Isenberg Dean Mark Fuller Presents His 'Leadership Rules of Thumb'
What’s the secret to running a successful organization? Is leadership an innate quality, or a set of skills that can be learned? Recently, Commonwealth Honors College students gathered in the CHC Events Hall to hear “The Leadership Rules of Thumb I More or Less Live By” from Isenberg School of Management Dean Mark Fuller.

At the Pizza & Prof event, Fuller discussed the philosophies that have helped him succeed in his work. He displayed and discussed a list of quotes and adages, which included:

- 10 percent strategy, 90 percent execution
- You’re only as good as the people around you
- Culture trumps strategy
- Don’t sweat the small stuff, but sweat the small stuff

As Fuller went through the list, he repeatedly stressed the importance of listening and building trust and collaboration as a leader. “Be able to listen. It takes confidence,” he said. Although good leaders bring ideas to the table, he believes they are also willing to remain open-minded and consider alternative pathways to success.

The key is staying in touch with the organization’s network and culture. How often does Fuller sit behind his desk? Maybe once a week, he estimates. Good management does not happen through memos or emails. “If you want to affect culture,” Fuller explained, “you need to look people in the eye.”

He also emphasized the importance of execution over strategy. Establishing a strategy takes up just a small percentage of an organization’s time. The important work is executing that strategy every day and seeing it through.

One student asked whether leadership can be learned over time.

“Yes,” Fuller replied. He advised students to pay attention to good leaders. “Do it. Practice,” he said.

Fuller has been the dean of the Isenberg School of Management since 2009. During his tenure, the school established a strategic vision to become a Top 10 public business school, and has also climbed in a number of national school and program rankings. From 2010 to 2016, it was the #1 most improved business school in the nation, according to BusinessWeek’s Undergraduate Program Rankings, climbing from 78 overall to 33. In 2017, The Financial Times Online MBA Ranking named Isenberg the #3 online MBA program in the world.
Is there any one principle or rule of thumb that helped Fuller and Isenberg reach its top-tier status?

“All of them,” said Fuller. When he finished presenting his rules of thumb, he joked: “Now I’ve told you all my secrets.”

*Photos by Jezaniah Martins*
• Be enthusiastic when you need to be.
• Apply compassion; it’s not all about you.
• Be able to listen.