a chance to destroy the rebel army, but he allowed Lee's weakened forces to escape because he thought his men were too exhausted to continue fighting. When Lincoln found out, he was furious. He sat down and wrote a long letter to Meade, expressing his dissatisfaction with the general's tactics. The letter was a real tongue-lashing. But when Lincoln was done writing, he put it in an envelope, turned the envelope over, and wrote these words on the front: "To General George Meade, never sent, never signed." Students in the class had been discussing the importance of emotional intelligence and how leaders need to remain composed under pressure. Lincoln's decision not to send that letter required exactly those qualities — emotional intelligence, composure, and discipline under pressure — because he needed to preserve his working relationship with Meade. Having this ability to pause, to remain composed under pressure, instead of giving a knee-jerk reaction, is a critical part of effective leadership. Call it the power of the pause.