This marks the 19th year that Achieving the Dream President and CEO Dr. Karen A. Stout shares her annual summer reading list

Lessons Learned from Summer Reading

Summer is a great time to refresh and reenergize. I keep a running list of ‘must-read’ books throughout the year and dive in when July comes. I often choose books because of the clear connection to higher education and the work of our colleges. Other books, which at first glance don’t appear to speak to community colleges or education, illuminate surprising connections.

I been sharing my reading list for 19 years. When I was president of Montgomery County Community College, it was my tradition to share the list at fall convocation. I share it with you with the hope that you’ll, too, find these books interesting and full of lessons for our shared work in higher education.

2018 Summer Reading List

Astroball: The New Way to Win it All by Ben Reiter

A terrific read about the journey of the Astros major league baseball team from 2014 through their 2017 World Series win, Reiter describes how the Astros effectively synthesized human observations into a “money ball-like” algorithm to paint a more complete picture of a player’s talents to consider softer skills like the player’s mindset (growth or fixed). The book also describes the pain of the journey of rapid change as club leadership decided not to try to maintain a .500-level team as they prepared for the future, an approach they estimated would take 10 years. Instead, they decided to fully tear the team down and re-build.
**Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence** by Joseph Aoun

I read this at the recommendation of one of my Aspen Fellow mentees. Aoun suggests that future college graduates will need to add three new literacies: data, technological, and human, and three cognitive abilities: systems thinking, entrepreneurship, and cultural agility to be relevant in the age of AI. Our colleges must refit themselves to shape students into “creators.”

**The Mind of the Leader: How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results** by Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter

I remain a student of leadership, perhaps even more so with my transition into a new vessel, non-profit leadership, to advance a purpose and cause I am familiar with. This book breaks down the three levels of awareness and leadership (self, people, and organizational) around three mental qualities that stand out as being fundamental for today’s leaders: mindfulness, selflessness, and compassion.
Automating Inequality: How High-tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor by Virginia Eubanks

I first heard Dr. Eubanks speak in early February at a Robin Hood convening in New York City on fighting poverty. After listening to her and reading this book, I am convinced that we may be building decision-management systems in higher education that are punitive toward the poor. There are many lessons here for us around the danger of using algorithms, alone, in making decisions about our students.

New Power by Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms

I found this book because it was part of a new book club I joined (@NextBigIdeaClub). Understanding “new power” is essential for all leaders and organizations. New power “operates like a current. It is open and participatory.” Isn’t this #OER? New power moves sideways, not top down. Strong leaders and strong organizations learn when and how to blend old power and new power; to know when to control and when to release control.
*The Promise and the Dream: The Untold Story of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy* by David Margolick

Margolick traces the distinct yet converging paths of MLK and RFK through the 1960s, including through the days leading into and through 1968 and their assassinations. I could not put this one down.

*The Beautiful Struggle* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

This is a beautifully written memoir of Coates’ journey from Baltimore to Howard University. I wish I had read this before reading his more recent book, *Between the World and Me*, because I get a deeper understanding of him and his experience. There is a passage on page 169 that I highlighted and re-read and re-read. It begins, “School was a weapon that outdid any glock. The whole process—with its equally spaced desks, precisely timed periods and lectures, with its standardized pencil and tests—felt unnatural to me.”

*Embers: One Ojibway’s Meditations* by Richard Wagamese

I picked this book up at Wateron National Park in Waterton, Canada, intrigued by the intersection of my interests in meditation and Native American culture. Wagamese writes a series of meditations that come to him in the morning around topics of stillness, harmony, trust, reverence, persistence, gratitude and joy. “Nothing in the universe ever grew from the outside in,” he shares from his spiritual father.
Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education by Nathan Grawe

Grawe writes that by 2025, we will be facing an unprecedented reduction in demand for post-secondary education and his “Higher Education Demand Index” (HEDI) quantifies this demand by region of the country and by higher education sector. The HEDI, which is based on several assumptions that we should debate, if accurate, paints a scary picture for the community college sector.

Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches, Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols by Nancy Duarte and Patti Sanchez

My work with the Aspen Fellows and team teaching with Stanford University Professor JD Schramm led me to this book. Great leaders must make compelling cases and lead people through change. Duarte and Sanchez offer a framework and examples for communicating through the five stages of transformation (Dream, Leap, Fight, Climb, Arrive).

And on my list but ran out of summer time:

There There by Tommy Orange
Uncensored by Zachary R. Wood