"Unparalleled access," was what Dr. Lonnie Howard promised.

Indeed, it was. Free and unfettered access to Dr. Howard’s entire day. It was revealing, interesting, and thought-provoking.

The day started in Dr. Howard’s office at 8 a.m.

With a baggie containing a couple of small tins of peanut butter.

He held up the baggie to show me. “I have to return this to Linda Schoonmaker,” Dr. Howard remarked while pulling his jacket aside to reveal an electronic pedometer on his belt. “From the Wellness Committee,” he explains. “I’m going to zero this out, and we’ll see how many steps I take in a day.” With that, Dr. Howard breezed off, seemingly excited to start the day. Into the Finance office we flew, Dr. Howard giving and receiving “good mornings” with all in his path. Into Linda Schoonmaker’s office we breezed, and he returned the small containers of peanut butter with a flourish. “I didn’t need them. There was a restaurant right next door!” Ms. Schoonmaker greeted me, and explained how Dr. Howard needed his peanut butter while on an overnight visit at an off-campus meeting. Then we pivoted and continued walking down the hall. “Let’s visit with Tawny before we start the day.” Into her office we flew, with more greetings. There, we all sat at her office table while Tawny briefed the president on issues occurring during his brief time away. The first of many photos were taken, while Dr. Howard explained some of his job. “It is like a big juggling act,” he explained, “with all these different items needing attention. And it goes on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Some people think we...the Administration... just have an eight hour day, and then we go home, and then have weekends off. I was here on Sunday, as was Joyce Loveday. I can tell you, this really is a full-time job.”

Returning to his office, he met with his assistants, going over office housekeeping issues and the day’s schedules, meeting minutes, and other items. Dr. Howard grinned and held up 15 pages of minutes, full of editing comments. “This is just one meeting!” he exclaimed. As Cherie Steele and Mary McCure worked with Dr. Howard on items, I noted a curious book on his desk that I made a mental reminder to ask him about. The assistants briefed him on schedules, and he asked that a copy be supplied to me as well. Dr. Howard motioned toward the office wall, pointing at dozens of framed photos, “This isn’t my wall, this is YOUR wall...OUR wall. You see, I think of myself working for all of you, the faculty and staff, and the STUDENTS. I would like all of this to be a celebration of all we do here!” The photos were various shots of classes, instructors, college projects with students, even pets! “I will put up photos of anything somebody thinks is important to them. Then it is to me. And I encourage people to keep sending them in. I rotate the photos as we fill the wall.” With that, we were off. Down the hall we cruised. First meeting: College Cabinet.

Off we went to Building 19, down the hall. It is 8:30. As we entered the room, many occupants noticed that I was in tow of the president. I was dressed in a suit and tie. Many of the folks in the room are very
well known to me, but they are not used to my dressing in this fashion, and a twitter of kind amusement at my dress went up.

Vice presidents, deans, directors and coordinators were at this meeting, and had been previously supplied with a briefing of goings-on from the campus during the previous week. I was seated next to Dr. Howard. The discussion of items on the agenda began. As various items of College import were discussed, it became increasingly apparent that none of this day, or discussions with the President, were scripted or amended solely because of my presence. Good for his word, I appreciated that I was experiencing a true representation of “A Day with the President.”

Dr. Howard approved my taking of notes, saying I had “free and open” access to his day.

Cabinet discussion included the upcoming Career Conference, with 3,500 expected attendees, Board of Trustees meeting agenda, graduation plans, catalog, shared governance, JBLM ties, accreditation issues, Distinguished Alumni and Instructor nomination plans, FERPA training, and other items.

9:30 — Direct Reports. A meeting of the VPs and Tawny giving briefings of various issues and proposals directly to Dr. Howard in his office meeting room. Just the vice presidents, Tawny, Dr. Howard, and myself were present. The tone and demeanor of those present was expectantly professional, but there was an apparent easy give-and-take attitude present between the vice presidents and president. I was taken that the VPs had no fear of Dr. Howard, as a couple of them gently admonished and lectured the president about some happenstances that may have been handled differently, in their opinion. Dr. Howard listened and accepted these remarks with aplomb.

Again, I was struck that I was truly experiencing a no-holds-barred day of shadowing.

Next, a meeting was held in his office with VP Ted Broussard and Ron Wright on the new Student Code of Conduct, and more detailed Graduation Ceremony planning.

Soon, it was time for lunch. Dr. Howard assured me that this was also to be a no-holds-barred approach, and no expense will be spared to provide a memorable midday meal.

As we rode in the president’s car to the Safeway deli, I remarked about how shared governance was quickly becoming a fuller reality, and that access to being part of that was easy. He reiterated his philosophy of working full-time for employees and students, and seeing that as a primary responsibility.

While at the dining area at the deli, Dr. Howard asked a young man to take our picture, and had a brief discussion of how education is key to the young man’s future. The young man made remarks about how he could not afford such a thing, and Dr. Howard informed him of the Presidential Scholarship, among many others, that would be awarded to a deserving individual, and invited the young man to contact him, as Dr. Howard presented his card.

Next, off to visit various buildings on campus. One was Building 37, where we visited with various faculty, including Dr. Venditti, and faculty, staff, and students of the I-BEST programs. Dr. Howard readily shared with students his experiences in growing up poor, but still managing to get an education and
making opportunities for himself. The rapport between our President and these students was gratifying to witness.

Mid-afternoon...another meeting with ASG officers on a variety of issues, including Student Engagement and success, and job opportunities on Campus with ASG. The good work and planning of ASG for the future was apparent and tightly focused, and bodes well for ASG and CPTC, particularly the ASG influence in College 101.

Now late afternoon, and we visited the deans’ offices and paid our respects there as well.

In closing the day, as the weather was so glorious, I gave Dr. Howard a short ride in my sports car convertible. We made a quick loop around campus, where we also stopped and chatted with the security man on patrol.

During my shadowing with the president, I would summarize that I am satisfied that there are many good people working in concert with each other to genuinely provide inspired and dynamic leadership for the college, and I am grateful for the opportunity to observe.

There were a couple of things that did not get accomplished...I never asked Dr. Howard about the “The Annotated Alice” book on his desk, nor did we check the final tally of the pedometer! Items for discussion at a future date, perhaps!