Episode 14: Chrysanthemum Mattison Hayes

# KL: Katie Linder CMH: Chrysanthemum Mattison Hayes KL: You’re listening to *Research in Action*: episode fourteen.

# [intro music]

# Segment 1:

# KL: Welcome to *Research in Action*, a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, director of research at Oregon State University Ecampus.

On today’s episode, I’m joined by Chrysanthemum Mattison Hayes, an experienced policy and data analyst and aspiring “[researcher-storyteller](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en)” working in higher education. Her experience with student success research and assessment includes work within and across the divisions of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Undergraduate Studies at Oregon State University. In her current role, she works with university leadership on division-wide projects, undergraduate success initiatives, and metrics that align with strategic plans and the institutional vision for equalizing student success. Welcome to the podcast, Chrysanthemum.

**CMH**: Thank you so much, Katie.

# KL: Chrysanthemum, you and I worked together here at Oregon State University; you were actually on my hiring committee, so I met you very early on when I came to Oregon State.

**CMH**: We made a good choice. (Laughter)

# KL: Well thank you. (Laughter) It’s been super fun working with you. And one of the things that I’ve really enjoyed learning more about is your role and what you do here at Oregon State. Can you talk with us a little bit more about what, “What does a data analyst do?” I know that’s a very broad question; I’m sure there are lots of nuances, but give us an overview.

**CMH**: Sure. When I think of an analyst in higher ed., there’s a few different roles that that person might fill. They might be a very essential “data number cruncher,” so to speak. That there’s certain information that we need to have on a regular basis, and they are the keepers of that information. They maybe maintain databases or systems, or they really know the ins-and-outs of different data systems on campus, and they’re really great if you have a specific question or you need a certain table or a certain report; they’re your people.

Then there’s the folks that do a little bit more direct work with people who aren’t quite sure about what data they need, but they do need it. That’s a lot of what I do. I work with directors or university leadership that say, “We need to know if our students are being successful.” And then we talk about, “What does that mean to them?” And then, “What are the numbers? What’s the data we would need to collect to do that? And what are the methods that would help us get at that?” So it’s more of an action research, but the analyst becomes important there, too.

And then there are the folks who, they do amazing work in data science and the analysis of big datasets, or they’re on the cutting edge of finding out, “How do we use information about students, or about what they’re doing, or how they’re interacting with materials or the campus; to study their trends and how we can create systems and structures and policies to most benefit.” Those folks, I have a lot of respect for them. I’m not really a number cruncher like that, but they do some really great work, too.

# KL: We’re in a larger organization here at Oregon State. I’ve noticed that we have data analysts who are more centrally located, and then we also have data analysts that are a little more decentralized within particular units. We have one here at Ecampus. I’m wondering if that, particularly because of what seems to be an upward trend in data analysts positions as we get more and more data in higher education that needs wrangling by various folks; are you seeing people getting located in particular ways? Is it across the board? What are some of the trends you’re seeing?

**CMH**: I think that that’s a really good question. Every once in a while, I get asked, “Do you work in IR?” Because I think that’s the traditional model; that if you do data analysis, if you know about institutional data and metrics that that’s where you’re located. Institutional research is one of the central locations where analysts are always found. All campuses, I think I can say that with confidence, have an institutional research office.

I’m actually located within a specific division and serve that division’s efforts and questions. I do think that’s becoming more popular. And a lot of the projects or grants that I’ve been seeing include funding for a specific analyst tied to that project. Where I think in the past what we’ve been seeing is there’s an expectation that there’s sort of a data summary or a report that comes out of those experiences, but I’ve been seeing more and more that no, that’s somebody that’s full-time associated with it. I think as data becomes more sought after and there’s also different levels and a higher demand for data, especially a wide-ranging dataset, or something like that, that we’re going to see more and more people filling those roles.

# KL: I’m wondering, as this field continues to grow, what are some of the ways that people are trained, formally maybe, to enter into this field? And are there particular skillsets that you see as being helpful that maybe aren’t included in that formal training but are very much a part of the work that you do as a data analyst?

**CMH**: I think it really depends, as I mentioned earlier, on those different groups – what type of analyst that you’re filling. I think for the folks that are doing very traditional analyst – reporting out information, there’s policy studies (that’s where I’m based), and data systems. If you’re doing a lot of number-crunching experience, and training in number-crunching and large data systems, and data management, and methodology is important.

The training I had was in policy studies, so we had social research, economics, sociology, and political science – what are the ways that populations are studied and affects… I know some folks in public health that are studying trends in large groups that would be really great for this work. Then, if you’re getting into more of the big data, people who are good at psychometrics, people who are in the fields of psychology or anything where you’re crunching a lot of numbers and trying to get at, what is the underlying message and information that we can glean from the interaction in the data.

# KL: It also seems to me, from working with the range of data analysts on campus here at Oregon State, that there is also this level of emotional intelligence and collaborative spirit of working with usually a range of different kinds of people that are asking for all kinds of data questions. They’re trying to get at different things; they may not quite know what they need, and it seems to be oftentimes a negotiation. Oftentimes I do this over email; I’ll ask a question and then a data analyst will reply and say, “What exactly… Can you give me more details about what exactly you’re looking for?” But it seems like that kind of interaction and negotiation is a big part of the work that you do.

**CMH**: Yes, I would say that’s a very good observation that, I think on the surface we ask questions like, “Are our students successful?” That is a very complicated question, because even just the word “students” – you ask an analyst, they probably in their heads see this huge spreadsheet with about 50 different variables that can be filtered on or off in several different ways so that you can define what that student is, and I think that there’s a translation, and like you were saying, a literacy about data, but also about the people who work directly with students who are asking directly about students where it’s like, “What filters do we need to place?” It’s sort of a parentheses around this question so that I know when I say “first-year students,” I mean first-year students who start in the fall, who are registered for full-time, and who have not taken summer classes anywhere else.

Those, for a data analyst, I think are very important so that when we describe the results, we can be very specific. I think sometimes there’s a tendency to over-generalize with data. I find myself being very protective of that. I don’t what there to be an overstatement or an understatement of what’s shown. There’s so many things that can factor into the results that we see that having that nuanced understanding of, “Who is it that we’re actually looking at in this population?” becomes really important, I think especially when a decision-maker is going to be seeing it there has to be at least a transparency in terms of, “Who is in this, who isn’t in this, what can you say about it, and what can’t you say about it?”

# KL: I think this is one of the areas where I’ve learned, maybe even the most, from data analysts is that level of granularity and that you have to be very careful about how you’re defining the parameters of your question. But I do find it also makes it easier on the other side, like you said, when you’re reporting the data, because you have very specific things you can say. It also gives you a very clear understanding of the limitations of what you have found in the data. One of the things that, when I worked with data analysts, I see that a lot of the reports are coming out and they’re very quantitative, perhaps not surprisingly. But for people who are not used to that, it could be a little bit intimidating to get this huge Excel file with different kinds of filters in it, like you’d mentioned, and trying to think –

**CMH**: Isn’t that what you wanted? (Laughter)

# KL: I think that that’s the challenge is you get, again there’s this kind of literacy, and a translation issue really, about helping to make sure that the people who are requesting the data understand what they’re getting back. I will be the first to admit that oftentimes I’ll get a data file from an analyst and I will then request a meeting with that analyst to make sure that I’m really representing the data in a way that it needs to be represented. I’m also wondering, are there areas in that way, when it comes to “Excel literacy,” or something along those lines that you think people need to brush up on those skills when they’re working with data analysts?

**CMH**: I may be the wrong person to ask because I feel like it is on the data analyst a lot of the times, at least that’s my… I also come from a humanities background, and this communication and, “We need to make sure that we’re clear, and we’re concise, and that we’re relevant in answering the question.” But answering the question so that the person that asked it can interpret the response very clearly. So I’ve actually spent a lot of time thinking about how to present data effectively; not just in the “wham-bam” infographic, sexy kind of way, but, “This was the question asked, and when 90% of the population looks at this graph or this figure, they’re able to say, ‘Oh, this is the answer.’”

That takes a lot of work. I actually think that there’s not enough resources about that, but I’ve been reading a lot of them. There’s the [Tufte](https://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/) work, and [Stephanie Evergreen](http://stephanieevergreen.com/) does a lot of that. I’ve been recently looking at some books by [Stephen Few](https://www.perceptualedge.com/about.php) and he talks about metrics that you can actually look at very quickly and understand the whole story. I think that’s where the storyteller piece comes in.

I actually think that’s just as important as being able to do the numbers because the reason why we have analysts is so that we can answer these questions. It adds, I think, an unfortunate complication when there’s then this literacy gap in between… Part of the function of the analyst is to explain. I guess that’s what I’m getting at in a very roundabout way. I think it’s on them. There may be people that disagree with me, but I don’t think that our job working in higher ed. is this elitist, “Only people that are trained in this field are supposed to be able to understand what I’ve given them.” It’s completely the opposite. My role is to make sure everybody that sees this understands it and can make informed decisions based on it.

# KL: I love this great foundation of thinking about this as explaining the data and making it applicable for people. After a brief break, we’re going to come back and talk a little bit about what led Chrysanthemum to the position she’s currently in and some of the student success initiatives that she’s become involved in.

# Segment 2:

# KL: Chrysanthemum, I know you work specifically with student success initiatives here at Oregon State. I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about what led you to the position that you’re currently in.

**CMH**: I’m going to go back a little ways before I even went to grad school, because I was working, and I had this great opportunity to run a program that had junior high and high school kids connected with experiential learning and service learning in the community. I loved that work. It had a lot to do with my goals and my values and it was exciting and I could tell from the work I was doing that students were getting what I was hoping they were getting out if it.

About three-quarters of the way through my time there, I said, “I should do a survey and find out what students are getting from this.” Because I can see it, there’s these transformations. So I did a pre- and post-survey, because I read somewhere that that was what you do. And I gave it to students who participated in a range of one to ten service-learning projects over the course of spring break, and I went and I looked at the surveys they had filled out at the end and I was like, “I don’t know what to do with this.”

(Laughter) I remember that, I remember looking at it and just feeling kind of dumb. I was like, “I know I did what I was supposed to do. I asked good questions.” But I hadn’t done things like being able to match them. They were all anonymous, and I didn’t know what a t-test was, I didn’t know what statistical significance was, I didn’t know how to extract the story that I knew was there. Because these students, these kids had done awesome work, they had great reflection, but all I could do was say, “Timmy said he had a great time, or he learned these things.” And I was like, “Gosh, this is a gap. This is a deficit in my skillset.”

So I figured out what that type of work was, and then I had the opportunity, I got a really great scholarship opportunity to go and take a Master’s of Public Policy program, and I did that and I got to learn a lot more of the methodology. But my intention had really always been, at the beginning at least, my intention was to return to program work and to maybe be a director of like a civic engagement center or something like that, where I could show more completely the type of impact it was having.

But along the way, what happened is I had an internship where I worked with a lot of the different programs and a lot of the coordinators and directors of these type of programs of which I saw myself eventually being a peer, and it was so much more helpful for me to spend the time with them, making sure that they got the information they needed. It was almost like, “Oh, well I could go and do my own thing, and that’s fine, or I could help 15 of my peers.” Continue the work, expand the work, and also make sure that it was well represented and it was demonstrated in a way administrators got it, the public got it; that what they were doing was valuable. I feel that’s part of my calling to this work is that I’m helping to tell the story that they can absolutely tell themselves, but me spending this time is a better use of my time.

# KL: I think that making, or somehow translating data to be meaningful (as we were talking about earlier), is one of those valuable things that a data analyst can bring to the table. Because you’re right, there is a story behind it, and there are actually several stories behind it that could be told, which is why I think that kind of granular piece that we talked about can be really significant.

# When it comes to student success in particular, which seems to be kind of a buzz phrase now in higher ed. in the past several years in particular, and we see now new VPs of student success and those kinds of things. What are some of the data points that you’re really looking for? Because student success seems like it could be a very general definition. How is that defined in your field?

**CMH**: I would say 5, 10, 15 years ago where we were at is, “Are the students coming back their second year? And are they graduating?” And those are the two big metrics which we still have. Metrics are the measures against which we’re looking for success. So a metric would be, “Did they achieve a certain goal?” In this case, were they retained, or did they graduate? I think recently what we’re seeing are people pushing back and saying, “That’s not enough, and that’s not telling us what we can do to help. That’s not giving us information. It’s not part of this good feedback loop.” So now there’s a lot of conversation around leading and lagging metrics, and graduation and retention are lagging metrics. We find that out after the fact.

But then there’s leading metrics, things like, “Are students registering for classes in a timely way?” Because we know that students that are missing deadlines and not getting into the classes that they need to be in, well they’re going to go off track in terms of they’re going to enroll in courses that they don’t need to take, or they’re going to spend more money, or they’re going to withdraw from those courses and be two weeks behind in these other ones.

So a leading metric might be, “What percentage of students were enrolled in the appropriate classes by a week before the term started?” Because that’s something that we can do something about. An advisor can look at that, then extract a list of students that maybe haven’t met that benchmark and do outreach to them so that we can help.

Some other leading metrics might be things like participation in experiential learning by the second or third year. So, “Have you done an internship?” Or, “have you planned to study abroad?” Or those different things. Engagement, both inside of classroom and outside of classroom are becoming bigger questions. You’ve got the learning management systems that instructors use, and there’s a lot of different places now where they can see, “Who’s reading the assignments? Who’s turning things in on time?” So you can step back and look at trends, which you can then act on.

I think that’s kind of the new and exciting direction, and maybe why there’s this increase in demand for analysts, because we have so much data that we never had before, and we know there’s stuff in there, there’s information in there, but there’s this gap between knowing the right questions to ask, knowing what data will help answer that question, and then getting it to the hands of people who will use that to make decisions, whether it’s an instructor, or an advisor, or the president.

# KL: So it seems like with some of the lagging metrics, part of the challenge was you got a signal that a problem existed, but it was too late. Then with the leading metrics, it’s really about, like you were saying, asking the right question, getting the right data, understanding the problem more coherently, but in particular so that you can create some kind of intervention to make change and actually shift the pathway of a student into a more successful realm.

**CMH**: Right. Or a policy adjustment or something like that, which is one of the things I like about this work. When you study policy you think, at least I was coming into it and was like, “This is great. The things that the state does, or that the government does, it’s reflective of what we know from the data.” And that’s not necessarily the case. But in an institution like ours or a lot of others that I know of, data is really important. If you can show that something’s making a difference, that results in a change, almost an immediate change. That can really benefit students.

# KL: It seems like the more data that we have now, it can really add to our student success initiatives. But I’m also wondering if that increase in data has led to any areas of additional caution. I think about things we read in [the *Chronicle*](http://chronicle.com/) or just discussions I hear on Listservs and in the broader public about things like privacy of student data. And there’s so many different kinds of data that we can collect now from card swipes of where students physically are and the kinds of services they’re using on campus, to, as you mentioned, learning management system data about, “Are students watching a particular video? When exactly are they engaging in the homework?” There’s so much out there now. Are there cautions that you would offer for how this data should be used?

**CMH**: I think it’s a cliché, but with great power comes great responsibility. If we are using data to better our understanding of our students and the challenges they face and the barriers they’re running up against, and then identifying places where we, as the leaders and the keepers of how the institution runs and operationalizes these things for students, I think if and when we’re using data to inform that process, that’s very important and that we need to do that.

I do think that there are ethical questions and important considerations when it comes to just accessing data or looking at data because we can, or, “That doesn’t belong to the student because the card swipe is on our campus and we can track where that student is.” Why? I think that why question is what’s central, and I think I want to make sure, in my work, I have a good, “Why?” There has to be a good reason behind this. It’s not just for curiosity’s sake, and it’s not just exploratory, and I’m not just, “Oh, did you know that the students have this random pattern?”

If I’m asking a question about, “Where would be the best places on campus to make sure that there are those blue lights to call for emergency if something happens?” Well then measuring patterns makes a lot of sense. But the analysis we do should be tied to student-relevant questions. I think there’s folks that have different takes on this; this is my own personal, guiding principle. I do think that we need to be transparent with students. I think students should know, and I think we should be open also about when we make a change that we’ve used data to do that… To inform and say, “It’s not a creepy Big Brother thing. When we looked at this, you said this was a problem. We verified this was a problem, and here’s how we made the decision to improve it.”

# KL: I think that intentionality that you’ve mentioned is so key about, “How do you communicate with students about this?” To close us out today, Chrysanthemum, are there any kind of additional resources that you’re using for your own professional development, or that you want future data analysts or people who are collaborating with data analysts to be thinking about?

**CMH**: Maybe this is more of a recommendation for folks who have to display data, talk about data, present data, whether you’re an analyst or in a role in which you’re expected to know data about your program, but I’ve been looking a lot at things like, “[Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations](http://www.duarte.com/book/slideology/).” Or, “[Information Dashboard Design: The Effective Visual Communication of Data](http://www.perceptualedge.com/library.php#IDD).” And I know I mentioned her already, but [Stephanie Evergreen’s new book](http://stephanieevergreen.com/book/) is definitely on my wish list. It’s about presenting data effectively. There are some great – This is not a… I don’t know if we can link this, but if you just Google, “[Great visual presentations](http://www.google.com/search?q=Great+visual+presentations),” or “[Representations of data](https://www.google.com/search?q=Representations+of+data),” there are some really good, inspiring pieces out there.

What I have found is that there are also some very helpful [Excel tutorials on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Excel+tutorials), especially for [Excel 2013](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Excel+2013) and [Excel 2016](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Excel+2016). There’s a ton of good ways to display data, and don’t let not being familiar with charts and graphs intimidate you. Take 5-10 minutes, watch some of these videos, and take that boring chart and turn it into something that you can interact with. It goes a long way when you can have a graphic representation that helps communicate part of that story.

# KL: Those are great resources. We will definitely link to them in the show notes. I would also add, Twitter does have a hashtag [#dataviz](https://twitter.com/hashtag/dataviz) that is all about data visualization and is something that I always follow with interest. I would like to thank you so much, Chrysanthemum, for joining me on the show. It’s been a real pleasure to chat with you.

**CMH**: Thanks Katie.

…And thanks to the listeners joining us for this week’s episode of *Research in Action.* I’m Katie Linder and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

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# Bonus Clip:

**KL:** Chrysanthemum, one of the things that you’ve shared with me is that you are kind of interested in this idea of being in a post-specialist era, which intrigued me. What does that mean, exactly, to you – a post-specialist era?

**CMH**: I remember I wrote a note on my phone when this phrase popped into my head. I didn’t google it to see if anybody else had thought of it either, but to me the idea of being in the post-specialist era is: I found myself wearing a lot of different hats in all the work I did. I’m grateful for opportunities that I had to be a marketing intern, and to be a copy editor, and to run children’s programs, and to be an assistant teacher, and all of these different things. And in each and every case, I developed this micro set of skills that applies to that job, but I’ve also been able to very easily transfer over and use in other work that I do.

I’ve found that I enjoy, for example, giving workshops. I really like being in the classroom, but I can’t always be in the classroom, but I can give awesome workshops. So I’ve found ways, I think, to plug in all of these different things that I find interesting that I’ve been able to develop a little skill in. Then when I stepped back it was like, “That’s all really important. That’s how I am successful. That’s why I’m doing a ‘good job’ in my job is because I have all these different hats.” I was like, “I don’t really switch the hats; I’m kind of doing all of them all the time.” That’s, I guess, what I think a post-specialist is.

I don’t know that I would say I’m any one of those things, but if I speak with a teacher, or I speak with a communications person, or I speak with a director of research, I can have a conversation. I think that’s kind of neat, and I think that’s also something I’ve been seeing a lot more of in my peers is that we can have these cross-disciplinary conversations, and we want to. We listen to podcasts about a whole bunch of different things and find ways to incorporate that into our work.

**KL:** I think this is actually really interesting because there are so many people that I know, and I would definitely count myself as part of this group, that got degrees (and sometimes advanced degrees) in areas that they’re not actively using in their careers. Or not actively using in a way that other people would recognize – maybe that’s a better way to say it. An example I can offer is that my master’s and my PhD are both in women’s and gender studies, and people are often very surprised to hear that because I do work with education research. Gender is certainly involved, and other aspects of diversity I was trained in are very much tied into my work, but I’ve had to develop a lot of different kinds of skillsets apart from the graduate work that I did, and particularly the discipline I was in, and that certainly informed how I moved forward. But I’ve since developed, as you’ve mentioned, a lot of these ‘mini skillsets’ with the different jobs that I’ve had.

I’m wondering, it seems to me that when you are doing that more informal professional development work and working on different kinds of skillsets, that mentoring might be a big piece of that – seeking out other people that have skills and wanting to learn from them. Is that something that you found in your post-specialist era work?

**CMH**: Absolutely. I got this particular perspective or piece of advice from somebody who I consider a mentor, and I sat down and was explaining, “This is where I feel I’m at, and here are some of the places I could see myself going,” and her advice to me was, “As part of your journey, you’re going to encounter a lot of people who can help you or that will be your mentors. Don’t limit yourself to one or two or three. A mentor who is your biggest fan is a great mentor to have, but also a mentor who’s going to challenge almost everything you say is a great mentor. And someone who is maybe at a peer level, but does their work with a passion or verocity that you want to have in your own work – how do they do that? Somebody who is in an aspirational career or role or level that you see yourself.”

So thinking of, “How can I put myself out there or introduce myself as somebody seeking that?” I think is really important. And most people, I think, are very flattered when you go to them and say, “You just have this way about you when you give a presentation, or when you do this, or when you lead a meeting, or deal with a very challenging issue. Can you walk me through that process?” And it doesn’t have to necessarily be a very formal mentor – ‘we meet every quarter for an hour and I have a little goal list.’ I would recommend keeping a professional development journal if you’re going to go a post-specialist route, because there’s not a clearly defined path forward, but it can be more informal, it can be coffee, ore a walk, or a phone call, or a Skype call, or something like that.

**KL:** I think that this is an area where this idea that you’ve proposed of a network of mentors and having some of them be at the peer level and some of them be more advanced than where you are now, but also having that kind of network mentality opens you up to becoming a mentor yourself when someone approaches you and wants to know additional information.

But I think about the different mentors I’ve had in my own life, and many of them have been ones that I sought out for a very particular reason. One in particular I can think of is when I started doing speaking engagements and I had to write contracts for them, and I had no idea what I was doing. I didn’t know what my rate should be, I didn’t know what kinds of things should be written into the contract, and the timelines, and how to keep track of it for tax purposes, and all of these kinds of detailed things that, when you’re a novice, you don’t know them. I found someone that I knew who was doing this work and reached out to her and said, “Can we just have a quick phone call and you can give me some tips on this?” and she was incredibly generous and even sent me some example contracts and gave me a sense of how she made these decisions. Those kinds of things can be very directed, but that’s been a relationships now that I’ve had for several years with this person. We’ve kept up and chatted, and I think that’s something that can be incredibly valuable – to not be afraid to just say, “I really don’t understand how to do this. Who’s a person that I can seek out to help me?”

**CMH**: Yeah, and I think sometimes you get surprised by the answer, too, or how easily a good mentor can simplify it for you, or make it all the sudden not scary anymore. I had one mentor – I had to go out and do informational interviews with a lot of different, pretty high-up people in my early internships, and she said, “A lot of this work is like therapy: you have to be a good listener. Don’t worry about… People want to tell their story, so you’ve got to give them the space to tell your story.” Advice like that is something that carries through any work that you do with another person. So yeah, mentors are good.

**KL:** One of my earliest mentors when I was in grad school and first started doing the work of faculty development really pointed me in the direction of what I consider to be one of my first professional development projects that would fit into your post-specialist era idea, which is that you take on an area that you don’t feel as confident in, and you really try to bring yourself into situations where you can practice that, or find mentors that can help you. In this particular situation, it was when I was consulting with faculty, one of the main things you really need to be aware of is emotional intelligence and that you’re not there just to fix a problem, you’re there to provide counsel and to really be empathetic. That was something that someone trained me in very early on and brought to my attention, and I think that part of the challenge for me with that was, as a young grad student, you’re really trained to work in isolation. Emotional intelligence isn’t necessarily something that is part of your graduate school training.

Anyway, it was something that my mentor pointed me toward, and I’m wondering if you think there is also a relationship between this post-specialist era, the mentoring, but then also finding these projects for yourself that, again, may not be tied to formal training or a degree that you seek, but maybe you found an area where you really want to improve and you go about setting something up for yourself to seek out additional skills?

**CMH**: I actually think it’s pretty essential if you’re going to be continuing to develop because, like I said, there’s not a development plan for somebody who’s taking a lot of different skills and constantly self-evaluating where they’re at, and looking at the “meta-level,” “Where can I grow to be better at this thing that I want to be proficient at?” So I think that’s actually really important. I was listening to the [Good Life podcast](http://www.goodlifeproject.com/radio/) and I think there was an episode about 13 minutes long, and it was exactly on that,” How do you – especially when you’re intrinsically motivated and you’re on your own path – how do you keep up the work you need to be doing, but are also constantly in this frame of mind that, ‘I’m working on something, I keep focusing back on that, and I’m working to slowly but surely chip away at it and chunk my professional development in these very specific areas, and then keep working on it?” I think you had mentioned, you wait until somebody compliments you that you’ve done it, then you’re just like, “Done!”

**KL:** This is something that Chrysanthemum and I have talked about in the past. One of the things I said was, “I know that that project is over when someone says something about it in a positive way and says, “Oh, you seem to have very good emotional intelligence.” And then I’m like, “Oh, great; Someone else acknowledged it! I can check that off as being… I’ve hit…” That’s the metric, I guess, that I use for that.

And there have been other areas, too. Another key one for me has been collaboration, again, because we’re often trained to work in isolation, so I’ve actively worked on that as well.

**CMH**: For me, it’s meeting facilitation. I get very nervous when I am leading a group to a certain end. I don’t know what it is. One-on-one… I get into it, and as soon as – even if they’re the closest peers and I’ve worked with every single one of them and I sit down in that meeting and they look at me and I’m like, “How do I do this?” So I got a bunch of books and I’m a big [TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks) fan, and I’m like, “Okay, leadership and coordination and good listening…” What are all of those things that go into it? And dissecting those pieces, and then working on one piece, and then working on another piece, and just being thoughtful, I guess. Not just about doing what you need to do, but how you do it. That layer of, “If I’m going to be a professional at this (to my own satisfaction, meet my own metric), what is that going to look like? What is the outcome? What is the benchmark?”

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