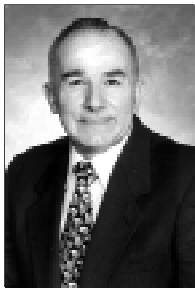


Professionalism: Putting the needs and interests of others above our own



Can you imagine the climate at UTMB if every day, every employee, faculty member and student took advantage of at least one opportunity to make life easier for someone else?

Recently in one of our clinics, something happened that I want to share with you, something that perfectly illustrates the type of professional behavior that makes me proud to be president of this institution. UTMB employee Robert Rodriguez handled a situation with thoughtfulness and care, and I believe he deserves the applause of everyone at this university.

A father needed to stop at UTMB before work to have his child seen by our doctors. He saw Robert, whom he recognized from previous visits to UTMB, at a grocery store before arriving here. The father explained that he would be rushing his child into the clinic on his way to work. When Robert arrived at UTMB, he thoughtfully prepared the child's file and had everything ready for their visit. Because of Robert's preparation, the child was seen quickly and dad was able to get to work.

Because of his professionalism and his unselfish act of kindness, Robert received recognition from his department, as well as two free tickets to a Houston Rockets game. The award, called "Random Acts" by the Pediatric Primary Care Clinic, was designed to recognize employees who look outside themselves and randomly do something nice for a fellow employee, patient or anyone else who might visit us at UTMB. I commend Richard for a job well done, as well as the pediatric management team for creating a unique way to recognize employees who go "above and beyond."

Can you imagine the climate at UTMB if every day, every employee, faculty member and student took advantage of at least one opportunity to make life easier for someone else? We've defined professionalism as putting the needs and interests of others above our own through compassion, accountability, integrity and respect. Robert did just that.

I've decided, after almost two years of underscoring the importance of professional behavior at UTMB in a variety of ways, that it's time to institute a series of interventions to reward professional behavior on our campus. Because of the importance of what we do here at UTMB, having our employees act in a professional manner is not a desired state, but an expected one. Anything less compromises the health and welfare of our patients, as well as the value of our students' education (which ultimately impacts the health and welfare of even more patients down the road).

Along with other leaders at UTMB, I'm outlining a five-year professionalism plan. During that period, we will implement several programs and incentives designed to show our employees that we mean business when it comes to behaving professionally at this university. To date, we've tried to communicate how important professionalism is to the success of UTMB. Now, we'll begin to hold employees accountable by devising ways to reward professional behavior and strongly discourage unprofessional behavior.

For starters, I will soon begin meeting with all new employees on the topic of professionalism in the workplace. Principles of Service classes, dealing with issues of professionalism, teamwork and improvement, are about to begin again. This time they will target all of our exempt-level employees (those ineligible for overtime pay). An institutional recognition program is being designed to reinforce the principles of service and to applaud those who go the extra mile in their daily activities. This column, which will appear in *Impact* quarterly, will be a forum for me to recognize departments that make it a point to reward professionalism, as well as the employees who are making a difference. In fact, if your department has designed a unique way to recognize professionalism at UTMB, I'd like to hear about it. Please send details to Jennifer Raeke in my office at jeraeke@utmb.edu.

Interventions like our Principles of Service training, monthly professionalism lunches, orientation sessions for new employees, and the annual professionalism brochure are starting to heighten the level of professionalism exhibited overall by UTMB faculty, staff and students. I'm frequently told that professional behavior is improving campuswide. That's encouraging to me, and it's imperative that this trend continue.

Please remember Robert's example. It doesn't take a tremendous effort to make a difference. Let's all look for ways to make the concerns of others the most important issue every day at UTMB.

I look forward to sharing more stories about exceptional UTMB employees in future columns.