



A Higher Standard: Leadership Strategies from America's First Female Four-Star General by Ann Dunwoody, with Tomago Collins.

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In 2011, one year prior to US Army Gen. Ann Dunwoody's retirement, women comprised 14 percent of the entire active duty force (enlisted) and 16 percent of commissioned officers¹—a significant increase from the percentages in 1974—the year Dunwoody began attending the Army's Women College Junior Program. Her military career commenced at a time of great change for the US Armed Forces, just one year after “the end of conscription and the advent of the All Volunteer Force,” when women were being heavily recruited to meet manpower needs.² In 1973, women accounted for “two percent of enlistees and four percent of commissioned officers” in the armed forces.³ In *A Higher Standard*, Dunwoody briefly describes women's increased involvement in the military in order to share aspects of her past while forwarding one of eleven strategies for successful leadership.

As its title suggests, Dunwoody's book is not a memoir or formal autobiography, though it is autobiographical in nature. It will not satisfy readers desiring a chronological overview of her life.⁴ Instead, *A Higher Standard* shares leadership strategies she cultivated from childhood through her collegiate athletic career to the work she has pursued since retiring from the Army. It is an ambitious first book, perhaps no surprise, given its author's credentials and professional experiences. Dunwoody served as an army officer for more than thirty-seven years; she is the fourth generation of her family to serve in the US Army, the third to achieve flag officer rank (brigadier general or higher). During the last four years of her service, she headed the Army Material Command—the Army's largest global logistics command, consisting of sixty-nine thousand military and civilian personnel and a budget of \$60 million. In retirement, Dunwoody is president of a leadership mentoring and strategic advisory services company and serves on the board of directors of two Fortune 500 companies.

Under the category “Memoir/Business,” Dunwoody offers strategies for readers in positions of leadership or simply looking to “live to a higher standard” (24). Having only read one other book of this sort,⁵ I cannot knowledgeably judge whether Dunwoody's work meets the conventions of the genre. I can, however, note similarities between her book and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*. Most notably, both set out eleven leadership principles. Sandberg, however, gives advice meant for women only, whereas Dunwoody's recommendations cross the categories of sex, gender, profession, and civilian vs. military status. The two authors also differ in criticizing the military as a sexist institu-

1. See Eileen Patten and Kim Parker, “Women in the U.S. Military: Growing Share, Distinctive Profile,” *Pew Social & Demographic Trends* (2011) – www.miwsr.com/rd/1610.htm.

2. “America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics,” *National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics* (23 Nov 2011). – www.miwsr.com/rd/1611.htm.

3. See Patten and Parker (note 1 above) 3.

4. Aside from a timeline on 253–54.

5. Sheryl Sandberg's *NY Times* and *Amazon* #1 bestseller *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (NY: Knopf, 2013). Sandberg wrote the foreword to *A Higher Standard*.

tion (Sandberg) or not (Dunwoody).⁶ In reflecting upon her military career throughout her book, the retired general insists that she “never encounter[ed] any direct form of sexual harassment or assault” (132) and credits “The U.S. Army for shatter[ing] the brass ceiling, not Ann Dunwoody” (243). Her broadly applicable credo is that living one’s life to a higher standard and being a good leader will bring recognition, regardless of one’s gender: “After managing nearly sixty-nine thousand employees, one thing is clear to me: there is a higher standard that provides the foundation upon which every leadership journey is built. It’s the difference between the leaders who excel and the leaders who fail. It’s their thought process, attention to detail, and execution that enables them to inspire and motivate their workforce to create and sustain high-performing, successful organizations” (27).

Dunwoody reveals the thought processes that made her an effective leader and highly decorated officer. But, at the same time, she always fully acknowledges and highlights the hard work of others who contributed to her success. Two of her leadership principles—“form your winning team,” “build your bench”—reflect her background as an athlete and her degree in physical education. Inspired by her athletic mother and military father, Dunwoody grew up a “sports omnivore” (159):

The game has changed. But one thing will never change: athletes can always learn from winning and losing, regardless of the level of competition. Sports instill discipline, teach teamwork, and build character and confidence. The military is no different [B]efore I joined the Army all I ever wanted to do was be a physical education teacher and a coach. During my thirty-eight years in the Army many people thanked me for coaching them, but no one ever referred to me as “Coach.” ... [I]n my military career, instead of coaching and building competitive, high-performing sports teams, I was coaching and building professional, high-performing units in the Army. (164–65)

Comparisons like these, which cross cultural boundaries, make Dunwoody’s advice relevant to a wide variety of readers, whether or not they are interested in leadership careers.

I approached *A Higher Standard* expecting to learn more about the career of an influential servicewoman and the barriers she overcame in the military. What I found instead was a self-help book, albeit of a high order.

6. See Tom Roeder, “Facebook Executive Tells Air Force Academy Cadets That Military is One of Worst for Bias,” *Colorado Springs Gazette* (7 Nov 2015) – www.miwsr.com/rd/1612.htm.