

In Memorium

Judith Elaine Owen Blakemore

January 4, 1948-February 8, 2020

Elaine Blakemore, Professor Emerita of Psychology, was born on January 4, 1948 in Quyon, Quebec. She grew up in the small towns of the Canadian Prairies where her father was posted as a missionary priest. Elaine moved to Chicago at the age of 19 to pursue a career in art and fashion but discovered an interest in psychology when she took a psychology class during her first year of college. She went on to earn her Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Northern Illinois University in 1978. She then taught for eight years at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire before joining the faculty at IPFW in 1986.

Elaine served as chair of the Department of Psychology for 14 years, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for nearly five years (August 2009–February 2014), and Interim Dean of the College for a year and a half (February 2014–June 2015). She served many years on the Faculty Senate, including as speaker of the Purdue faculty. Throughout her career, Elaine was deservedly proud of her ability to balance her teaching, research, and service. But more than just balance these areas, she was able to make significant contributions in all three.

Elaine worked tirelessly to keep her teaching updated with the latest research from the field and to mentor students in her lab. Last fall, I asked former students and colleagues of Elaine to send thoughts about her impact on their careers and lives that I could share with her. One of her students wrote, “It was watching you share your knowledge and wisdom so matter-of-factly, yet wrapped in encouragement and expectations that inspired me to keep trying all the way through to graduation.” And from another former student, “Your passion and motivation inspired me to persevere regardless of the circumstances in front of me. I know now that I can be confident and inspired, compassionate and strong, without hiding who I am. I have you to thank for that.”

Elaine was a renowned expert on the development of gender roles in children. She published over 20 articles and was the lead co-author of a highly-regarded textbook on gender role development, published in 2009. The book will be published as a second edition with Elaine still listed as an author as a way for her co-authors to honor Elaine’s lasting impact on it.

Elaine’s service, mentorship of colleagues, and promotion of faculty governance continue to impact many of us across campus. In addition, she was a champion of women faculty and a fierce supporter of the Women’s Studies program. As one colleague wrote last fall, “Elaine had a principled and moral calling for her to provide the resources and motivation that would enable faculty and students to succeed if they had the capability and wherewithal to take advantage of it. ‘Inspiring’ is a concept that expressed the essence of Elaine’s being. Her incisive understanding and knowledge about university governance and regulation has benefitted the campus immeasurably. Future generations of faculty will have the advantage of her efforts to develop and make explicit the procedures and foundations on which faculty governance should be built.” From another colleague, “Elaine was just always this level-headed, approachable, and deeply sane person whose presence helped make sense of a lot of insanity flying around. She listens

deeply and responds with steady, thoughtful comments and advice. She was and is this institution.” And one more, “You always have worked to generate positive and concrete solutions to problems or challenges. You have been the kind of person to say, ‘We can figure this out’ and then thrown your energy and support into making it happen. I’ve always felt comfortable expressing my opinion with you and seeing where the discussion went. You aren’t threatened by other opinions and you create an atmosphere where all ideas are welcomed.”

Elaine’s scholarship and service were recognized by her selection as the 2014 Distinguished Lecturer of the College of Arts and Sciences and her receipt of the 2014 Lowell W. Beineke Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Liberal Arts and Sciences and the 2016 IPFW Chancellor’s Medal. Elaine also served as secretary-treasurer and president of the Midwestern Psychological Association.

We deeply miss our valued colleague but are grateful to be the beneficiaries of her extraordinary life’s work.

Elaine is survived by her husband Thomas and two sons, Gregory (Jennifer) and Neil.