



Organizational competences and the success of the research team

Interview with Prof. Richard Griffith,
Institute for Cross Cultural Management of Florida Institute of Technology

Conducted by:

prof. dr hab. Barbara Kożusznik, University of Silesia in Katowice

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ICSD

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Staff Development



Prof. Richard Griffith

Institute for Cross Cultural Management of
Florida Institute of Technology



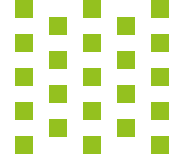
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- **Barbara Kozusznik:** Hello, everybody. Welcome to the Interdisciplinary Centre for Staff Development at the University of Silesia. I invite you to listen to an interview with Prof. Richard Griffith. The topic will be connected with competency management at the university. The interview will be conducted by Prof. Olaf Flak and myself, Barbara Kozusznik.
- **Olaf Flak:** Our guest today is Prof. Richard Griffith, who is a Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology, and Director of the Institute for Cross-Cultural Management at the Florida Institute of Technology. He has published his research results on applicant faking, leadership, and cross-cultural work. His distinguished works consist of publications on cross-cultural issues of management and cross-cultural teams, as well as on organisational psychology. Prof. Richard, we would like to ask you some questions about competency management at universities and things you are familiar with. Our first question is about your own work. What research problems are you involved in today? What is your main research work?
- **Richard Griffith:** I would say that there are two areas that I'm spending most of my time on now. The first is the optimisation of experiential learning. So much of the learning that happens in organisations is in formal settings or classroom settings, workshop settings; and what we know is that advanced competencies are best learned by doing and being engaged with your environment, but many people don't take the time to learn, so we're doing some research that will help them learn in those experiential settings. The other area that I'm working on now is the development of self-regulatory skills in junior leaders. It's a research project with the US Army Special Forces. They want to make sure that their soldiers are not only able to self-regulate their own behaviours but that they can lead others in these areas of self-regulation, which should then optimally improve your performance.

■ **O. Flak:** Thank you. Which of your research projects are the most important for you? Which of them are you the proudest of?

■ **R. Griffith:** I was involved in a US Army research project for about 7 years, which was in the assessment of cross-cultural competence and then the development of cross-cultural competence with the US Army Special Forces. As you know, those are small units that often are deployed behind enemy lines where they don't know the language. And if they are not properly trained, they don't know the culture, so it was important for us to be able to help them identify individuals that could benefit from cultural training and then be able to provide that cultural training so that they could be successful. I think one of the reasons it was so important to me is that as a young man, I was in the US Army, so I naturally connected with them and, in many cases, learning cross-cultural competence might be a matter of making another dollar or making some more money with business being important. But in this case, it was a matter of life and death for these units. The outcome of our research had real implications for these particular units and—ultimately—it was satisfying not only from a scientific perspective. We learned a lot from this project, but also it was personally satisfying for me.

■ **B. Kożusznik:** Now I would like to ask you about some important values that are connected with you. We met as internationally spread people, and I know how engaging and inspiring international cooperation with you is. Please tell us what contributes to the establishment of contacts of a given researcher with researchers abroad.

■ **R. Griffith:** Thank you, Barbara. I think that's a really good question. It's one that often young faculty members don't quite understand. To me, the thing that is most important is having a relationship orientation. You and I keep coming back to being in projects together; you're my friend. And when I make friends around the world, they introduce me to their other friends and that keeps happening. So all of a sudden, rather than knowing one or two or a dozen researchers, you know hundreds. Because you're thinking about them as people, and you take an interest in not only the topic that they're looking at but their families and their lives and then the work that you're doing. For me, it's much more fulfilling. When you're open to those kinds of relationships and then I'm not only learning about the science, but I'm learning about the culture of the person and the place that they live. So all of that—I think—is a function of being relationship-oriented. You know, not putting the science aside per se, but the science is only one factor that comes into play in that relationship, but the relationship is the important part.

■ **B. Kożusznik:** Tell me, can we learn it?

■ **R. Griffith:** Relationship orientation? Yes, I think we can. To be honest, I'm a very in-

troverted person. I have a difficult time having conversations with people. It's not easy for me, but I've learnt as a young professional that if I wanted to be successful, I needed to focus on relationships, and I work hard to find something in the person I'm talking to that's interesting. I don't pretend to be interested; I think that's a terrible thing to do. I work hard to be really interested in a person, and it was a skill that took time to develop, but it can be developed.

■ **B. Kożusznik: I think that when young people listen to you, it will be confirmed that it can be learnt.**

■ **O. Flak: What kind of factors can you name which create the team collaboration? What is the most important in team collaboration?**

■ **R. Griffith:** To me, one of the things that are important to develop is what we refer to as a safe psychological culture—or a safe psychological climate if you will—where people feel that they can say what they're thinking and, most importantly, they feel they can make mistakes. One of the things that I emphasise at ICCM is making mistakes is a good thing because then we're learning from the activities that we have. We want to make sure we try not to make the mistakes again, so we reflect deeply and think about the mistakes that we've made and put some things in place so we don't make them. It's a great learning opportunity if people feel that it's safe. If they feel like I'm going to yell at them, or if there's some punishment that is associated with it, then they'll hide the mistakes and that's the worst thing that could possibly happen because we're not learning, and then those mistakes will pop up later, there will be consequences. So I think just making sure that you can develop trust in your team, and that they feel safe in terms of their learning, that they know they're going to be developed through this process, that they're going to get better through the research project, I think that overall then you get positive outcomes.

■ **O. Flak: These are very important things.**

B. Kożusznik: I am observing you and think that a lot of people looking at you are thinking "What are your competencies?" In your opinion, what competencies you have made you a good leader of a research team? Because everybody knows that you are a good leader.

■ **R. Griffith:** Well, I don't know about that. I try hard to lead. I think a lot of that is what I've learnt from my father. He told me a long time ago if you take care of your people, they'll take care of you. So I work very hard to make sure that I'm attending to the needs of the people in ICCM. Those are a variety of needs, many of which are intellectual in nature that people like to be challenged; they like puzzles to be put in front of them, so we work on tackling what very difficult problems are. We don't shy away

from them, and something I'm always very proud of when it comes to my people is that they're just fearless when it comes to research and projects. They'll tackle hard things that people will say are impossible. But that's just one side of it. The other that I really work hard on is taking care of them as people. I think about the stressors that they have, and if someone comes to me and says they have a problem – no problem, we will take care of the problem first. The work will still be there, and we'll get back to it, but when I do those two things, I find they're appreciated and people tend to be highly engaged in the work that they're doing and highly engaged in the organisation; in fact, sometimes too engaged. That's a problem that we run into. We have to slow them down, so they have some work-life balance. But I think that all that stems from the lesson that I've learnt for my father in terms of taking care of your team members and if you do that, then good things happen.

- **B. Kożusznik:** I don't know if it is something that you may want to hide; but to make this obvious to people, you once confessed to me that your team is very stable. It is almost the same group of people that you've been working with for many years now. So do you think that these factors that you've mentioned contributed to this effect, or can you add something in regards to what made it so stable?
- **R. Griffith:** I do really think, again, that it is the focus on people rather than on tasks. We work very hard. I don't know if I'd say we're workaholics; we work hard because we enjoy our work. But we take the time to make sure that the person is the most important part of the arrangement, and because we do that, I think people tend to be more loyal, and they really do want to contribute, and they want to stay because they're happy, they feel comfortable, they feel respected, I think that's another part of it. I love these kinds of situations because I can brag about my team. I'm lucky enough to lead the best team in the world, and it's a joy for me to work. I mean, I shouldn't even call it to work. In many ways, it's just a wonderful experience. I think because they feel respected and they feel they have a home and no one wants to leave home.
- **B. Kożusznik:** Yes, I can confirm that. I visited the Florida Institute of Technology once, and really the atmosphere, the climate, and the relations between people are very person-oriented, so congratulations, Rich.
- **R. Griffith:** You're very kind, thank you.
- **O. Flak:** Going back to the competencies, I would like to know, what was the situation when you became aware that you have to develop your competencies as a researcher? Was it in some sort of special situation, or at what point did you really recognise "I have to develop myself in these areas and so on?"
- **R. Griffith:** I think that's a great question. The process probably started when I was in

graduate school in that I had a very good advisor, and we had a good relationship, so I was motivated to become a better researcher. So I watched her, and I watched what she was doing, and I watched my peers try to see what I would need to do to be successful. I don't know if I was as mindful of the notion of competencies just yet, I just knew I needed to get better, and I wanted to work on it. When I started to become mindful of it was at the beginning of my career as a professor. I had a very unique opportunity in that I was hired as a programme chair of a programme in the United States directly out of grad school. So one day I was a student, and the very next day I was the chair of a programme and I had to develop other people and start to think about their development; and then when I was doing that, that's when that notion of competencies kicked in, and I started to really think about skill development, not just in the people that I was leading. I knew that I had to get better at many things in order for us to be able to achieve our goals, and then I think that continued again when I founded ICCM. It was, again, a unique opportunity. And now that the kinds of problems we were tackling were different, they were very international in nature, so I had to work hard on my cross-cultural competencies, something I still work very hard on, to try to be aware of the culture and to make sure that I'm not only respectful of other people's culture, but we're working hard together to leverage our cultures, to get better at problem-solving. In many cases, it's research, but it might be applied projects as well. So it's been a process through time; I think that started in grad school but was accelerated in my professional career.

- **B. Kożusznik:** And I would like you to tell us what the difference between being the team leader of a native research team and an international one is. You said a few words about it, but could you add something more? Your experience is immense, and you can really compare because you felt it on your own skin. What is this difference?
- **R. Griffith:** I could speak to some experiences. Hopefully, that will answer your question. So in the United States, one of the characteristics of leaders that are considered positive is moving quickly and making quick decisions. If someone asks a question, I make a decision rapidly, and we move in a given direction, and that's admired in the United States. Being decisive is rather admired. When I worked internationally, I've found that it's neither admired nor smart. In that, you need to take your time and think about the moment, think about the context, think about a lot of factors. And then—when everybody is comfortable with the decision—we might be able to move in a direction that if I move quickly, I'll make a mistake, and I make mistakes anyway. If you ask, I worked hard to get better at being cross-culturally competent, but I make mistakes every day. Culture is really difficult. But if you're learning from your mistakes, and people see that you're trying to get better, then they appreciate that, and I think speed is a factor. If I just walk in, and do it like I was going to do it

at home, then I'm not trying, I'm hoping; and hope is not a strategy. I think people want to be strategic when they're approaching these things. And I would say that my international experience has made me better as a domestic leader. Because now, I go back, and really, I shouldn't have been so fast to begin with, I should have taken the time and listened to people, slowed down and thought about context. So I find the skills of cross-cultural competence are just good people skills that can be applied even in a domestic setting. I found that they've helped my leadership. I don't know if my team would say that but I feel that I'm better as a leader because of my international experience.

■ **B. Kożusznik: What makes you nervous in a situation when you are internationally engaged as a leader? What behaviours, apart from time issues?**

■ **R. Griffith:** So, if I follow you right, what makes me nervous when I'm in...

■ **B. Kożusznik: What makes you nervous when it comes to the behaviour of participants of these international teams?**

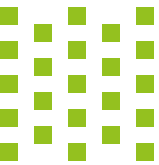
■ **R. Griffith:** I'm glad you asked that. So Barbara and I... I've known Barbara now for maybe 15 years, maybe more. We've had long conversations about culture, and I've learned a lot about Poland—particularly Silesia—from Barbara.

■ **B. Kożusznik: And in May, we will meet again during the Congress, so I'm very happy, yes.**

R. Griffith: So now we have open conversations, and open conversations are great because I know when I've made a mistake. If I make a mistake, Barbara will be kind enough to say: „Oh Rich, you're silly; you've made a mistake,” and then I can learn. In indirect cultures, Japan is a beautiful example; in Japan, there's a correct way to do everything, every single thing, how to pick up your chopsticks, how to say “Good morning,” how to say “Good night,” there's a proper way to do things, and if you don't do them in the proper way, your partner won't tell you, because they don't want to embarrass you in this situation. And there are things you could do that could harm people's feelings. And I don't want to do that, they're my friend, I want to respect them and take care of them. But because of the indirect nature of communication, sometimes the mistakes I make are not revealed to me, and then I have to discover them later, and does it make me nervous? Let's just say I'm apprehensive. I want to do things right, and I don't want to hurt people's feelings.

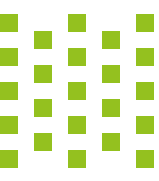
■ **B. Kożusznik: Because you see the negative effect on the research results, because not everything will be said openly.**

■ **R. Griffith:** I think what can happen is it can harm the relationships on the team. And then, because of that, your research results might suffer somewhat, as your team is



not focused, and the levels of trust might drop a little bit. In those indirect cultures in particular—if I'm working in East Asia or in Latin America or in Africa—I definitely take my time. I want to make sure that I'm building good relations.

- **B. Kożusznik: I have to remember this.**
- **R. Griffith:** I try really hard to do that, not to hurry, try to be as patient as I can be, which is difficult for a US American. We move pretty quickly, and I have to really pace myself so that I can build those relationships. And then, if I make a mistake—I think my counterparts know that I didn't mean to make a mistake—they give me a little bit more trust than I might normally have.
- **O. Flak: About trust, as far as trust is concerned, I would like to ask you how to build a climate of trust in team collaboration. What do you do to enhance people's trust in each other?**
- **R. Griffith:** Great question, especially internationally. One of the things that I've learned over time is not just to say what you're going to do but to tell people why you're going to do it. So you might say: "I'm going to engage in this particular activity; this is why I'm going to do it," and the reason I think this works is that what differs internationally is not often the activity, it's the intent behind the activity. I might act in a certain way that could be interpreted not accurately in some ways by my international counterpart. But if I say: „Here's why I'm doing it," then they can see the logic behind it, and it makes sense, and then there's little disagreement about that. Talking about the why and encouraging people on the team to talk about the why, I think, can be quite helpful in an international setting. Another one that I think helps build trust, but it can be tricky, is to be genuine. So I try to be myself. Now, the tricky part about it is being yourself; I don't think it's hard, it takes time to be comfortable with yourself and all that, but being yourself in another culture is tricky. So, for instance, if I go to Poland, I'm still Rich, but I'm the Polish version of Rich.
- **B. Kożusznik: What is the Polish version of Rich?**
- **R. Griffith:** Yeah, so what would that mean? In the United States, I'm not exactly what you'd call timely, so if there's a meeting, I might be a couple of minutes late to a meeting. I'm not going to be a couple of minutes late for a meeting in Poland. I'm going to be 15 minutes early in Poland because I can tell people get nervous if I'm not early. Even today, when I logged on a few minutes earlier. So you're being genuine, you're being yourself. When I'm in Poland, I laugh, I have fun, and I think my personality is coming out, but I lean in the direction of Polish culture just a little bit to be respectful; and that way, people can see who I really am, and I think that helps build trust, but I'm also being respectful of their culture and their heritage.

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- **B. Kożusznik:** I would like to ask you to follow this thought and tell me how can the authority of the leader be built, according to you. You mentioned some cultural aspects, some personal aspects. What is this real authority you can build in your research team? What is cherished especially by research workers? Let's focus on this.
 - **R. Griffith:** The first thing that I think you have to have—it's almost a baseline—is you have to be an expert in the area that you're doing research. You need to know everything that's been done in this particular area and be well-versed in the research and in the concepts. Now, that is a baseline; you have to have that. If you don't have that, you won't have authority, it's impossible. But I think there are things on top of that that are helpful. I've mentioned relationship orientation, and that might be the next level that you need to be able to have. There's a certain level of confidence that's necessary, but it's a balance with humility. It's important for me that people understand that I'm learning, too, and I'm open to learning, and I'm not going to hide the fact that I don't know everything, that when we are studying a new phenomenon I can learn from my teammates as much as they learn from me. And I don't pretend otherwise. So this humility; I think it works quite well internationally. In the United States it might not. I think, in many ways, people expect their leaders to know things. But internationally, humility is a part of the equation of leadership. So understanding your topic and being an expert in the sciences is important, taking care of your people, and then approaching it in a confident fashion but also being confident in your humility; I think it is an interesting balance to be able to strike.
 - **B. Kożusznik:** Yes, I fully agree with this. But maybe from the more negative side, there is another term in English, one is humility and another one is humiliation. I am interested in this topic and that in research work, you are only one step from humiliating someone else because of anything, lack of knowledge, young age or some other aspects. This can be very dangerous, and sometimes research teams are close to it. I was observing it and I hope that this doesn't last, but it was really dangerous.
 - **R. Griffith:** I don't know if you know the researcher Michael Zickert. He is a friend of mine; he is a Professor at Bowling Green in the United States. I've learned a lot from him, and one of the things that I found so attractive about the work that he does is that he does the science, and he lets the science do the talking. He lets the data do the talking. If he's wrong, if someone comes out later with the study that shows that he was not correct in his assertion, Mike doesn't defend it. Mike just says: "That's science, and we've learnt from that, and let's move on," and, to me, you can't humiliate Mike Zickert because it's not his pride in his paper, it's his data in his paper, and he's a scientist, not a salesman. I think if you approach the problem with that kind of mindset that almost every paper you're going to write is wrong, it moves science forward a little bit, but it's not 100% correct; it's just your insight into the moment

based on the data, and the very next paper that you write will be better, and the next project you do will be better. So just do the work, advance and then leave it behind and continue on in your career. It's difficult to be humiliated when you're willing to give up those things.

- **B. Kożusznik: That was very interesting.**
- **O. Flak: I would like to ask you something about team development. How can you recognise that your team is becoming better and better? Do we have any parameters, measures or any other techniques to check your team's progress?**
- **R. Griffith:** Absolutely. A big part of what we do at ICCM is to make sure that we are measuring the learning, measuring the performance, and measuring the customer's experience, so all the members of ICCM are going to get performance feedback. And we attend to their performance very closely. Now, they get that from a variety of sources. ICCM has about 50 people that work in it, and there are about 39 different projects that are going on at any given time. Do I know the tasks of every single person that's involved in every single project? No, I couldn't. I'm leading at the strategic level, but then on each team, there will be team leaders that do know intricately what the performance of every individual is; they will report to our portfolio leaders who then have a different picture, probably more based on the outcomes of a project than the behaviours. And then I have a real good sense of how that feeds into what is the overall strategic vision of the organisation. Each of those sources of feedback is important. The person needs to really understand it at a behavioural level and then what are the consequences of their behaviours. One of the things that I do to be able to gather that information is I work closely with our customers and our strategic partners. So I'm talking to them about what are the results that they're getting back from the work, from people in ICCM, so I could find out are they satisfied. Our goal is always to exceed the expectations of the customer or the client. Whatever they thought they were going to get, we want to give them +1, so they are extremely happy with the work that they're getting, and then I see feedback from them. I can give you an example. Just this morning I had a meeting with some of the folks that are working in ICCM and many of them are PhD students; they're preparing a presentation for Johnson & Johnson, a huge multinational company, the project is a 6 billion dollar project that they're working on. And they're putting together a brief for what is the executive team of Johnson & Johnson. Most universities and the professors at the universities could not get a meeting with the executive team of Johnson & Johnson. The President of a university couldn't get a meeting with Johnson & Johnson, but our students are going to get to do that, and when I hear they've done a great job and the executives of a multinational company are saying: "This is fantastic work, you've done a great job," that's great feedback. And now we're able to go to the folks in ICCM and say „You've

done a good job, and here are the things that contributed to that excellent work.” I know that’s kind of long-winded, but with multi-source feedback, understanding the value of the different sources of feedback is really helpful. And then being able to give that feedback back to the people and ICCM in a debrief, it helps them make sense of it, and help coach them, so that they’re getting better along the way, allows me to really see their development, and then see their performance, where they’re at that stage of their career.

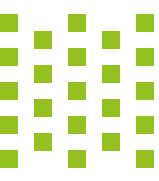
- **O. Flak: So the keyword is feedback, the right feedback.**
- **R. Griffith:** I think so.
- **B. Kożusznik: Rich, next question. What competencies in your team members do you value the most? Of course, you have a lot of team members, and you have different configurations, but could you give us some examples?**
- **R. Griffith:** I’d be happy to. It’s interesting because I tell this to all my team members when they’re working for me, and they have a project; what I’m looking for is the project to be on time, on target, and with no drama. So I can break those three things down in some ways.
- **B. Kożusznik: No drama?**
- **R. Griffith:** No drama, no emotions. Obviously, we’ve told the client that we’re going to have it delivered for them at a certain time, and internal deadlines can move, but external deadlines can never move. We must deliver the project when we said we were going to deliver it, so you have to manage the project well, and if it’s multiple people, that means you have to manage the people and the resources; so having a good project plan and being reliable in your management of that project. As I said before, I’m usually leading at what is the strategic level, but the day-to-day management of the project is done by the members of ICCM, which are often PhD students. They’re learning project management skills, so I think that’s a critical competency. On target, the second part of that phrase that I used is profoundly understanding the requirements of the project from the client’s perspective, not our perspective. What does the client want, and why do they want it? What is their intent? How will it be used? How is it going to affect all the stakeholders in the particular project that they’re in? And if they understand that, then they can build what is the research project or applied project, so that it meets all of the stakeholders’ requirements or exceeds all of the requirements. And I think that it takes some cleverness and thoroughness to design projects that can do that. And the last one – no drama. Maybe that’s an idiosyncratic requirement of mine, but I like to work in a place that is fun, that I can laugh and then I can learn in. And some people bring in problems, they complain, and they get

overly excited about things, and I'd get that, but take care of that in your own time. Don't bring that into the team, because it's contagious. It gets the team agitated, and then they become nervous. So I like people that are calm and can have fun, laugh and enjoy their work. And then it's a fun place to be, and we're getting a lot of work done but everybody's enjoying it, and you don't get negativity in the team, which can spread and cost problems.

- **O. Flak: You told us about your break-even point, about your research competencies. But was there any similar situations when you recognised that you have to develop your team competencies, your team leader competencies, and then you went forward, and you moved to this level at which you are now?**

- **R. Griffith:** Yes, I think I had that experience in my life, even prior to university. As I mentioned, as a young man, I was in the army. And as a boy, I was kind of lazy; I didn't work really hard, I didn't really understand what was necessary to accomplish things. And then the army requires you to do many things during the day. So I started to have this realisation that: "Wait a minute, if I work really hard, I can get a lot of things done, I could accomplish a lot of things." And then the next step in that thought process was: "Wait a minute. If I could get my team involved, I could get even bigger things done." Because I had an extension of my thoughts and there were people that could tackle these tasks, I just needed to learn how to do that. And I think that my style now is very much like it was when I was in the army, in that I wanted to take care of my people, I wanted to make sure that they were safe and they felt that they could be developed and that overall they were going to grow as people, and they were going to grow professionally. So I think that a lot of my leadership skills I leverage now. It's almost as if I'm still in uniform; it really is similar. ICCM—in many ways—is similar to the units that I used to run when I was in the army; in fact, the size of the unit is roughly the same. I've had many opportunities to be promoted into what would be positioned where I could lead larger units, but I don't like that, I like to lead small units. When I say small, I mean less than 50 because then I know people, and I'm leading person to person, rather than looking at a number on an Excel sheet and saying: "Oh, you must do this, you must meet this metric," and I don't find that very appealing. So I like what I would call small unit leadership at the platoon size type of leadership.

- **B. Kożusznik: Now, my next question is connected with the internationalisation of your university. I know that you are at the very top in a lot of rankings in the USA when it comes to internationalisation, and it requires some innovative approach—I think—to be on such a high level. What do you think about employees, people, university workers and their competencies which make a university innovative and open to different experiences?**

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- **R. Griffith:** Yes, that's a really good question. One of the things that I think can kill innovation—or can stifle innovation—is strong central control. If you have leaders who are at the top of the organisational ladder and they make all decisions, then why would an employee be innovative? There's really no reason to be, you just do what you are told, and things will happen, and good things happen. So if you want to have innovation, you need to push authority out into what are the departments and the programmes, let them make local decisions where they can be thinking about the context that really matters to them, the metrics that really matter to them. I think that's critical. Let's say the President of a university tells me: "You need to do X, Y and Z to have a highly-ranked programme." He or she may be a wonderful President, but they don't know my programme. They don't know my field, they don't know what's valued in the field, they're going to view it through their lens and their lens might not be the appropriate lens. This functions in a similar way in cross-cultural competence. I don't know of the Polish lens. I try hard to learn it but I would never be arrogant to be able to say: "This is the way we should do it in Poland," I would ask you: "How should we do it in Poland?" And I think university administrators need to be doing that in the university, going to heads of their research institutes and their programmes and their departments and saying: "How should we do this in order to be great and innovative?" Of course, they need to work with them to be able to get that integrated into a strategic plan in ways that make sense and what they want to prioritise at the university. But they should never say: "This is what we need to do in order to be innovative," because they will be wrong, and no matter how brilliant they are, they just won't have an understanding of the context. Trust your people and get your people involved in the decision making, and you'll get better outcomes than if you are arrogant and you don't trust your people.
 - **B. Kożusznik:** Well, yes, you are right.
 - **O. Flak:** I see great openness in this approach that you describe, and that's why I would like to ask you another question. Does your university look for researchers or specialists outside the university and employ them? Do you have any programmes to engage people from outside, to work at the university?
 - **R. Griffith:** I would say that's where it's interesting because ICCM is a little different than Florida Tech as a whole. So I would say Florida Tech as a whole doesn't do that as much as they should, and at ICCM, we do. Because I want the best people in the world on my team, not the best people in my town. I work very hard to be able to make friends and learn, and then, if someone is an expert in a particular area and they happen to be in another place in the world, it's so easy now to have someone in a meeting, and to get a project going; it's easier than it's ever been. It's funny how there are some good things that came out of the pandemic, but one of them is now the comfort level that people have with distance meetings. We work really hard to

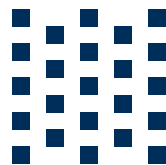
incorporate people into the projects that we have from all over the world. I would say Florida Tech could do a better job of that, and for that matter, we go out into the world. So before the pandemic—and actually next semester it kind of starts again—I’ll be out of the country maybe one week a month. I’ll be in Poland in the summer, and I’ll see you both in person, but I try to get out and meet our colleagues and my friends, so we’re talking about projects constantly. And then they come in and visit. Florida is a nice place to come when it’s cold. In the winter, you’ll be very happy to visit Florida.

- **B. Kożusznik:** **Of course, we will think about things that we can do together. You’re so open that your openness invites and inspires others to think about collaboration. It is a very interesting place. I think that we can ask you the concluding question rather than a general one. Could you propose what method could your university—or any university—use to strengthen its research and the capacity of its researchers to do good research?**

- **R. Griffith:** I think that’s a fantastic question. First, I would say you want to think about it as a process. It’s not a one-time thing that you would do. First, you have to select the right people. And this means that when you’re getting people who are applying for a job, you have a good selection process in place. You have to have clarity in terms of what you’re looking for. But to me, the most important part is, let’s say that you have someone who leaves your department, you don’t try to find a person just like them to fill it. You find the best person, and then you let your appropriate programme adapt. So every time you bring in a new person, things are adapting a little bit, but you’ve hired the best person, not necessarily the best fit in terms of their technical expertise. And then I think it’s very important to have what is an active mentoring and coaching programme. One of my favourite things to do is to mentor young faculty. I truly love mentoring young faculty, helping them have what a productive career is, and what we say is clearing the brush for them to be able to be successful. So I find what are the political barriers and what are the resource barriers and clear space so that they can be productive, and let them do what they want to do. And then build a programme around that, rather than telling them what to do. That requires really open communication with the faculty, so they feel they can trust you, and telling them what your developmental needs are, and then having some skills in coaching so that you can help them come to insights and become more aware of their overall performance and then doing that for what is 15 to 20 years. You’re always trying to improve your faculty; they can always get better. It’s little steps, and it’s not looking like they’re going to go from 0 to a 100 km/h; it’s not happening that quickly – it stages. It gets a little better every day, and being patient, understanding that they’re trying, and that sometimes they’ll fail, many of them learn from their failure. So I think that approach is helpful, you pick the right people, and then you really commit to mentoring the

young faculty, knowing fully well that they'll be better than you when you leave. But the whole point is that when you retire, you step out of the organisation knowing that you put it in a good place, that you've done what you could do, to make sure that the organisation will be successful moving forward.

- **B. Kożusznik: Yes, it is crucial, and it is not easy. And this is about competencies which should be acquired along with the methodological, statistical, and many other competencies. We have a chance to ask more questions, if you want to ask Rich.**
- **R. Griffith:** I'd be happy to. I don't have anywhere to be, so if you have other questions, I'm happy to answer anything you'd like.
- **O. Flak: So maybe something about the competency management at the university. Does your university reward any special competencies of individuals? If they are good at something, is there some sort of prize, awards, some additional incentives?**
- **R. Griffith:** Yes. Our university has a couple of reward and recognition programmes. In terms of recognition, annually, the university recognises the best teacher, the best researcher, I think there are even some awards for administrators, so there they're recognised by the university. And then there are some reward systems in place for conducting funded research, so if I get a funded research contract, I forgot what the percentage is; there's a percentage of it, it's relatively small, but it's still a significant amount of money, a percentage of it that goes to you as a research bonus that you can get. So it does put some extra money in your pocket. I'm trying to think we do some other local recognitions in our college so it is happening across multiple levels of the university.
- **B. Kożusznik: Dear Prof. Richard Griffiths, thank you very much for your interesting and inspiring answers, as well as the tips you gave us regarding competency management in the modern university setting. We hope to continue our cooperation in the future, thank you very much.**
- **R. Griffith:** Thank you both very much. Take care.



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