

Appreciating John Anderson: Some Lessons Learned

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Since the early 1970s the author has benefited from interacting with John Anderson in a variety of contexts, as our guest of honor has taken on increasingly ambitious roles in the profession – e.g., assistant professor and quick study at Cornell; respected colleague in membrane science and ultimately university administrator at Carnegie Mellon; corporate consultant and hired gun to Sepracor spin-offs; valued friend and mentor; and now VP, Provost, and all-around academic big shot at Case Western Reserve.

At a recent technical meeting, the author presented remarks directed to the topic “Lessons Learned at Sepracor: A Case Study in Commercializing Membrane Reactors.” This experience will be reviewed briefly, inasmuch it provides an occasion to highlight the indirect but important role that a very young John Anderson played in bringing about this company. Beyond that, the “lessons learned” format of this talk suggests a framework for reflecting on just a few of the things that John Anderson has taught his many students and colleagues over the years. Indeed, the author’s own career might be viewed as a “case study” of sorts that merely hints at the scope and character of John Anderson’s personal and professional impact on many of us.

John Anderson has left marks on our profession, its institutions, and on innumerable individuals within it that are as indelible and unmistakable as the rhomboidal track-etched pores in the mica membranes that were the subject of his Ph.D. thesis work.