



UAF news and information

Friday Focus: Pivotal impacts

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— by Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

The end of the academic semester and calendar year is naturally a time for reflection, introspection, gratitude and much more.

As I reflect on fall 2020, I broadly think of the countless hours of visible and not-so-visible work put in by our faculty and staff to ensure that our students were safe and had access to quality education and experiences during the pandemic.

And then more specifically, I think of the instances when a faculty member expressed their belief in a student who was facing self-doubt, an advising staff member built a deeply meaningful personal connection with an advisee, a tutor lent support at a crucial junction, a colleague served as a peer-mentor, a student brought forth a valuable perspective, a supervisor advocated for an employee or vice versa. When we look at it at an individual level, these acts of kindness and relationships play a huge role in shaping our lives and who we become.

This week has been extra special for me. Earlier this week my father had his 88th birthday and today my parents celebrate their 60th anniversary. They've always lived a humble and honest life, working hard with integrity, and giving without expecting in return. There are so many things I knew about them and some stories that I am still discovering. Here is one that is worth sharing.

In summer 2019, [Professor Ram Charan](#), an eminent business and management consultant, traveled to my hometown in India to give a presentation. He had the address of our ancestral home and he arrived there looking for my father. The house was locked. The neighbors informed him that my family had moved and gave him the address of the store that my father runs.

He went to the store, but my father had stepped away for lunch and regretted not being able to meet him. Incidentally, Professor Ram Charan had come to express his gratitude to my late grandfather and my father, who had helped him get a passport and visa to come to the United States 60 years ago! And that was a pivotal point in his professional journey. This story was picked up by the local media ([coverage in Hindi](#)) noting it's never too late to say thank you. This week, on my father's birthday, I was able to connect the two men by phone and they shared many more stories of kindness and gratitude.

Our successes and who we become are not random. They are built cumulatively with the support of many people who believed in us and who helped us in different ways at pivotal moments in our lives. If we were to relive our journey without those people, we wouldn't be who we are today. A big thank-you to our faculty, staff and students for the kindness you have shown and for the time you have invested in building relationships. I know that there will be many more stories told tomorrow about what you are doing today.

Friday Focus is a column written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week. On occasion, a guest writer is invited to contribute a column.



Anupma Prakash. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.