

Dr. Carol Sawyer

San Diego State University

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The first time I spoke with Dr. Carol Sawyer, I knew she would have a significant impact on my career. Carol was my graduate advisor and she came into my life when I was at a professional crossroads, of sorts. I had just turned down a lucrative offer with another company in order to stay with my employer. In exchange for my promise to stay, my company promised to pay for my graduate education. When I called the university, for information about a master's degree in organizational behavior, I was told that I may want to contact the program chair directly.

I assumed she was a busy woman and I would probably be leaving a message to be returned at some point in the future. I was wrong. Carol and I spoke for about fifteen minutes that day. By the end of the conversation, I knew I wanted this woman in my life.

I took a class with Carol sometime in my first year of graduate school. She was simply transformative. You could not take a class with her and not come out a different person. In class, Carol was a dynamic instructor challenging us with work I did not think I was capable of doing. She was honest in her assessment. If I "phoned it in" and didn't produce work she knew I was capable of, I heard about it. Carol took an interest in each of her students, was willing to provide late-night guidance, meet on weekends, anything to support us through the thesis process.

As I was nearing the end of my program, Carol one day asked me what I planned to do with my master's degree and inquired whether I needed her to write a recommendation for a PhD program. When I told her I wanted to teach at my local community college, her response, in a rather incredulous tone, was "why *community college*?" When I explained that I thought the community college environment was the most dynamic in higher education and I saw myself as someone who could relate well to community college students, her demeanor changed. It seems that Carol initially thought I might be selling myself short - and she never stood for a woman underestimating her own abilities.

Carol gave me my first teaching opportunity - a note here, I'm sure she'd take issue with the word "gave" and tell me I *earned* my first teaching opportunity - as a student teacher in one of her management courses. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity because I had the ability to learn from the master. Carol taught me the most important things about

teaching: to establish a presence, connect the content to students' lives, be creative, be myself, and always go beyond the classroom in everything I do.

Thanks to Carol, I have had the opportunity to work with amazing students over the last 10 years. At the end of my career I will judge my success by the number of people I have been able to positively impact throughout my years at MiraCosta College. I can only hope that someday I might mean half as much to Maile, Mandy, Susanne, Erica, Clint, Travis, Alina, Sam, and the rest of my students as Carol has meant to me.