

An Outstanding Principal For A Principle

Lisabeth Margulus, Ed.D., is a pioneer with a purpose.

In 1987, Margulus was the first woman in 50 years to be appointed principal of a public high school in West Michigan, a position she held at Grand Rapids Central for six years.

A half century is a long time. A lot of careers came and went with a lot of dreams unfulfilled.

"I think women have to work twice as hard to get the same job as their male counterparts," said Margulus, who is currently an associate professor in Advanced Studies for GVSU's School of Education.

Attaining the position as principal was only half the battle for Margulus, who said she experienced difficulties with staff members reluctant to accept change. Her tenure at Central High was about breaking down traditional barriers, earning trust and respect and then rebuilding a cohesive staff that worked together through collaboration.

"Those who do succeed in getting one of these positions find it a difficult and a lonely job being a principal," Margulus said. "As a rule, women tend to be more collegial and collaborative, and men tend to be more directive.

"As a principal, you have to be a team builder, and it's a tough job for a man or a woman. You have parents making demands of you, staff making demands of you and not a lot

of support from the top. Middle management in public schools is very difficult. More and more is being expected. If you get dedicated people willing to spend their life working toward those ends, it can become very stressful.

"When I became principal at Central, I faced a mostly male staff that had been there a long time and many were former coaches. It was difficult that first year gaining respect."

Still, Margulus persevered. She was successful in building a collaborative effort among staff and eventually united even the most cynical of her detractors with her leadership style.

It has helped open the doors to administration for many of her colleagues.

"Everybody waited to see if I lived or died in the position," Margulus laughed. "We were able to accomplish a lot of good things."



Lisabeth Margulus

Set Your Goals, Then Hold Tightly To Them

As a former superintendent of Northview Public Schools and deputy superintendent for Grand Rapids Public Schools, Patricia Oldt, Ph.D., knows her way around administration.

Oldt served as superintendent for Northview from 1993 until January of 2000 when she was appointed GVSU's Special Assistant to the President for Campus Equity and Planning.

Her advice to aspiring administrators?

- Be persistent, no matter how overwhelming the odds may appear to be.

"When I decided I wanted to be superintendent, it became my vision and my dream, and I held tightly to it," Oldt said. "Every time I would go on an interview, I would try to learn what I did well and what I needed to do better.

"It wasn't like I got my first job, but I kept trying, because it was what I wanted. I worked at it and did what I needed to do.

"Women take risks by seeking leadership positions or superintendencies," Oldt added. "But too often they may get to the finalist stage in a couple of situations, not get the job and then become discouraged and not try again.

"Sometimes, we get the idea that people are successful on their first or second try, but it's just not true. When you go on the job search, you want to look at the institution as much as it looks at you to make sure it's a right fit. Keep trying to find that right fit."



Patricia Oldt

Oldt predicts that there will be many opportunities for women in administrative management positions over the next several years — if school districts are willing to break away from past protocol.

"What I've been concerned about is that when you look at national statistics, the number of female superintendents is declining," she said. "I'm not sure whether they're not applying for those positions or whether or not school boards are not hiring women superintendents.

"Women still struggle with the glass ceiling concept and still experience stereotyping."

- Don't get discouraged.

"Men and women bring different things to the table as far as leadership goes," Oldt says. "But we're finding that men and women need to learn from one another to be successful in public education.

"There is a strong need for sensitivity to the community, understanding common values, appreciating and honoring diversity and so many external factors — as well as internal — that must be managed through that leadership role. It's about juggling multiple tasks and being visionary.

"Women are seeking leadership roles more and more, but there's still a newness to it," Oldt added. "We need to tell our stories, so that other women understand that it is a journey. If you want it badly enough, you have to continue the journey."

CONVOCATION CELEBRATES SUCCESS OF GRADUATES

The School of Education hosted convocation ceremonies for fall semester of 1999 at Sunshine Community Church in Grand Rapids to honor graduates, teachers, distinguished alumni, faculty and those achieving high honors.



Amy Gill

Among those honored were professor Thomas Jackson, who retired after a 22-year career at GVSU; Dana Overway VandenBos of Jenison Public Schools as Administrator of the Year; Sparta High School teachers William Bartlett as Teacher of the Year and Samuel D. McIlhagga for special alumni recognition.

Speaking on behalf of the Class of 1999 were graduates Lorraine Feenstra, Amy Gill, Patricia McCrea and Giovanna Scandariato.

School of Education convocation ceremonies for GVSU's spring 2000 graduates are scheduled for April 28 at Sunshine Community Church. Commencement is April 29 at VanAndel Arena.

Honorees at spring commencement include retiring professors Weston E. Wochholz, Ed.D. and Phillip O'Connell; Pamela J. Wells as Administrator of the Year and James L. Aldridge as Teacher of the Year.

Commencement ceremonies for Traverse City graduates are scheduled for May 2.

S. AFRICA OPENS DOORS

With a grant from GVSU's Center for Philanthropy, four members of GVSU's School of Education — Dean Robert Hagerty, Barbara Lubic, Julie Chlebo and Ram Chattulani — traveled to Cape Town, South Africa last March. Their mission was to visit schools and begin establishing relationships for pre-student teaching by GVSU students. The pilot program begins in March of 2001.

"It will give Grand Valley students a global perspective and an opportunity to experience the most multi-cultural city in the world," Hagerty said.

The GVSU contingent visited four universities and 19 schools during their one-week stay in Cape Town. Further details appear in the Dean's Corner, page 2.

STUDENT CEC HONORED

For the second consecutive year, the Grand Valley State University Student Council for Exceptional Children was named outstanding student chapter of the year. Joe Moleski served as Chapter 908 president.

Patricia McCrea, Moleski's predecessor as chapter president, received the Outstanding Undergraduate Student CEC Member of the Year Award. The Student CEC Board of Governors established the award in 1982 in order to "honor a student CEC member for his or her dedication and contribution to children and youth with exceptionalities and to the Student CEC."