On the job with airport authority's Jeffrey Woodson

Jeffrey Woodson

(Editor's note: The Daily Transcript's social media intern Abdul-Jabbar Mohamoud recently talked with Jeffrey Woodson, vice president of development for the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority. The two talked about the airport's new parking structure project, Woodson's career path, and the perils of partying in college.)

The airport authority is executing its masterplan for the next 20 years, which includes a three-level, 3,000-space parking plaza.

"We are going to make sure that it is very compatible with the architecture and the customer experience that we are currently offering at Terminal 2," Woodson said. "We are also looking to be more sustainable and more efficient -- reducing costs for things like energy and water, and watching our carbon footprint, on the road to becoming a sustainable organization."

Woodson moved to San Diego in November 2002, joining the airport authority as vice president of administration. In a staff shakeup necessitated by retirements, Woodson was asked to join the development division in a role completely different from anything he'd done before. But he made a smooth transition and sounds like he's found his happy place.

"San Diego is blessed for it has the natural things, like the coast and the weather and topography," he said. "These are all the amenities and the quality of life that everyone is looking for. It has the opportunity to grow economically."

From the time he was young, Woodson always wanted to be an executive in the business world. He took a circuitous route to get there, however, learning a few hard lessons along the way. Woodson describes his career path as one that can "serve as a real lesson for people, and [that] lesson is on drive, determination, and discipline. Discipline is the most difficult of the three Ds."

He entered Virginia State University with the intent of majoring in business administration, but got sidetracked by partying, "fraternities and hanging out and having a good time." He switched programs, graduating with a bachelor's degree in sociology before quickly realizing he wasn't cut out for social work.

Woodson later enrolled in the business administration program at Virginia Commonwealth University, earning a Master of Public Administration. He then began his professional career in the budget department for the city of Richmond, Va., working his way up to budget director. Not wanting to be pigeon-holed "as a financial guy," Woodson took over as Richmond's director of parks and recreation. He was eventually drawn back into the financial world, taking roles as budget director for the city of Dayton, Ohio, and assistant city manager for administration of finance for the city of Portsmouth, Va., before venturing west.

"Cities back east tend to struggle a bit," Woodson said. "Ohio is in the old Rust Belt and is a manufacturing state. It's very difficult for them to maintain their economy since they were manufacturing and [are] now a service industry. They do not have the same opportunities for development as San Diego does. Richmond is a growing town that is centrally located. They have had their successes, but again are competing with the Atlanta's and Charlotte's of the East Coast. "San Diego is competing with LA and Phoenix, but San Diego is prime real estate. There are always cranes everywhere, even during the recession. The weather, the high quality of life have made San Diego an economic and real estate development mecca."