

Leadership Profile - Dr. David Powe

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, the state's only academic health sciences institution, is on the move. UMMC's leadership completed an extensive long range planning project last year and has a compelling vision for the future which will have a big impact on Jackson and the state. It is interesting to back up and get a little context on the size and scope of UMMC. Each day there about 20,000 people on its campus including over 8,873 employees (approximately 1,000 added in the last eighteen months). That would make it a top 20 city by population in the state. UMMC has invested heavily in safety and security resulting in its being rated in the top one percent of urban academic health sciences centers around the country for overall safety. The campus has its own water supply and electrical substation. Its doors are open 24/7/365 and its technical systems people manage 72,000 points throughout the campus. There is over 4,000,000 square feet of space that requires management and upkeep. From a regulatory standpoint, there are layers of federal, state, and local requirements that must be continuously considered. In addition, there is a \$1.3 billion dollar annual budget to manage.

It takes great leadership and execution to make all of this work together to provide quality patient care, first class healthcare instruction, and cutting edge research. I enjoy studying how people manage complex organizations and execute on such lofty goals, so I recently sat down with Dr. David Powe, Chief Administration Officer at UMMC, to learn more about how he manages all of this from an operational standpoint. Dr. Powe has extensive responsibilities including facilities, transportation, real property, security, logistical services, environmental safety, emergency preparedness, master planning, and governmental and community relations. What first struck me about Dr. Powe was his passion and enthusiasm for the job and the mission of UMMC. My experience has shown me that enthusiasm is contagious, and I am sure that his passion for his job inspires those that work with him.

Dr. Powe has an extensive and diverse background in leadership. He received a doctorate in education from the University of Southern Mississippi, and participated in the prestigious Harvard University Senior Executive Fellows Program where he became a Harvard Fellow. His career path includes service as Superintendent of Education in McComb, MS, President of Mississippi Delta Community College in Moorhead, MS, and Director of NASA's Environmental Science Directorate. He is not one to rest upon his prior accomplishments, and he and the leadership team at UMMC have ambitious plans to make UMMC one of the best academic health centers around to compete with such facilities as UAB, Vanderbilt, and LSU. The combination of engaging in advanced research, training tomorrow's healthcare professionals, and serving Mississippi's patient population creates a unique mission for UMMC.

In response to my inquiries about how they execute on all of this, Dr. Powe noted, "The key is the employees, and their pride in the organization." I shared an experience I had on the campus awhile back where I was lost, and employees apparently recognizing my plight, were overly friendly to get me to my destination. Dr. Powe shared similar stories like that which anecdotally illustrated his point that "it is the people that make the institution." The glue that binds the large team that works at UMMC is a vision statement that is shared throughout the organization that states that UMMC is, "A great academic health sciences center dedicated to improving lives." Their vision statement has

subpoints which further clarify and elaborate on the vision. As Dr. Powe emphasized, “You have to live the vision, not just know the vision.” His point is well taken that it is our execution toward a vision that really counts. In other words we have to “walk the talk” to be successful.

The long range plans of UMMC are exciting for Jackson and Mississippians throughout the state. I have great confidence that Chancellor Dr. Dan Jones, Vice Chancellor Dr. Jimmy Keeton, and the leadership team including Dr. Powe will seize this moment in time to help move this state forward. Mississippi has some very strong health care institutions as well an academic health sciences center in UMMC. For those of us in the business community, I think we should consider how to leverage this growth sector and recognize health care as the economic engine that it is, and could be, for advancing the state.

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