

Rachel Croson Dinner Toast

- Others have spoken about Betsy's academic work. How groundbreaking and seminal it was, and especially how it has influenced their own and the discipline.

I wanted to talk about her other activities and how they also changed our profession and academia as a whole.

Let's start with the fact that Betsy has TWO PhDs. Kind of astonishing.

She entered our discipline with the revolutionary idea that we could be more inclusive, more interdisciplinary, more open to perspectives from outside of economics. Very early in her career, and early in our discipline as a whole, she blazed the trail for how incorporating insights from other disciplines into economics could enrich both areas.

As all of us here know, she has also transformed our discipline by mentoring junior faculty. I met Betsy when I was a PhD student, attending my first ESA conference in 1993 (over 30 years ago), and presenting my first paper on ultimatum bargaining. She, in contrast, was a full Professor, an Associate Dean at Arizona, and the first author of one of my key citations. I was, understandably, nervous to meet her.

She was....phenomenal. She offered insight and constructive feedback on my presentation. She requested and read the paper, and offered additional suggestions. We discussed potential extensions. When I met setbacks in the subsequent years; had papers rejected, faced unclear data or confusing analyses, or disheartening referees, she encouraged me to persevere. And I know I wasn't the only one; for many of us in this room and many not here, her personal engagement has sustained us, and has enabled us to make our own contributions to the discipline.

In 1998 I was invited to participate in a mentoring workshop sponsored by the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession and the National Science Foundation (NSF), and funded by Catherine Eckel who was at the time a Program Officer at the NSF. I was overjoyed to discover that Betsy was assigned to my group as the senior mentor.

- Her impact on our group of mentees was simply astounding. As had been my experience up until then, she was generous with her time, constructive with her criticism and insightful with her direction. She had a significant impact on the careers of everyone in our group.

- That workshop, and my joyous experience of Betsy as a mentor, was so inspiring that after receiving tenure I joined the Board of CSWEP, submitted a grant to the NSF, and re-started the mentoring workshops, which continue today. Without Betsy's inspiration, that never would have happened.
- Not only did the members of that group all go on to successful careers (and four of the five are here today), many of us took on leadership positions; Sara Solnick, Lise Vesterlund and Laura Razzolini have all served as department chairs, all of us have served on editorial boards or as editors of journals. And we all continue her commitment and legacy to mentor the next generation of scholars.
- But I couldn't conclude MY remarks without mentioning Betsy's administrative contributions. When I met her in 1993 she was still an Associate Dean at Arizona, but she soon moved to serve as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at University of Illinois Chicago, President of the University of Colorado System, and Executive Vice President and Provost at Iowa State.
- When I was considering making the transition to "full-time" administration, Betsy was my first call (and my second, and my third...there have been many calls).
- Deans, Provosts and Presidents are HARD jobs. We do things every day that we were never trained for in graduate school. Our goal is to advance and protect the institution, to enable faculty, staff and students to succeed to the best of their potential. And in today's world of increasing political polarization, attacks on DEI, and declining trust in institutions of higher education and accompanying disinvestment in public universities, this is not a straightforward task.
- Yet Betsy succeeded with aplomb. As an example, at Colorado during her first three years she raised a billion dollars. She oversaw the consolidation of the health sciences center in the Denver campus. And she established a strategic plan that emphasized interdisciplinary research. In Colorado, and in every position she has had, she met the ultimate goal of any administrator; leaving the universities stronger than they were when she arrived.
- Every administrator (and for that matter, every faculty member) must also decide where our values lie. We need to pick our battles, and while that means knowing where to compromise, it also means knowing which hill you are willing to die on.
- Betsy picked hers; the hill of protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom. Anyone who wants to read more about the circumstances can find numerous news stories, pundit's opinions, and maybe even a draft of Betsy's memoir. But the fundamental insight for me is captured in the quote from Voltaire's biographer, Evelyn Beatrice Hall; "I wholly disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."
- I think about her principled decision every day. As I helped to navigate my institutions through an abusive President at UT Arlington, the Nassar scandal at Michigan State, COVID, George Floyd and now the Israeli-Gaza conflict at the University of Minnesota, I am continually asking myself, "What would Betsy do?" What are my values? The institution's values? What is worth protecting, and how far

would I go in protecting it? And as we all watch as Congress, and think tanks, and major donors attempt to stifle academic freedom in an attempt to advance their own agendas, I realize that we all still have more to learn from Betsy.

- Betsy, thank you for your contributions to our profession, for your service in nurturing the next generation of scholars, and for your leadership, directly and by example, that contributes to the health of higher education, the nation, and our world.