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JRNL– Speech Story

CU Speaker Wants to Change What it Means to be a Great Leader

While most people believe being a great leader revolves around their personality, Author and Business Mogul Jim Collins, would argue that has nothing to do with it. In a speech to students on campus at the University of Colorado Boulder Wednesday, Feb. 27, Collins described every aspect of a great leader besides their ability to lead.

“There are three things you have to find in life before you have your ever-important hedgehog,” Collins told the audience. “If you can first find something that you’re passionate about and love to do, then something you are encoded for, you’re made for, constructed for, put here for, and finally you can get paid for it, then you have your hedgehog.”

Having a hedgehog means having the combination of passion, purpose, and an ability to get paid all wrapped up into one life goal. Collins explains that you do not need a bodacious and outgoing personality to be a great leader. Rather, the idea should be to find your hedgehog and where your passion lies, then people will start to follow you. Passion remains the number one importance in life, if you do not have passion, then you will forever work and never live.

“When you get clear on your hedgehog, then you start pushing this flywheel, and after a lot of effort you get one giant, slow, creaky turn, but you don’t stop, and you eventually get two turns, but you don’t stop, and then four, and then eight, and then sixteen, and then hundreds, and thousands,” said Collins.

Once you have your hedgehog it needs to be paired with organization, persistency, and continuous action. A flywheel means building enough momentum so that a whole bunch of small pieces reinforce each other over-and-over again to create a giant machine. Small companies believe that if they do exactly what the big companies do over-and-over again, then they will become big someday too. Yet, Collins explains that they should instead be focused on doing something different over-and-over again, in order to achieve something none of the big companies ever have.

Being a successful leader involves finding your hedgehog and turning your flywheel, but according to Collins, only the rare individuals find them before they graduate college.

“Your twenties, for most of you, are going to be The Great Wander Fest, and that’s just the way it works,” said Collins. “But in finding your hedgehog and your flywheel somewhere along the way, you can begin to wander productively.”

Brandon Rodriguez, a 21-year-old senior and Biochemistry major at the university was thrilled with Collins’ big picture idea, saying, “It makes a lot of sense to me, instead of being the leader and making others adhere to your vision, it is a really good idea to make the vision as a whole,” also adding that “collaboration may be the new way of things.”