# Health and Human Science Matters Season 1, Episode 2: Dr. Manfred Diehl

Dr. Manfred Die...: In very important big meetings, let's say a study section at NIH, I sometimes think, "Am I really supposed to be here?" Because my parents probably thought, "Oh, he will become an electrician or maybe work in an office." My dad always said, "I want my boys to go to work in a white shirt and a tie." And here I am, I do not even like ties. I wear them when I have to. But my dad always said, "I want my boys," because he was a factory worker, "I want my boys to go to work in a white shirt and a tie." So I take this mentoring seriously because I think I have greatly benefited from that.

Avery Martin: Welcome to Health and Human Science Matters, a podcast by Colorado State University's College of Health and Human Sciences. I'm your co-host and digital media strategist, Avery Martin.

Matt Hickey: And I'm Matt Hickey, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies. In our college, we make it our mission to optimize human health and wellbeing through discovery and innovation. Don't just take our word for it. Each episode, we sit down with people who fulfill that mission, our college faculty and staff. And today we've got a special treat, a friend and colleague, Dr. Manfred Diehl from Human Development and Family Studies, and notably, a university distinguished professor as well. Manfred, welcome. We're delighted to have you.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Oh, thank you. I'm looking forward to talking with you.

Matt Hickey: We're looking forward to it as well.

Avery Martin: As are we.

Matt Hickey: They're always fun. I have to share a lament before we get started. A little birdie just told me that yesterday was your birthday.

Dr. Manfred Die...: That's correct.

Matt Hickey: And so my lament is we didn't manage to schedule this yesterday. We could have had a real fun celebration. So happy birthday, Manfred.

Avery Martin: Yes, happy birthday.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Thank you. Thank you.

Matt Hickey: So, Manfred, as we were just chatting before we got on air, we're interested in getting to know our colleagues as people, as human beings in addition to their scholarly roles or personas that we assume when we step on campus. And so I'm interested in hearing about you, about your family, your interests, any special memories you may be willing to share with us.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. As a matter of fact, given that my birthday was yesterday, sort of creating a subjective aging experience, I of course have been thinking a great deal about my background and how far I have come along. So as you probably know, I did not grow up in the United States. I grew up in what was then West Germany. And I came to the United States in 1985. But my primary socialization really took place in West Germany. And of course that has shaped my person, my personality, and who I am.

Just to give you a rough sketch of where I come from. So I was the third of four children of a working class couple. We were not a privileged family. My dad was a skilled worker, my mom was a housewife, and I'm the only one with an academic degree.

Matt Hickey: How about that?

Dr. Manfred Die...: My brothers and sisters finished high school, but they would then learn basically a trade. And they have been really doing well. But I am sort of the bookworm. I always had my head stuck in books. I did academically really well. And it took quite a while to really get to the degree that allowed me to study at a university. In Germany, and at the time, there were not many programs for gifted children, for example. There were no social policies in place. And I took what was called the secondary educational pathway, which through a business school and an advanced business school, I eventually got the degree that would give me the eligibility to formally study at a university. And that's what I did. So it was a little bit of a detour. But I did it also after two years of service, because back then in Germany, it was mandatory military service. So every young man who was able, got drafted and had to enroll. But I decided to be a conscientious objector, so I had to do an alternative service for two years. And after those two years, I started at the [inaudible 00:04:33] in Bonn. I enrolled in psychology.

And I had never known what psychology was about. But during my civil service, I worked with disabled young men. And the psychological services for them were very scarce. We only had one psychologist for five different homes, a large number of people with needs. So that's when I started to really get interested in psychology and that's what I did. So from 1978 through 1982, I did my undergraduate work, finishing with a pre-diploma, and then my master's level work, which I finished with a diploma thesis in 1982. I then worked for several years actually as a clinical psychologist, because I'm trained as a clinical psychologist. And eventually applied for a scholarship to come to the United States. And I did that in 1985. The German Academic Exchange Service provided me with a one-year scholarship. And I got to Penn State in the PhD program in human development and family studies, and finished my PhD there.

Matt Hickey: Great. It's interesting, again, these connections. When I was a master's student, my heart was set on Penn State and it just never worked out. So I'm always a little jealous when I hear about my friends who landed at Penn State. I want to circle back to a couple of things, Manfred, if I can. I'm interested in your hometown. We want to expand our vision. So tell us a little bit about where you grew up. What was it like? Even the topography?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Well, when I arrived in Pennsylvania, I felt very much at home because the topography of Pennsylvania is very similar to the topography of where my hometown is. I come from what is known as the [inaudible 00:06:36] area. But I'm not from that area that is more well known because of the wine growing region. I'm more from the area where there is regular agriculture. So it was very much a small town, at the time, probably about 5,000 residents, so fairly small. Pretty much everyone knew everybody. And yeah, very much working class, agriculture. There were still probably close to 20 working farms at the time, which is not the case anymore. Today, for example, today, everything has been consolidated maybe to two, three, four, five big farms.

Matt Hickey: Exactly as it happens over here.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Very similar as it is happening here in rural America. People were hardworking. And there were a few rich people in town. It was basically the pharmacist, the doctor. And yeah, there was one family, they owned a furniture manufacturing company. They were affluent and so on. But otherwise, it was regular working class folks.

Matt Hickey: That's neat. When you had a chance to travel as a family, where would you go?

Dr. Manfred Die...: We actually didn't travel because my family simply didn't have the means to do that. And vacation for my family consisted of maybe just visiting some relatives that lived in two or three towns over. But we never took a vacation to a foreign country. I remember as a child, once we went as a family over a weekend into a larger city.

Matt Hickey: That was going to be my next question.

Dr. Manfred Die...: That was an adventure for a child. I had never seen a streetcar, things like that.

Matt Hickey: And where was it? Where was this trip?

Dr. Manfred Die...: it was [inaudible 00:08:38] actually. [inaudible 00:08:39] and Mannheim are big cities comparatively to my hometown. And I remember I cried the first night because I wanted to go home because I felt unfamiliar.

Matt Hickey: Isn't that something?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Unfamiliar at my relative's home. But the next day, we did something very wonderful that I still remember. We took a little ferry from [inaudible 00:09:03] and over the Rhine River over to Mannheim. And in Mannheim, there was a very nice zoo. It was the first zoo I ever visited. And as a child, it was like a fantasy world.

Matt Hickey: Oh, that's so neat. I can remember as a child, I grew up in a tiny little town in upstate New York, my folks were both from New York City. So the first time I went, I was the classic you're not from around here, because I'm doing this routine of looking at all the skyscrapers and everything, tripping over the sidewalks, these sorts of things. It's quite a cultural shift when you find yourself in a large setting like that. So I'm going to nudge us into your educational pathway. We've got you temporarily paused at Penn State University. And I'm interested in, and this may be forthcoming in terms of your reflections about your doctoral training, but people or mentors that have left their fingerprints on you, you still think about them, maybe you conduct yourself in a manner not unlike them, people that were really important touchstones in your trajectory.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. Well, in terms of my education and my academic pathway, I always credit my first grade teacher as the most important person in my academic career.

Matt Hickey: Wow.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Because she really instilled a love in learning and a certain curiosity in me. And I think that, plus some teachers along the way, even before the university level. I had, for example, a very good and inspiring math teacher the last three years of my schooling before the university. He could have been a university professor, but he was so humble, so modest. And his calling was educating students at a lower level. And he was so good, I never had problems with statistics. He was just an excellent teacher.

At the academic level, I would say there were a few people. For example, the professor who was the advisor of my diploma thesis, her name is Ursula [inaudible 00:11:20]. She later became actually a secretary in the federal government. She was the Secretary for Families Youth. And she introduced older people actually at that time in 1987, I believe, as an aspect of that department. So she was very influential because she gave me actually an opportunity, first as a work study student to work in her department. And then later on she extended it to a paid research assistant position, and I became a research assistant on the first longitudinal study of aging in German, the Bonn Longitudinal Study of Aging. And that sort of got me hooked on adult development and aging.

My mentors also here at Penn State, of course, Warner [inaudible 00:12:15] and Sherry Willis have been very influential. And my postdoctoral mentor, [inaudible 00:12:20]. I think they all have been definitely shaping my trajectory. They have extended opportunities for development to me. And so I think those are really the individuals that have helped me to become my own person.

Matt Hickey: That's great. That's awesome. Now, where did you go for your postdoc?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Well, initially of course, I was not eligible for any postdocs, federally funded postdocs here. So in 1991, when I graduated from human development and family studies at Penn State, and the job market at the time was very miserable. I admire students right now who graduate and see 20 or 30 or 40 opportunities to apply. I think in that year when I graduated, that was just coming off politically-speaking of the Reagan years and moving into the Clinton years here. And we know economically it was somewhat of a depressed period, which also was reflected in the academic job market.

So I was able to secure a research associate position at the State University of New York in Albany, the University of Albany. And I was there for two years. It was not a great job. It didn't pay a lot. But I was able to gain some extremely valuable experience, because as a research associate, I was tasked with writing one grant application after the other. And I had never written a grant application before. So I took that as an opportunity, as hard as it was, to really hone my skills in grant writing.

And during that time, I also got married to my lovely wife, Lisa. And that made me eligible then to apply for permanent residency in the United States. And because my research associate position was in a school of social welfare, I then started to look around with that new eligibility for federally funded postdocs. And I was able to identify a postdoc that was right down my alley, because being trained as a lifespan developmental psychologist with expertise in adult development and aging, I applied for a position at Wayne State University in Detroit. And it was an NIH funded project that I was hired into. It was a longitudinal project. I came in at the second wave of data collection. And then from 1993 to 1996, I had this post-doctoral position at Wayne State in their department of psychology at Wayne State University.

Matt Hickey: Yeah, that's great. So at some point, we were lucky enough to get on your collective radar screens. Colorado State University emerged as an opportunity, happily for us. Can you tell us about your arrival in Fort Collins?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. So interestingly, I had never applied here at Colorado State University, both Lisa and I. Maybe I have to step back for a second. Navigating a dual person career in academia is quite difficult, because when you graduate, and even with similar decrees from human development and family studies, not one is in physics and the other one is in electrical engineering or whatever, you have to find, of course, positions almost in the same department or at least in similar departments. And that was very difficult. So Lisa actually was the one who applied here for the department head position in human development and family studies. I, at the time, was a associate professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Florida. Lisa there was in a different institute, I think it was called the Institute for Child Policy Studies.

So Lisa interviewed here. And when she came back to Gainesville, she had that sparkle in her eyes. And she said, "I think I nailed it." And she got the offer. And then of course the question was, "Will there be a position for me?" And so we came here for a second visit. And the dean at the time, April Mason, I think was a very visionary kind of person. And it was a time, after 15 years of our career, where we suddenly saw, "Well, maybe the stars are aligned the right way." And I saw a good potential here at CSU. And so we eventually got both offers. I had an NIH grant that I was able to bring with me. There were still three years of funding left on that five year grant, which really helped me to hit the ground running here, although the data collection was still going on in Florida. But I had a postdoc there. I had an established research team. I would travel every two, three months back to Gainesville to make sure everything was running right. But at the same time, I was building my lab here. And at the time, and this is probably not known very widely, I actually was the director of a center on aging in a previous incarnation.

Matt Hickey: Indeed, indeed, yes. That's a fond memory.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah.

Matt Hickey: So the move out here involved a family, of course. And so can you tell us a little bit about the two young men that followed you out here?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Before we moved to Florida, we of course had been living for four years in Colorado Springs. And our second son, Christopher, was born in Denver in 1997. I, at the time, was an assistant professor at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. But we moved to Florida because Lisa had to take an hiatus from her career. And I always had promised her that I would support her if she wanted to go back and resume her career. So that brought us from Colorado Springs to Gainesville and then from Gainesville back to Fort Collins. And we really hadn't known... And the boys actually didn't want to leave Florida.

Matt Hickey: Oh, interesting.

Dr. Manfred Die...: And the main reason for that was they both... Well, Eric was a known entity in Gainesville because he was a left-handed pitcher. And of course, in Florida, you played baseball year round. So there is no break. And Christopher was very happy there. The school they went to, they went to a Montessori school that would go from preschool all the way through, I think, eighth grade, and they liked it. They had their friends there. So for them it was actually a bit hard to move here. And it took about two years until they really said, "Oh, we really like Fort Collins." So they didn't follow us necessarily willingly because they left behind the warm climate and all the baseball opportunities in Florida. But I think after about two years, they felt very comfortable here.

Matt Hickey: That's great. That's great. So we've managed to recruit you to CSU, and you've been flourishing ever since you've been here, our only current university distinguished professor. So as you think about your current activities, your current scholarly work, what do you find most interesting, most energizing about the activities that you and your team are currently engaged in?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Well, there are a number of things. Just last week, I gave a presentation to our new incoming cohort of graduate students. And those opportunities always are events that sort make me reflect on what have I been doing, have I been doing it well, and so on and so forth. And I think the exciting part of what we're doing right now is I think I have come to the point where I really have been able to translate the basic research that I have been doing to something that is now translatable to an applied project, namely an intervention. Because literally, everything I have done more from a basic research perspective over the past 25 years has been learning about how can we optimize positive or healthy aging. But now we have developed the program, the Aging Plus Program, where we put this into action, where we really do a randomized controlled trial testing the efficacy of this program. And that is something that is, on one hand, challenging, on the other hand, it is exciting because it has the potential to lead to something that maybe can be turned into an evidence-based program that can be applied really in real life settings.

Matt Hickey: Here, here. So a day in the life of Manfred Diehl and his research team.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. Well, let me see. Usually I'm in my office anywhere between 6:00 and 7:00. And a day like yesterday, we have a team meeting, my staff, I have a postdoc, I have a project coordinator, and there are a doctoral student. Last year, I still also had another master's student. And then anywhere between six to 10, 12 undergraduate research assistants for whom the lab is really sort of a real life lab where they can really learn what research is about. And one of my first sentences always is, "It's not always glamorous what we're doing."

Matt Hickey: Indeed. Indeed, yes.

Dr. Manfred Die...: The glamour comes very often quite late in the game. But anyway, so my staff currently engages in a lot of recruitment, enrollment for the trial. When we have a team meeting, we go over where we are, what are the challenges, what do we have to do next? This week, we looked at preparing presentations for an upcoming conference, the annual scientific meeting of the Gerontological Society of America. So, we're doing all the things, from very nitty gritty to putting together presentations, working on manuscripts that we submit to peer reviewed journals.

And I think one of the things that I really try to do is, and I let other people be the judge of how well I do it, is I tell my students, "I do all the things that you are doing, and I would never ask you to do something that I'm not willing to do myself."

Matt Hickey: Indeed.

Avery Martin: That's incredible.

Dr. Manfred Die...: "Now, I have to delegate things to you because I simply don't have the time. But I never do that in a mindless kind of way. I always respect that you take the task and you do it to the best of your ability." And so I try to lead by example as best as I can.

Matt Hickey: That's great. I want to run with that theme because it seems to me, having known you for several years, that you have a real gift for mentoring. And that mentoring of course extends beyond colleagues in HDFS. And so I wonder if you'd share some thoughts on your role as a mentor?

Dr. Manfred Die...: My role as a mentor, in part, it goes back to my first grade teacher. If my first grade teacher wouldn't have seen something in me, or some other teachers, I probably would not be sitting at this table today. I probably would never have attended university. Even sometimes when I sit in very important big meetings, let's say a study section at NIH, I sometimes think, "Am I really supposed to be here?" Because my parents probably thought, "Oh, he will become an electrician or maybe work in an office." My dad always said, "I want my boys to go to work in a white shirt and a tie." And here I am, I do not even like ties. I wear them when I have to. But my dad always said, "I want my boys," because he was a factory worker, "I want my boys go to work in a white shirt and a tie." So I take this mentoring seriously because I think I have greatly benefited from that.

And when it comes to mentoring, you can read books about mentoring and so on. And to be honest, in the beginning as an assistant professor, I bought some of these books. I very quickly threw them in the corner because they really didn't teach me how to do it in real life and with real students. Because students can be challenging. But what I always say, there are two major principles. One size does not fit all, so mentoring has to be very individualized and it has to draw on a student's or a junior colleague's or a postdoc's strength and weaknesses. And hopefully we can build on the strength and really make the weaknesses over time as small as possible.

The other thing is, you cannot mentor with a remote control. You have to be in there. You have to get your hands dirty. And in this sense, I very often think myself in a very similar way as probably coaches think of themselves. You cannot do coaching with the remote control. You have to be there with your team, the players, and you have to tell them. And again, you have to lead by example. Because your behavior is very often the behavior that your students or the people, your mentees, will emulate. For example, I have taken students to conferences. And of course in conferences we are, let's say, in this big crowd. And they come, after the first or second day, they come and sort of whisper to me, "Dr. Diehl, I didn't really know how famous you are." And I said, "Forget about fame. It is what we do on a day to day basis."

So when I take someone on as a mentor, I really try to get as quickly as possible the idea of the potential of that person, the strength and the weaknesses. And that's what I try to work with. And I'm not the person who promises someone else a rose garden. I say, "If you have this goal, I think I know what you need to do to get there, but it will not be easy. Are you committed to that?" And I have had to tell students, "Look, I have done a master's thesis. I know how to do it. Do you want to do it?" Because I think sometimes they underestimate what their part needs to be. And it's really to convey to mentees, "Look, if you really want this and you want this badly, I'm on your side. You have my full attention, you have my full support. But you need to be in there full as well. Don't waste my time." So I'm very clear about that.

And of course there have been students for whom these were not appropriate conditions. And they have walked away and that's fine. But I think the students who ,I don't want to say tough it out with me because I don't think I'm a tough person, I'm just realistic, and how can you really bring someone to the next level, I think they have never regretted. And I think that's really nice to see.

Matt Hickey: Well, there are some really important lessons here. I've never thought that mentoring can be simply reduced to encouragement and nothing more. That's a key piece of it. But that alone does not a mentor make, as the saying goes. And then you've articulated this reciprocity. We both have to invest in this process. The other lesson for me, Manfred, listening to you share just now, is that our mentoring is often taught in the sense of this direct quasi-formal relationship with our students, but often it's caught in terms of students observing how we conduct ourselves without any formal didactic, "Do this, they're watching. "And I think that's an important lesson for us, right?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. I think that's why it is important to be a role model and to be really consistent. If students get the sense, "Oh, he said this thing over here, and then he said completely opposite things over here," that is confusing. And it is also inconsistent. So I think really being able to... Or it is critical to really act in a consistent way. And again, not being afraid to roll up the sleeves yourself. My students see that I'm in the office most of the time before they are there. And I'm there on weekends. They see me emailing in the evening or emailing at 4:30 in the morning. So it's not that I'm working less. I even sometimes say, "If you work more hours than I do, something is wrong. Scale down. Because I don't want you to work as many hours as I do."

But of course there is the expectation, you have to put in effort, and you really have to be in this game as much as I am. And if I have to ask the question, "Do you really want to write this master's thesis? Or do you really want to write this paper? I know how to do it, but you want to learn how to do it and I can teach you how to do it well." Because my students, my doctoral students are able really to publish in the top journals. And that is a big accomplishment. I know the first time I published the first article from my dissertation in Psychology and Aging, which is really the top peer reviewed journal in our area, I was so happy. I had never thought I would be able to do that. And I know that feeling, and I can share this feeling, that enthusiasm, that joy with a student. And I want them to be able to do it as well. Because if they see that reward for their hard work, even if it takes two years to get there, that is really important.

Matt Hickey: Here, here. I can share with you that one of our recent conversations for the podcast was with a colleague of mine in HES named [inaudible 00:33:07].

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah, I know [inaudible 00:33:09].

Matt Hickey: Of course. And she was singing your praises. So I just want to let you know how much she appreciates you, and we as a unit appreciate you. You've invested a lot of time and effort into a talented young colleague. So thank you. We appreciate that.

Dr. Manfred Die...: And of course, [inaudible 00:33:21] has been a pleasure to work with. I think she really knows where she wants to go. And of course, it was very rewarding that she was able to secure her career development award from the National Institute on Aging. And just the other day, I told my students during the team, one of the things as a professor, at least for me, I don't know whether other people have this experience as well, and I do not speak on behalf of everybody else, I can only speak on behalf of myself, is of course there are days where I think, do I really make a difference? And there can be long stretches where I really don't know, to be honest. And it's somewhat eye opening to make this statement. But then I have another day or another event where I have the feeling I have touched a person's way, perhaps in a minor way, but I have touched this person's life. And that is very rewarding.

Matt Hickey: It is indeed. So what does the future hold for Manfred and his team?

Dr. Manfred Die...: The future? So, we will be finishing up this current funded project, which will end next year. And obviously, the pandemic has been a big challenge because we had to shut down things and then reopening. So we will do this. Then we really will comprehensive analyze the data from this study, try and publish. But to be honest, I'm a little bit in a winding down phase. Given that my 65th birthday was yesterday, I think I have about a three-year horizon. And I clearly want to mentor [inaudible 00:35:22] till the end of her, another [inaudible 00:35:25] award will be ending in 2024. So I want to not leave suddenly, but also I don't want to work forever. I love my work. I think I can do a lot of writing on my own. I don't need to have an office on campus. I can do that at home and do it at my own pace and leisure.

And I'm also looking forward perhaps to... So I will never really retire in that sense, but I'm looking forward to having some other interests. For example, my record collection needs a little bit curation. And I would perhaps love to learn a new instrument, some new languages. I definitely want to learn Spanish to keep my mind alert. Aside from German and English, I speak French and Italian. But both French and Italian don't help me a lot when I travel to southwest Colorado. There I need to be able to speak Spanish. So I think I will do that. I want to do more traveling. Because when I was growing up, I never had money to travel widely. I have seen a lot of the world so far. But I, for example, have never been to Japan or Australia or Africa for that matter. So those are places that I would like to visit. Perhaps resume painting again a little bit. Both my boys are artistically inclined, and I give myself a little bit credit that I used to paint when I was younger. So there are things that will keep me occupied.

Matt Hickey: Indeed.

Dr. Manfred Die...: And I promised Lisa that if I retire before her, I will do all the housekeeping.

Avery Martin: Oh, perfect.

Matt Hickey: What a guy. I can't help myself, I have to ask, do you have a burning desire to learn how to play the banjo by any chance?

Dr. Manfred Die...: Not the banjo.

Matt Hickey: An honest man.

Dr. Manfred Die...: I would probably love to learn either piano or guitar.

Matt Hickey: That's great. Good. We look forward to concerts at the home. Very good. Manfred, we have two remaining questions. Thank you so much for hanging in there with us. We appreciate it.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Sure.

Matt Hickey: So the first one speaks to this College of Health and Human Sciences community, and I'm just interested in your reflections on what you like the best about being part of that community.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Whoa. That's a big question. Obviously, since I have arrived here, the college, first when I arrived, it was the College of Applied Human Sciences. Then there came the name change to College of Health and Human Sciences. And I think it was a very good name change because so many of us, of course, are doing work that is directly health related. And so having that word in our name is, I think, not just a word, but it's meaningful.

I think what I always have liked about the college is across departments, it is relatively easy to find collaborators, to find like-minded individuals. And in that culture, I think, even has improved over the, it's now my 16th year of being here. I have seen different leaders at the helm of the college. As I said, April Mason was the dean, then Jeff McCubbin was the dean. Now Lise Youngblade is the dean. And I think all of them have certain visions on their own, which I really appreciate. So I think overall it's a good place. People talk to each other. There are only few instances that I can recall where people had animosities.

I also, of course, am very much shaped by the culture in my department, which in turn, of course, had been shaped a great deal by Lisa as the department head. So I think we are a very collaborative bunch. And the nice thing is I think most senior people are very much interested in supporting their junior colleagues and want their junior colleagues to be supportive, as indicated by mentoring on [inaudible 00:40:06] awards, helping younger faculty to be successful in grantsmanship and grantswomanship. So I think it's a good place to be.

Matt Hickey: I agree. I agree. . The next part of the concentric circle is CSU as an institution. And CSU rightly holds forth this land grant mission and vision. And I'm just interested in your reflections on that notion.

Dr. Manfred Die...: Yeah. The University of Florida is actually a land grant university. It's one of the seven or eight comprehensive land grant schools because they also have a medical school and a law school all on the same campus. And I never knew before going there that there is this specific status of a comprehensive land grant university. And I learned actually more about the land grant mission here than in any other place before. I learned about the importance of extension. Because in the first five years I worked and collaborated with people in extension, we had a conference series on aging that I was part of in securing the funding for. And I worked with those agents in terms of disseminating information. Because I very often get information much earlier, especially from the research side, than they do. And so they were very receptive about that.

I also like that, of course, CSU explicitly strives to educate first generation students. Given that I'm a first generation academic, this is something that's dear to my heart. And that CSU, of course, also really tries to increase diversity and inclusion here. Having said that, I sometimes, however, also perhaps would appreciate a little bit more that people here would be taking more calculated risks along the lines of some bigger universities. And one of the former presidents once said this actually much better than I can do, but I immediately understood what he meant. And he said that during a speech to faculty here on campus. And he said, "Many faculty at CSU suffer from a self-handicapping humility." And although humility is something good, I like people who are humble and modest, he had a point. I think many people here don't take risks in the sense... And very often it comes from a place of insecurity, of not knowing how good they are actually, and not really reaching more for the stars and doing that in a calculated and systematic kind of way.

And so as an organization, I would like to see a little bit more of that. And I would like our leaders at the top really model that perhaps a little bit more. Because I think sometimes we're a little bit too conservative to our own fault. For example, in the state of Colorado, I think we have the largest research revenue budget. We have a bigger budget than CU Boulder. But no one knows that. Now, we don't need to go around and brag all over.

Matt Hickey: But we can tell our story.

Dr. Manfred Die...: But we can tell our story, and we should do that in a self-confident kind of way. And so I think the 16 years that I have been here, I clearly have seen a good number of missed opportunities, if we had a little bit more of a calculated risk taking attitude. And I saw that, for example, in the College of Medicine, the first three years at the University of Florida, my appointment was in the College of Medicine. And there was a certain sense of entrepreneurship there. Even in my contract, I had to generate, after three years, 80% of my salary through grants. That really put a fire under my butt. I could not slack off. And I would like to see some of that a little bit more. The other model can go to the extreme, that people sometimes forget scholarship over chasing just for the next grant. So there has to be a good balance between those things. And I think we can be a good land grant university, but at the same time can have some of the visions of other good research institutions and really go for it. So I think that sums up how I see CSU.

Matt Hickey: That's great. Thanks so much for sharing, Manfred. And that's our show. Thanks for tuning into another episode of Health and Human Science Matters.

Avery Martin: If you want to learn more about our CSU College of Health and Human Sciences, visit our website, chhs.colostate.edu.