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I could describe Betty’s professional life as a teacher, adviser, and administrator. Instead I will illustrate two of the ways in which Betty developed a different culture in Creighton’s Psychology Department.

When Betty joined us in the early 1970s, there had never been a female faculty member in the department (there were very few women the college) and research involving undergraduate students was almost non-existent. Betty sought a teaching position in the department while supporting Carl’s practice, raising four children, and teaching part time at John F. Kennedy College in Wahoo, Nebraska. Oh and she was pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

The four men in the department were not accustomed to having a female colleague; much less a woman with an active family life, but Betty quickly won us over with her charm, skill, and remarkable work ethic. During her 25-year career, the department became female and family friendly. Now, 6 of the 12 full time faculty are women, and we empathize and support faculty who must attend to family affairs during the workday.

Betty had a broad vision for teachers of psychology; she didn’t just teach about research methods and findings, but rather she actively engaged students in original scholarly investigation. She was responsible for creating a culture of involving students in research in the context of a department that had no graduate program (and still doesn’t) and at a time when few undergraduate programs encouraged students to do research; incidentally that attitude has changed dramatically in the last 5-10 years. Betty believed that whether students planned to attend graduate or professional school or to enter the world of work immediately following graduation, research (problem solving) skills were invaluable and eminently transferable.

During the last two decades of her career, Betty sponsored 75 students who made 50 presentations in 10 different venues, including the American Psychological Association, the Southwestern Psychological Association, the Great Plains Students’ Psychology Convention, and the National Building Family Strengths Conference. Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher, could have been describing Betty when he wrote - individuals can’t be good teachers unless they have feelings of warm affection toward their students and a genuine desire to impart to them what they believe to be of value.

Betty could not have anticipated her impact following retirement. In 1996, the first issue of a new psychology journal appeared. The Journal of Psychological Inquiry was and is only one of three refereed journals in the United State devoted to publishing the research of undergraduate students. The inaugural editorial described the journal’s emergence and identified one person in particular when it stated, “Betty Dahl’s dedication to encouraging and supporting undergraduate research provided inspiration for the journal.” In marking the journal’s 10th anniversary the editorial announced the commencement of the Elizabeth A. Dahl, Ph.D., Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research.
Still further impact of Betty’s “culture of involving students in research” is revealed in the Psychology Department’s archives. In the decade following Betty’s retirement, 105 Creighton students have authored or co-authored 88 publications and 336 Creighton students have made 234 presentations at psychology conventions. American author and historian, Henry Brooks Adams’s statement applies to Betty; he said that teachers affect eternity – they never know where their influence stops.

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