



Alicia DeCoudreaux, President, Mills College

By Sarah Duxbury
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HQ: Oakland.

Background: DeCoudreaux was recently inaugurated as Mills' 13th president. Previously, she was vice president and deputy general counsel at Eli Lilly and Co. She also is a trustee of Wellesley College and has served as director of the Indiana University Foundation.

First job: Picking strawberries on Cape Cod.

Education: B.A., Wellesley College; J.D., Indiana University School of Law.

Residence: Mills College.

Business strategy

How's business: We just ranked as one of the top five regional universities in the West and are rated one of best 376 colleges in the West.

Biggest challenge for your business at the moment: Ensuring that we continue to offer a high-quality education to our students and that we do everything we can to prepare them for the tough economy they are facing.

What's going to change at your company in the next year: I want to continue to build on (Mills' strong) reputation and to increase visibility for our academic programs.

Goal yet to be achieved: As long as research continues to show that women are still underrepresented in the upper ranks of most fields and underrepresented in select fields like science and math, institutions like Mills are more important than ever to help them break through these barriers.

How will you know that you've achieved it: When we have more than 2.4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs who are women, when more than 17 percent of Congress are women, when we see more overall equity in the workforce.

Management philosophy

Guiding principles for good management: In real estate, it's location, location, location. For me, it's listen, listen, listen. Listen to all perspectives and listen at all times.

Best way to keep competitive edge: It sounds repetitive, but one of the major things I learned in my business career is if you want to stay competitive, you have to be a good listener. As I begin my presidency, my strategy is first to listen to input from faculty, staff, students and alumnae.

Why people like working for you: For one thing, I get out of their way. For another, we tend to laugh and have fun while we work, and we work as a team.

Mentor: Many different people in my life have been able to provide advice and counsel on various matters.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/print-edition/2011/10/28/alecia-decoudreaux-president-mills.html?page=3>