

Spotlight ON WOMEN



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Contributing Writer



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What brought you to the Salk Institute?

Well, after serving for 10 years as Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of California, San Diego, I was recruited by Salk in 2007. It was a wonderful move for me, and I have enjoyed my position for the past seven years.

What are your responsibilities with Salk?

Along with President William Brody, I provide academic leadership and manage the fiscal and administrative functions of the institute for 870 researchers and 230 administrative personnel. My background and past experience include 25 years as an academic leader and administrator.

You spent the early years of your career in Canada. What brought you to San Diego?

I always thought we would stay in Canada. My daughter was born there, and my husband and I were both at the University of Toronto. Then I was recruited to UCSD, and my husband was offered a position as a political science professor.

As husband and wife, was it difficult for both of you to get jobs at the same time?

Not in our case, but I believe that organizations who want to recruit the best people must be open and facilitative to two-career families. People have to look at how you can accommodate a partner with their career in the community. San Diego has so many opportunities in so many fields, I believe we have the best of both worlds.

How about mentors?

I guess I was an activist. I was in a multidisciplinary setting, so I met and became friends with people in several fields. I was open to people who were experts in other fields, and they came to know my skills. When you are chair of a department, that is your domain, but when your department is very large, as was mine at the University of Toronto, you have to appreciate other areas and can't be so narrow as to think your department is the center of the universe.

Did you ever consider being a woman as a disadvantage?

It may have been, but I didn't know it. I was the first female dean at the University of Toronto, but there hasn't been another one since.

How do you help other women?

I like to ensure that women are given the opportunity to compete and be taken seriously for the position. People often come to me for advice, and I always want to be accessible to other women who are faced with career decisions. Often they want to know how to prepare themselves for the next position, or if they should take another position.

You came into Salk at a senior level. How were you received?

Very well. Certainly you have to earn people's trust. I think the most useful thing I did was that I met one on one with all faculty at their place of work.

What advice do you give to others?

As you broaden your area of responsibilities, you are called upon to make decisions that are difficult, and you can't be paralyzed by that. If there is legitimately more than one side to the issue, I always do what I think is right and move forward. You have to think about what is best for the organization.

What do you enjoy the most?

I love being part of the incredible future for the Salk, and being able to play a role in the future. Things are always changing. These are jobs with a short attention span.

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