



# FACULTY FORUM

You Cannot Conceive The Many Without The One  
-Plato-



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Fifty Years Together  
By  
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USC Salkehatchie turned 50 this year. So did I, at least in the realm of academia. Salkehatchie opened its doors in the fall of 1965 and that same semester I entered USC Beaufort (a two-year campus at the time). So, what is the tie that binds me to Salk? The professors I had in Beaufort also taught on the fledgling campus in Allendale. Since the two campuses were “brand new” and close together, Beaufort shared many things in addition to faculty. Beaufort students helped Salkehatchie students with clubs, we shared an annual (I still have the first edition of the USC Salkehatchie annual), and we shared a basketball team and cheerleaders—at least that first year. As I approach retirement, you could say I began my learning journey with the faculty at Salk and ended my teaching/learning journey at Salk fifty years later.

In the early days of my education at Beaufort, all entering freshmen took the same courses as there was a core curriculum that did not provide much wiggle room. Normally, Dr. John Duffy, Dean of the campus, called groups of students into his office and told them what they were taking the next semester. That was the registration procedure. The same was true for my sophomore year. The numerous choices of electives that exist now did not exist then.

There were a few clubs, one sports team, a newspaper and an annual that was compiled jointly with the other regional campuses. There were neither computers nor Xerox machines. The library was actually used for research and there was a real card catalogue. Anything copied came from the purple, smelly ditto master that faded quickly. With the exception of one, all of my professors in Beaufort were male. As a student, one always came to class (and on time) and followed the path set by the professor. There was no syllabus. It never entered my mind to complain about hard work or too much work.

When my two years in Beaufort came to an end, I made my way to USC Columbia, as was expected. Still before the age of computers, students made appointments with an advisor, based on major, and were told what they were taking. On the actual day of registration, students went to the

office of the professor of the class they wanted and the professor put you on his roll. If he determined the class full, you could take the class at another time (and rearrange your entire schedule) or go back to your advisor and wait to see him so he could suggest another class and sign off on it. This process was repeated multiple times until your schedule was full. Is it any wonder that registering for five classes took three days? It got slightly better when the Carolina Coliseum was built in 1968. There were still no computers but all of the advisors and professors were in one place so rather than walking all over campus, you just stood in line. The procedure was the same.

I graduated and continued on to graduate school at USC Columbia as a teaching assistant, soon earning a master's degree in Romance Languages. After graduation I put my newly learned language skills to work through employment with Disney, then Pan Am. I did not begin my teaching career until several years later. I began as an adjunct at USC Beaufort, then I became an adjunct at USC Salkehatchie, and finally I took a full-time position at Salk.

Over the years I have seen many changes. Students have real choices of courses to take, careers to pursue, and opportunities to take advantage of. The core curriculum has changed in many ways, including more electives, the elimination of PE as a requirement, the inclusion of a fine art, and the offering of computer science as an alternative to math, to name a few. Material can be copied on a machine that works quickly and does not smell nor smudge. The computer is an endless source of help and information for faculty as well as students. The basic material covered in classes is constant but the manner of presentation and interaction with students has reached a high level.

Arriving at the point where I am now, retirement, certainly causes one to reflect on the past, think of the present, and look to the future. Based on faculty efforts at Salk I would have potential students know that everything they need to start is here: opportunities for financial aid, professors who care and know your name, small classes, help when needed. However, YOU must do the work, YOU must make good choices, YOU must give 100%, YOU must know exactly why you are here.

These statements meant nothing to me as a freshman. I was in the generation that went directly from high school to college, no questions asked. Of course we would perform well. Not doing well was never an option. There were no real choices in our academic paths until junior year. But what my generation got, and hopefully what today's and future scholars will get, was/is an education that leads to success in the future. It is so much more than a degree: it is knowledge; it is life lessons; it is self-discovery; it is about goals and achievement.

And now I end one part of my journey in education but begin another. If I am lucky, my “learning journey” will last many more years. As I look back on my time as a professor, I find that I have learned almost as much as I taught. I learned that all students have their particular learning style. I learned that some students will do well no matter how well or badly you teach the class. I learned that some students will do just enough to get by no matter how much you try to push. I also learned that some students respond well to pushing. I learned that you cannot make a student learn or care. As an educator, I can show my students the stars, but they must gather them.

On the edge of retirement, Professor Sharon Folk has taught at USC Salkehatchie for over thirty years, during which time she has led students through several courses, including Spanish (beginning to proficiency) and University 101. Among her many other contributions to campus culture, she frequently took students (and sometimes faculty and staff) on summer trips to Spain. This essay was written to complement the 50th anniversary issue of *Faculty Forum* that was published in fall 2015.



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