

Kasie Whitener (00:03):

Welcome back to More Impact. My name is Kasie Whitener, and I'm your host. And with me today, Dr. Audrey Korsgaard, Senior Associate Dean for Academics and Research. Thank you so much for being on the podcast, Audrey.

Audrey Korsgaard (00:13):

Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

Kasie Whitener (00:15):

This is exciting. So, what's your background and what was your route to the role that you're currently in?

Audrey Korsgaard (00:20):

So I have a PhD from NYU. I spent one short year at Tulane University, and then I came here to USC in 1991. Wow. So my whole career has been here, and I taught in about every program we have here, the undergraduate program, the PMBA, the IMBA, the one year MBA, PhD program. So I've been all over and when I first got here, I was, you know, as an assistant professor, I did what all assistant professors do. I, I taught and I did research and continued to do that till I got promoted to full. And then I started taking on some more significant service responsibilities, like department chair and well,

Kasie Whitener (01:01):

You and I really met when you were chair of the Senate, your president of the Faculty Senate.

Audrey Korsgaard (01:05):

That's right.

Kasie Whitener (01:05):

That's when you and I first started interacting when I was like, just a new senator, and I was like, wait, Audrey's in my department. That's fantastic. That like, I have a direct line to the president of the Senate. Talk about the service, the role of service in your career, and like really at the university as a whole. That shared governance piece is so valuable, but I think people don't really know what it is.

Audrey Korsgaard (01:23):

Yeah, yeah. Well, the, the dirty secret is this is the way we get faculty to do work for us <laugh> in administration. So the faculty are in charge of yeah, maintaining and developing curricula. Also monitoring and evaluating their own peer performance and deciding who to hire, who to keep, who to terminate. So they have a big voice in you know, regulating themselves and, and giving us good curricula. The ultimate decisions, of course, are made in administration. So the first step toward getting to an a formal administrative role, like the one I have now, is by being on these committees. So serving on a tenure and promotion committee, I, I did a lot of that work at the department, college and university level. And as a faculty senate chair, it's not a president, it's just a chair. <Laugh>, I was overseeing all of the curriculum changes that were made across the entire university. So that, that's an important role because it's a lot of work. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And you really need to be an expert on what, what should a course be? What kind of content should be in it, what should the pedagogy be like? So the, the people who know how to do that are, are the subject matter experts, and the, the

administration kind of sets the strategic direction and provides the resources that support the strategic direction.

Kasie Whitener ([02:50](#)):

When you think about the role that you played in that, that service piece, adding on to your role in the management department, and as you saw your career growing, what were some highlights, some moments where you're like, man, I'm crushing this <laugh>. Like, like this is a hundred percent where I'm meant to be and the work I'm meant to be doing.

Audrey Korsgaard ([03:07](#)):

Yeah. I, I think a lot of times it's been opportunity more than anything I did. But when I was department chair, we had a, a large retirement wave. So I had, I hired seven people while I was department chair. Wow. And you have to understand that that was in the tenure track, there's only about 15 people, so it pretty much changed the entire composition.

Kasie Whitener ([03:26](#)):

Yeah. Like 50% of 'em.

Audrey Korsgaard ([03:27](#)):

Yes. And I hired a lot of clinical as well, but that hiring those people changed the culture and it really stepped up the research productivity of that department and it enabled them to do some really amazing things with their graduate program and human resources. And then when I was senate chair, by that time, we had hired a lot more clinical faculty, and they really didn't have a clear role in the university. It was kind of weird. They were sort of treated like temporary employees, but they were there for the, the life of their career. And they were huge contributors on all facets of the university. Our mission is teaching research and outreach, and our clinicals are doing those things as well. And so and that's across the university. And so as senate chair, I led some revisions to the faculty manual, which governs how we evaluate, hire, and terminate employees to include a whole layer of what we do with our professional track faculty and also giving them a pathway for promotion. Right. So that they really are, are more committed. So I, I'm, I'm really proud of that because they're, it's an important colleague that we're kind of being neglected <laugh>.

Kasie Whitener ([04:31](#)):

Well, when we think about that, and I, and for people who are listening that don't know the distinction between the two, our tenured faculty have that research focus and there's a certain pathway for that. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and different hierarchies or levels of how they're going to be promoted through their ranks. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And then the clinical faculty, a lot of times come in with some professional experience Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> that doesn't necessarily translate into the academic experience. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And so trying to figure out where they fit and how they can excel and what their career path might look like. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> if they plan to stay there forever. Like, that's really critical thinking Yeah. To be done by administration that to your point, maybe hadn't been done before.

Audrey Korsgaard ([05:05](#)):

Yeah. And we, we in our defense in the college of business, Darla Moore School of Business, we were always good about crafting jobs for these people that, you know, if they, you have really strong outreach

experience, then you put you in head of a center where you're connecting a lot with our corporate partners. If you have this great entrepreneurial edge gets you involved in a center on, on that. So we always try to create the job, contract the job to meet the needs of the the faculty member. And but finding a pathway so you can always get promoted. Right, right. Everybody wants a promotion <laugh>.

Kasie Whitener ([05:40](#)):

Yeah. Well, and I mean, if you're going to be in a career for a while, you wanna see that you're progressing through it. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So, so here you are. Now you've progressed to associate dean Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And in this position, what are some of the priorities that you'd like to, to see, or some initiatives that you'd like to take Yeah. While you're in this role?

Audrey Korsgaard ([05:56](#)):

I basically have three priorities. Okay. The first is to attract and retain the best talent. So it's a very, very competitive market. In on the tenure track side, we're looking for, you know, people with PhDs from top institutions who have really good research, really visionary. And on the clinical side, we're looking for people who are excellent teachers and have really interesting experience that, that provides connections to our, our stakeholders. And those are really attractive people. So my job is to make sure that we have a good value proposition for people working at the Darla Moore School of Business, and that we provide them with the resources and the recognition they need. So a lot of my initiatives are around creating more recognition and reward programs for our faculty. For example, having more endowed chairs, which are professorships that provide additional resources for faculty to do their research, and also creates greater prestige for the position and the college as a whole.

Audrey Korsgaard ([06:57](#)):

The second thing I'm trying to do is to elevate the visibility of our research and expertise. You know, we're, we're in a business school. We do very applied research. So and, and the value of that is that we can, we can help people in business have, make evidence-based decisions, using good research methodologies and cutting edge models. So you know, as examples, a lot of companies now are, are, are, you know, trying to find new ways to use AI. And, and they've embraced this concept of experimentation, using experiments to see whether AI has a use case is, is really viable. We're really good at doing that if we, we know, we know how to design and execute experiments. So that's one area. And we have some people who are subject matter experts on AI in different functions of business. And another way that we're trying to do that is to have research round tables where we bring together our stakeholders with our subject matter experts within, within the building.

Kasie Whitener ([07:54](#)):

I like the idea of the round tables. It engages people to have more of a casual discussion. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> about the research and some of the conversations I've been having with our colleagues Jason DeBacker's been in here Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> Dr. Ozturk has been in here. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. When we think of the our finance folks coming in and saying like, yeah, I've got this great research. I'm like, tell me about it <laugh>, and then also tell me about it. Like, I don't know anything about finance. That would be really helpful. So, in the round table discussions, are you thinking about bringing in community members? Is it other, is it business leads? Is it just kind of anybody who's curious? What do those round tables look like?

Audrey Korsgaard ([08:27](#)):

Right now our, our, we're working mainly with centers, so we're working with their constituents or their advisory board. So last semester we had a round table with the center of executive succession with some executives who are responsible for talent within their companies. And it was all about disruptors in the environment and in the coming years and how that affects the strategy for, for attracting and motivating your talent across a variety of industries. So we had all these executives there, and we brought in folks from our management department, our finance and risk management area, and econ right. To discuss their, the, their trends. And it was a really, really productive, it helped them develop kind of a strategy for how they want to go forward. And we're hoping to do another one. We're planning it right now. And that will be with primarily led by the econ department. They have a growing initiative right now in policy, so it'll be more likely to involve state agencies. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> or federal agencies that are involved with economic development and the development of labor human capital.

Kasie Whitener ([09:28](#)):

If you're looking for information on that, there is an episode with Dr. Orgul Ozturk and we talked all about that. Yeah. And the name of the center is

Audrey Korsgaard ([09:37](#)):

Epic.

Kasie Whitener ([09:37](#)):

Epic, yeah. So as we kept talking about it, she's like, I just, every time I say it, I just smile. I just feel happy about the idea that we get to call the center "EPIC", which I think is really cool. In fact, on the podcast, I volunteered to help do some of the reading that they've got. 'cause I had told her, I was like, if you're looking at disseminating this academic research into white papers that politicians can understand, can I please volunteer for that role? <Laugh>? Like, I absolutely wanna be one of those people that gets to make this palatable or understandable or just like, put it in terms that they really actually get. So I'm excited about Epic and the things that they're gonna be able do on the policy side. So what are some of the changes you've seen over the years at the Moore School?

Kasie Whitener ([10:14](#)):

You've been here your whole career, and I know you're extraordinarily proud and for good reason. Mm. Because the Moore School has continued to thrive, and we get better. It feels like we get better every year. Mm. We've got a lot of accolades and a lot of awards. We just won this huge INFORMS award with the supply chain group. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, when we think about what are some of the things that you've seen over the years, places where you think the Moore School is, has, has thrived or has had, you know, kind of pivotal moments? Mm-Hmm.

Audrey Korsgaard ([10:39](#)):

<Affirmative>. Well, when I came here, we already had you know, our, our flagship program is the IMBA program. At that time, it was called the MIBs Program. And so we already had this really strong cornerstone in that, and we had some really great faculty and staff. But we had the, the, the school was named, I was there for the naming, which was very exciting named after Darla Moore, with a very generous donation, which translated into an explosion of activity on the programming side, scholarships, and also on supporting research and faculty. So that was really transformative. And those things don't happen overnight. You know, you're making an investment there and then you see what

that does. So at this point we have a fantastic undergraduate program, and I think over the last 10 years, we've done a lot of really good things to enhance the experience.

Audrey Korsgaard ([11:27](#)):

It's not just having good courses, a good faculty, but the total experience of the student. And we've done a lot to make that happen. The other thing that's really struck me is that we've created a lot of more curated master's programs recognizing that an MBA is not for everybody. A lot of them need a specialized degree. They have a very focused orientation in their career. So we've created a lot of opportunities around that with certificate programs, concentrations and specialized master's programs. And then the other thing is that there's been a proliferation of centers. These are centers that support research and curricula in different functional areas. So like, if a supply chain center and human resources center economics, and these centers often have an advisory board, and that gives us a really strong connection to the, our, our employers. And we've really I think it's given us a huge edge, both on the undergraduate and graduate level in terms of developing curricula that really meet the needs of our industry partners. We're, they're, they really are our partners in, in education, and it's made a huge difference for us.

Kasie Whitener ([12:36](#)):

Let's go back real quick to this concentrations and specializations to meet specific market needs. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, because I think that that's a critical strategy built intentionally, right? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and listening to your customers and saying to them, and you would assume that a business school would do such things, right? <Laugh>, that a business school would say to their customers, Hey, how can we better meet your needs? But as you think about something like, we had Maz in here talking about the MHR program. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, when you think about, like, looking at our HR, our CHRO friends and, and the folks that are helping out with the Center for Succession for executive succession Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And saying to them specifically, what are the skills you're looking for? What do you need out of our undergrads? And also, what do you want out of our graduates that come out of here? What is that process like? Were you able to be in on some of those conversations where you're bringing in this skill set and then going, okay, what do we have? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, how do we organize this program to be more than an MBA?

Audrey Korsgaard ([13:27](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. Well, I, I directed the center for human Resources Research, the Regal and Emory Center which is the one that Maz is also working with. So that one I've seen up close and personal. We have a, a very active board. And once a year we have a strategic planning meeting, and we you know, go through our curriculum. We go through trends that are occurring in the workplace and what kinds of modifications we want to do in the curriculum. Sometimes it's not really changes in the courses we're offering, but changes in the pedagogy which is a big change that's happened everywhere thanks to the centers, is providing more hands-on work experience. As a concrete example, in the MHR program, we've gotten a lot of our advisory board companies to provide pre-program internships. So before our students start the internship, if they don't have a lot of work experience, they'll give them an internship over the summer before they start the program. And it, it really helps 'em hit the ground running. Right. so those are the kinds of things that the centers help us with. It's not just like, what courses you should teach or it's more really what are, what do you need to be highly employable and hit the ground running in your job? And that's the total experience of the student.

Kasie Whitener ([14:42](#)):

I love everything about that phrase, highly employable <laugh>. Even as the director of a entrepreneurship center, there's that sense of like, our students are coming here and they're looking for the next step. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> when they walk out the door. And that employment or employability seems to be the next step. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, that's a key metric. It's been a key metric for the Moore School for a long time. And over the time that you've been here, have you seen that metric change? Have you seen more of a focus on it? What's sort of, what's the drive behind making sure our students are getting the post undergrad experience that they're looking for when they leave here?

Audrey Korsgaard ([15:17](#)):

I'm not sure what the driver is. I think it certainly is enabled by having close relationships through our centers, with our, our corporate partners. And I have seen great changes associated with that. And a lot of the credit for that also goes through our Office of Career Management who helps prepare them on their professional skills, get their resumes together, how do you interview effectively, things like that. So, you know, we've been monitoring that for years. And their, their graduation, they complete a survey, tell us about where they're going. And our placement rates have continued to climb. Our starting salaries are, have really jumped up. So you can see it in those kinds of outputs. But I think we also see it when we go back to our alum and find out what their careers have been like. So we don't just prepare people for a job to get hired. Right. We're really preparing them for a career. And so we are seeing that as we we're, we're I think, engaging more and more with our alum and seeing these fantastic careers they have. One of the greatest things for me working on the Regal and Emory Board is seeing new board members come on, who were my students Oh, that's great. In the master's program. And they're now, you know, VPs somewhere and a, a really good company. And it's just, it's great to see that kind of success for them.

Kasie Whitener ([16:26](#)):

It's great to see them come back to the school Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and want to give back and want to help future students have a similar experience Yeah. Or a better experience than they did. All right. Cool. You're a faculty advocate, have been for a very long time. What are some of the trends in that faculty hiring, retention, and achievement that we talked about that you're seeing?

Audrey Korsgaard ([16:44](#)):

Well, I think one of the trends, I sort of alluded to this, I, I've seen in other schools, I, I'm actually doing sort of a systematic review of our, our peers and aspirant peers and how they manage and, and reward and recognize their faculty. And one of the trends I've seen is more of this kind of crafting of the job. So you know, sitting down with your each department chair sitting down on an annual basis with their faculty and saying, what, what are you good at? What do you really wanna do? As I mentioned, we all have to, our, our mission is service, research and teaching, and we do different amounts of those, and we're better at more, more or less better at some of those things. And helping faculty to find the right path to keep them highly engaged and, and maximizing the contribution they can make to, to our department or our college.

Audrey Korsgaard ([17:32](#)):

So I think that's a, that's a, a, a trend I'm seeing, and I think it's a great one. It's one of the, the joys of being a faculty member, I think, you know, because you're able to pursue your bliss where you're really, where your strengths are and, and really make a difference because that's where your strengths are.

And that's why I ended up in administration, by the way, is because I, one of my strengths is in program building. And I, I really loved doing that, and that was something I did effectively. So we should be doing what we're good at. The other trend, it's not really a trend as much as it is a weakness I see in some of our, our peers and aspirants that, and we can sort of exploit <laugh> and that is building your own talent pool. People in higher education don't really have good bench strength for various roles. And we're really working hard under our new dean, Rohit Verma's leadership to make sure we have clear roles and we have pathways to those roles, and helping identify people who have the potential to take on different roles and helping them get there. So creating clear pathways to, to, so that we, we promote our own rather than hire from the outside. And so trying to do more of that both on the faculty and the staff side, although I'm not in charge of staff <laugh>,

Kasie Whitener ([18:45](#)):

It also creates a sense of loyalty to the program. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> a sense of camaradery when you know that, hey, this is where I can, I can have a career here. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, I can be here for the longevity of it. Especially, we're attracting new, younger researchers, new younger professors. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> that maybe are gonna start a family. Can I raise a family in Columbia? What does it look like for me to be here? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> for the, for the longevity of my career. And so I like the idea that we're gonna start individually looking at individuals and saying like, Hey, what do you wanna do? And how can you be successful here? I think that's a really great approach. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, why should students consider the Moore School?

Audrey Korsgaard ([19:23](#)):

Oh, well, for a lot of reasons. <Laugh> we do have absolutely fantastic faculty. A lot of the textbooks are either written by our faculty or they're writing stuff that our faculty discovered. So we are really thought leaders across the board. So you're gonna get the best experts behind your education, and it's an outstanding education. You know, both in terms of what's in the classroom and the experiences outside of the classroom, and the total experience of the student. So we, and as I said before, I think it prepares them for a career. Not, not a job, but for a whole career. It's rigorous. But it's also fun. I think our students have a lot of fun. They are, they're in the building all the time. They seem very engaged but smiling, not, not freaking out. So it's, it's a lot of work, but it's fun. And they, they develop a great network that they'll have for the rest of their lives. It's a great community.

Kasie Whitener ([20:26](#)):

It is a great community at the Moore School. And I had a faculty or a alumni interview a little further back in the summer with a, somebody who graduated from the international school, and she talks about still keeping in touch with her colleagues that she went to that program with, and still leveraging her Moore school connections for her own business as she's building her own business. So that's really cool to know that, that this is something you're investing in. Our students are coming in, they're investing in their experience here, but they invest in each other and in the community, and the community continues to give back to them over time. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, and as you said, you've got some that are coming on as board members now. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, yes. So, as advisory board members to our centers, which is really great. So, one last question. Why should researchers consider coming to the Moore School? If I'm a faculty, a potential faculty member, but research is my jam, and that's really what I'm looking for. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, why do I belong here? What should I do?

Audrey Korsgaard ([21:18](#)):

First of all, you can have some fantastic colleagues. Like I said, we have some really outstanding scholars in, in our, in every department of our college. And we have a culture of collegiality that I, I think is really hard to find at a lot of other universities. We really respect and are curious about each other's work. We wanna help each other. And I think that that's a, a great place for a junior faculty member to come in because they can find a lot of potential collaborative relationships, but also people who can help mentor them as they progress through their career. We also do provide a lot of resources, and that's a, a big part of my, my research remit, is to make sure that we have adequate resources to enable people to be successful scholars. So we have a lot of internal scholarship programs I'm sorry, grant programs. We have some endowed chairs, we have fellowships. And all of these are designed to give people the resources to get to data, to get to companies and also get to conferences to share their work. So it's, it's a, you'll, you'll succeed here, I would say, and you'll be really engaged and excited about doing research if you're here.

Kasie Whitener ([22:36](#)):

This is good stuff. Congratulations on taking this role and being at this point in your career. I think it's exciting to get to that place where you can enact even more change than you already have while you've been here. You've been a tremendous contributor to the Darla Moore School. Certainly since I've been here, I've been thrilled to just be able to work anywhere near you in Audrey's vicinity, <laugh>. So I just think that's amazing. Thank you for the support you give to our centers as well. I think that as we see those centers grow and thrive, and we're adding like two new ones this year. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> maybe three. So I think it's just fun. It's a, it's a really fun dynamic place to be right now at the Moore School.

Audrey Korsgaard ([23:09](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for those kind words. I appreciate it.

Kasie Whitener ([23:12](#)):

Any other final comments for our more impact listeners?

Audrey Korsgaard ([23:16](#)):

Oh geez. Come see us. Whether you're a in a company or working for a state agency working for a nonprofit, or you're looking to get, go back to school or start school, come see us. We've got something for you.

Kasie Whitener ([23:29](#)):

We have a lot to offer. Thank you very much, Audrey. Thanks. This has been Moore Impact. When you learn more, you know more, and when you know more, you do more. Thanks for listening.