



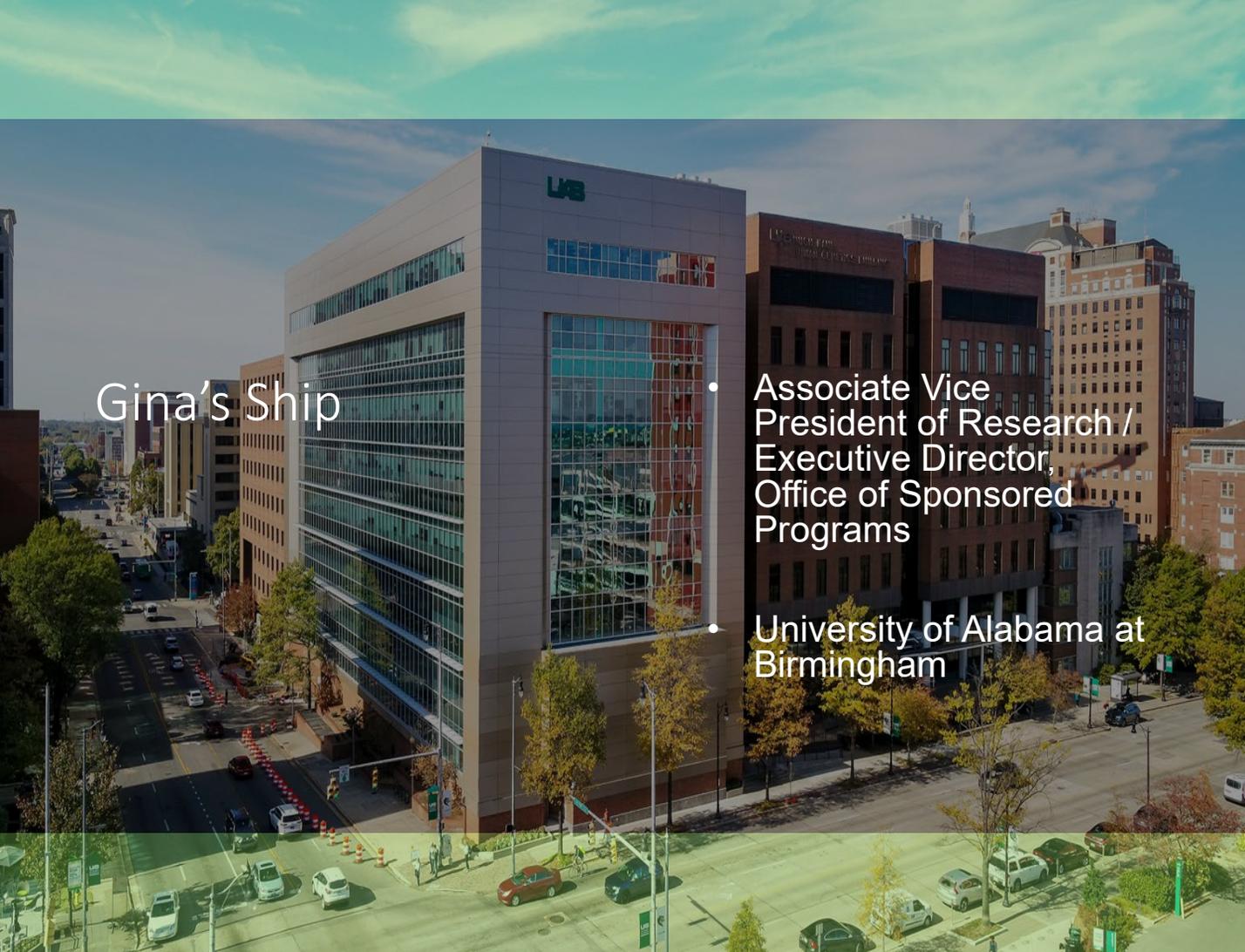
SRA INTERNATIONAL  
ANNUAL MEETING  
**CHICAGO 2024**  
OCTOBER 26-30

**“It’s Your Ship” What  
Research Administrators  
Can Learn from a Naval  
Commander  
T500 – 10/29/2024**



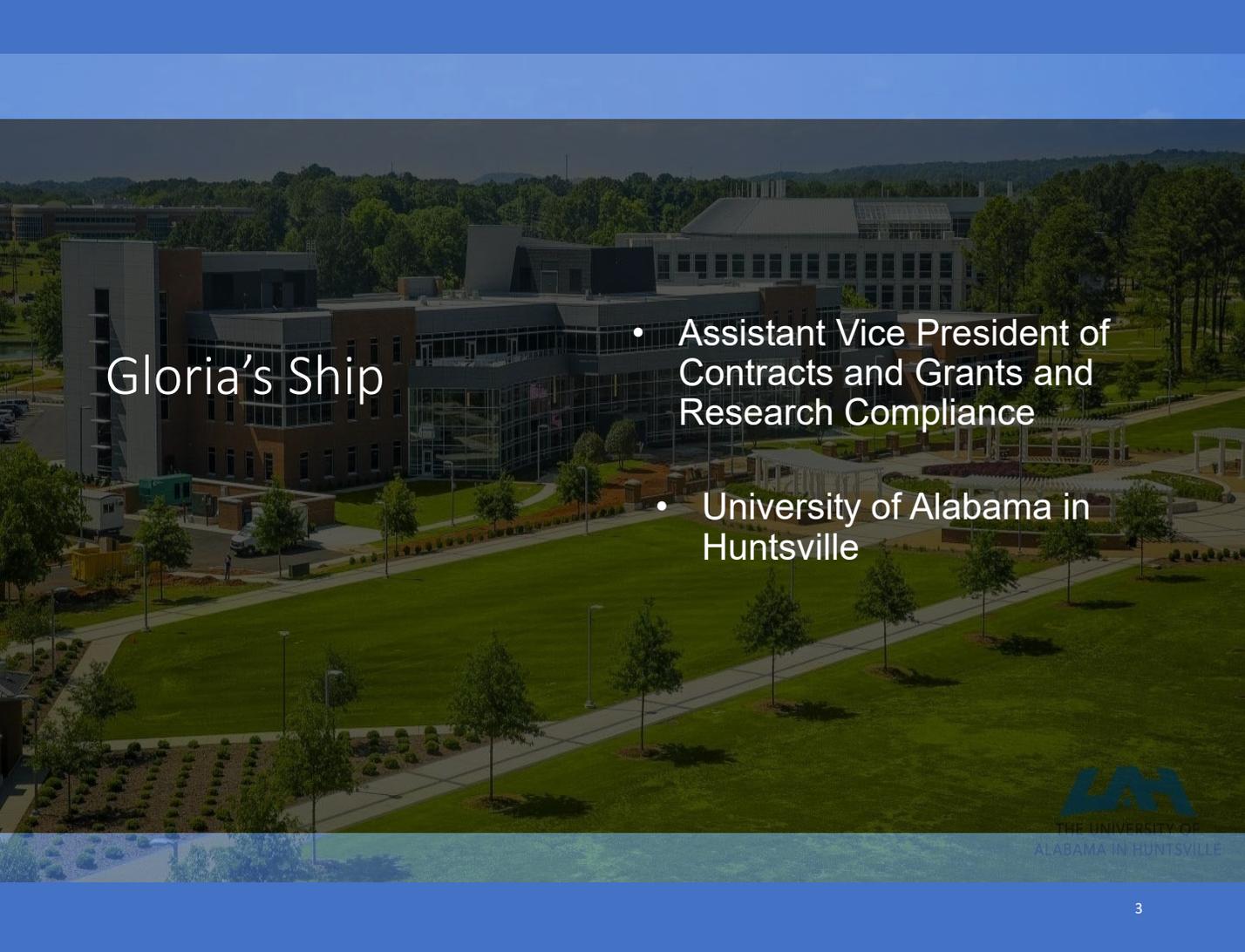
Gina Hedberg  
University of Alabama at  
Birmingham

Gloria Greene  
University of Alabama in  
Huntsville



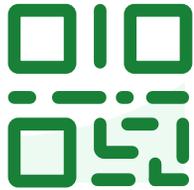
Gina's Ship

- Associate Vice President of Research / Executive Director, Office of Sponsored Programs
- University of Alabama at Birmingham



# Gloria's Ship

- Assistant Vice President of Contracts and Grants and Research Compliance
- University of Alabama in Huntsville



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## Poll Question: What Does Your Ship Look Like?

- I supervise 25+ staff
- I supervise 10-24 staff
- I supervise 1-9 staff
- I have no current staff supervision, but one day I will command a ship!





# What Does your Ship Look Like?

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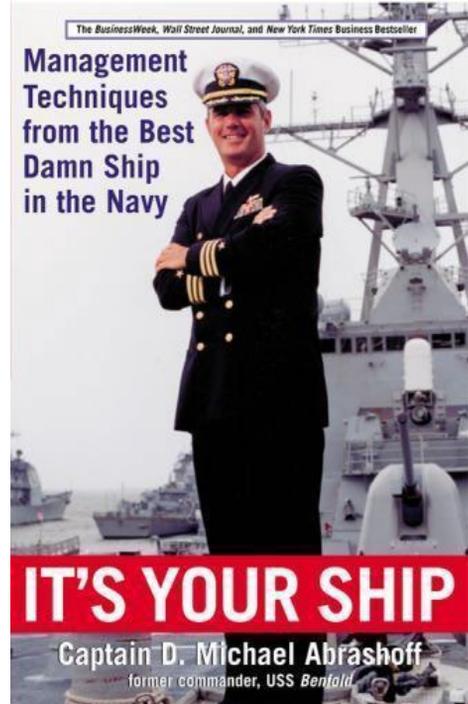
# “It’s Your Ship”

Captain Michael Abrashoff was given command of a ship fitted with the latest technology, but the crew’s productivity and morale were both low

Captain Abrashoff realized that to effect change among those he commanded, he had to make some changes also

His vessel ultimately became a model of naval efficiency with high crew confidence and assurance

**SO – HOW DID HE DO IT??**



# Background

Commissioned in 1996, the *USS Benfold* is a guided missile destroyer with a crew of 310. This is Captain Abrashoff's first sea command\*.

(\*This is command of a commissioned warship or various other vessels in the U. S. Navy.)

During this time, about 35% of men and women who joined the military annually would not complete their enlistment contract.

At the time of this command, each sailor trainee costs about \$35k to recruit and tens of thousands more to train to basic proficiencies. Today the cost of recruitment is \$9400 - \$13,500. However, the training cost now averages \$84k.



**Which of the following leadership traits do you believe is most important for fostering a strong and effective team?**

**i** Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

“Show me an organization in which employees take ownership, and I will show you one that beats its competitors.”

# Empowerment and Ownership

- Research shows an empowered workforce results in a stronger commitment to the workplace, but not all “empowering” activities yield the same results. Employees respond differently!
- Define what “empowerment” is to your staff – it generally isn’t a one-stop-shop. Commitment by a supervisor to a staff given the freedom to be innovative will define the culture of the workplace.

How do you empower?

- ✓ Prioritize trust
- ✓ Strike down the fear of failing
- ✓ Step out and encourage new ideas and processes



We spend an estimated 1/3 of our lives in a workplace environment. The freedom to take on new responsibilities, make changes, and release the worry of criticism usually results in employee satisfaction and a positive and productive work environment.

“As a manager, the one signal you need to steadily send to your people is how important they are to you. In fact, nothing is more important to you. Realize your influence and use it wisely. Be there for your people. Find out who they are. Recognize the effects you have on them and how you can make them grow taller.”

# Build Trust and Respect

- Statistics show trusting employees are more motivated to work, tend to make ethical decisions, have lower rates of absenteeism, and are less likely to look for another job. However, most employers overestimate their employee's trust level
- Trust is the opposite of fear
- Trust creates future leaders



## Steps to building trust

- ✓ Respect is trust in action – get to know employees and encourage them to know each other.
- ✓ Communicate! Employees want to hear from supervisors. If information is shared only at the top level, trust can not grow. Be approachable and committed to communication.
- ✓ Foster a safe environment – let employees feels safe to challenge the status quo. Even if disagreements result, open engagement can be positive.

“You have to train yourself in leadership, and you can’t afford to wait until you get promoted to begin the process. While you’re still an individual contributor, learn to think like your boss, so when the day comes to be a leader, you’re ready to step right in with your game plan in hand.”

# Continuous Learning and Improvement

- Continuous learning in the workplace can expand employee skills, increase existing skills and knowledge, generate new ideas, boost morale and raise employee performance
- A strategy for continuous learning develops long-term goals and uses tools and resources to support and reach those goals. These include accessible need-based learning opportunities, a culture that fosters sharing knowledge, feedback from students and those with knowledge to share, and an environment to apply the new knowledge and skills

Benefits of continuous learning – a win for both sides

- ✓ Individuals can achieve career goals
- ✓ Individuals can develop marketable skills
- ✓ Organizations can keep costs contained due to retention of a trained workforce
- ✓ Provides employee satisfaction
- ✓ Can assist in reaching organizational goals



“Leaders need to understand how profoundly they affect people, how their optimism and pessimism are equally infectious, how directly they set the tone and spirit of everyone around them.”

Always remember that  
leadership is a privilege.

Your influence can alter  
the trajectory of people's  
careers and transform  
their entire lives.

© Daniel Abraham

# Effective Communications

- Exchange of ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and information that is received and comprehended clearly and purposefully.
- Balancing act of active listening, verbal communication, nonverbal cues, body language and emotional intelligence.

## Tips for Effective Communication in the Workplace

- ✓ Know where to communicate
- ✓ Build collaboration skills
- ✓ Engage face-to-face when possible
- ✓ Watch body language and voice
- ✓ Prioritize two-way communication
- ✓ Keep it to facts, not stories
- ✓ Speak to the right person



“Lead by example; listen aggressively; communicate purpose and meaning; create a climate of trust; look for results, not salutes; take calculated risks; go beyond standard procedure; build up your people; generate unity; and improve your people’s quality of life.”

# Lead by Example

- A leadership style that involves setting an example through your own actions, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Demonstrate qualities and behaviors that you expect from our team members and modeling the behaviors that you want to see in your workplace.

## Benefits:

- ✓ builds trust and respect
- ✓ Sets the bar high
- ✓ Inspired others
- ✓ Creates a positive workplace
- ✓ Encourages accountability

## Put this into practice

- ✓ Coaching and training

Studies show 80% of leaders who have had coaching or training feel more confident and over 70% of these leader's experience improvement in their work performance, relationships and communication skills.

- ✓ Identify great leaders and shadow their practices and behaviors.



leadership is not a  
position or a title,  
it is action and  
example.

**“It’s Your Ship”**

Thank you!

Gina Hedberg, [ghedberg@uab.edu](mailto:ghedberg@uab.edu)

Gloria Greene, [greeneg@uah.edu](mailto:greeneg@uah.edu)

