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A Tricky Task

Drew Barringer '09

Illinois Wesleyan University, iwumag@iwu.edu

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A Tricky Task

At the FedEx Institute, Shaye Mandle '93 bridges the gap between business and education.

Shaye Mandle '93 has spent most of his career advancing the cause of integrating education, technology and business to stimulate economic development. Now he'll have a chance to make his biggest impact yet as the new executive director of the FedEx Institute of Technology at the University of Memphis.

Opened in 2003, the FedEx Institute is a 95,000-square-foot facility that is home to 150 faculty members, researchers and staff who collaborate in areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, geospatial analysis, multimedia arts and nanotechnology. As a place where science, business and industry intersect for advanced research, the institute has "become sort of a front door for the University of Memphis," says Mandle, who started his new job in July after moving to the Memphis area with his wife, Sunny Johnson Mandle '93, and their two children.

The University of Memphis' growing prominence in several fields of research attracted Mandle to the job. He was also impressed by the partnerships the FedEx Institute has developed with top private companies such as AutoZone, Cisco Systems, Steelcase, BellSouth, Comcast Cable and Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare.

"The University of Memphis is positioned for some great things," Mandle says. "There are tremendous research capabilities and pretty extraordinary opportunities to capitalize on what they're doing. Technology commercialization is a fairly new endeavor for the university and the region.

"One of my goals is to sit down with members of the community and get a handle on the issues here and to do an analysis of where the holes are that the university can help with," he continues. "Initially, I want to build relationships; then, produce tangible success stories."

Mandle realizes that balancing politics and business with the institute's essential educational mission can be a tricky task — but one for which his past experiences have uniquely prepared him.



At Illinois Wesleyan University, Mandle majored in political science and history. After earning a law degree from Duquesne University, he worked for then-speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Dennis Hastert. He has also practiced law in Illinois and served as a legislative liaison to the Illinois Department of Revenue for Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar.

Mandle went on to serve as president of the Illinois Coalition, a public-private partnership advocating for science and technology-based economic development. During Mandle's tenure, the Illinois Coalition developed a strategic plan for growth that led to the largest public investment in Illinois' science and technology infrastructure in its history (Illinois VentureTech, \$2 billion). Meanwhile, seed-stage venture capital investments through the Technology Development Bridge Fund reached all-time highs. These programs produced significant investments in new university-based institutes and entrepreneurial centers and funded more than 20 new start-up businesses.

Mandle also served as chief executive of the East West Corporate Corridor Association, the Chicago western suburbs' largest business advocacy organization operation. Most recently, he worked for one of the nation's largest commercial defense and aerospace firms, Science Applications International Corp., leading the company's Reconnaissance and Surveillance Operation in its strategic business activities.

Part of the appeal of his new job at the FedEx Institute, he says, is the excitement of "being on a college campus again and helping the kids at school with their careers."

Mandle, who was awarded the Robert M. Montgomery Outstanding Young Alumnus Award from Illinois Wesleyan in 2002, says he hopes his high-profile job "will build another bridge for IWU out in parts of the country where there may not be strong formal connections."

"For me, [Illinois Wesleyan] is the basis for jumping off into everything I've done. My degrees prepared me for law school and gave me the chance to learn to be a leader and to deal with different types of people," he says.

"Life is about how you treat other people, and at a small school like IWU, getting to know lots of people helped me build the skill set at a young age to sit down with CEOs and senior executives. It gave me a support platform to excel."

Editor's Note: This profile is adapted from a story by Drew Barringer '09 that appears on the IWU alumni Web site, www.titanpride.org, where many more alumni profiles are available for viewing.