

RITA R. HANES
TEACHING STATEMENT

Organizations rarely struggle because people lack intelligence or commitment. More often, they struggle because capable people are unable to translate purpose into coordinated action. Throughout more than twenty-five years in Fortune 100 companies, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and board leadership, I have become increasingly interested in that challenge: how leaders create alignment, exercise judgment under uncertainty, and help organizations execute on their mission. It is this perspective that I seek to bring to the classroom.

My professional experience has been an extended study of organizations from the inside. I have served as a Chief of Staff, led enterprise marketing and communications, negotiated global partnerships, guided strategic planning, and worked alongside executives, educators, boards, and community leaders. Across those roles, I have observed that leadership is rarely about having perfect information. It is about asking better questions, making thoughtful decisions, communicating with clarity, and creating the conditions for people to do their best work.

Early in my tenure leading brand and integrated marketing within a national media company, I inherited an entire team with no transition period, no additional resources, and an unchanged organizational responsibility. Rather than beginning with restructuring, I began by creating shared understanding. We acknowledged the challenge honestly, clarified priorities, and rebuilt confidence through communication, accountability, and disciplined execution. Experiences like this are not stories I intend to present as answers. They are cases that invite students to wrestle with ambiguity, evaluate alternatives, and consider what leadership requires when there are no perfect choices.

My interest in teaching is also personal. I grew up in a family of educators. My father was a principal, my mother a speech therapist, and education was understood as a public trust. That foundation has continued through my work with educational organizations, charter school governance, university foundation leadership, and community service. It reinforced my belief that talent is widely distributed while opportunity often is not.

I will approach teaching as I have approached leadership: with intellectual curiosity, careful preparation, respectful dialogue, and a commitment to connecting ideas with action. My goal is not to recreate the workplace, but to help students bridge the distance between academic theory and organizational practice. If students leave my classroom with stronger judgment, greater confidence, and a clearer understanding of how organizations actually work, I will have accomplished what I set out to do.