

CAMPUS NOTEBOOK

Dr. Barbara G. Lyman '69 Warms to New Trustee Role



Photo courtesy of Shippensburg University.

The first time Barbara (Gallow) Lyman '69 arrived on the Anna Maria campus, she'd been on a train and a bus for more than 36 hours, relying on the kindness of strangers to navigate her way north. It was June, but the 16-year-old from St. Landry Parish in southwest Louisiana remembers feeling cold. She'd never traveled that far from home before.

She came to Anna Maria in 1965, the summer before her freshman year, staying with the Sharry family in Worcester and taking the College bus to her campus science laboratory job. "Living with that family, and their 10 kids, helped during those first chilly days," she recalled in a recent conversation. "It was a bustling household. I was very warmly received."

Fifty years later, Dr. Barbara Lyman, Ph.D. arrived on campus as Anna Maria's newest board member to attend President Mary Lou Retelle's Inauguration. During her undergraduate years, she didn't realize colleges even had boards. "I was aware of all the deans and faculty members dedicated to teaching me and holding high expectations for me, especially English professor Sister Mary John of Carmel. And I was aware that the College was led by a woman, as Sister Irene Socquet would speak to us on various occasions and while making rounds on campus." She also met Dr. Ogretta McNeil, the first African-American woman that she knew to have earned a Ph.D., and who was an instructor at Anna Maria.

Those high expectations of her role models prepared her for a career path that led the English Literature major to graduate study in English and American Literature at Brandeis University, as well as in the Teaching of Reading program at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University, followed by teaching and administrative roles of increasing responsibility up to her current position as Provost and Executive Vice President at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

For each new position, she's had people recognize her abilities before she could, she said. Their invitations to new challenges have often been the nudge she needed. Early in her career, she recalled, "some friends took me to lunch one day, and asked 'would you like to be our interim department chair?'" Dr. Lyman said she protested, saying it wasn't her department or even her college. But she eventually spent two years in an interim position and learned much.

"Why not? I had done hard things before," she said with a laugh. "Like leaving Louisiana at age 16 to come to Anna Maria College."

She credits Anna Maria for helping her to develop a deep sense of competence and consider that next challenge. "I've been given advantages, so I should be willing to step up for them," she said. "It's a way of serving, of giving back."

She brings back to Anna Maria her skills as a chief academic officer and veteran of six distinctive universities, all public. "My experience in higher education means I'm exceedingly aware of the challenges that these institutions face," she said.

As the country slowly emerges from recession, the appeal of a vocational approach to learning is strong, she acknowledged. But "we still need to prepare people for the long haul, for jobs we can't even imagine," she said. "It's not unfair to let students know how the pursuit of liberal arts will prepare them for future employment. However, they need to understand the value of that liberal arts education to solving the novel problems that will continually arise in both life and work."

Dr. Lyman is looking forward to learning how to be most helpful as a new trustee, and is excited to begin her term as the new president begins her tenure. After serving on many college accreditation teams over the years, she said she has "a plethora of ideas." For her, joining the trustees "is another way for me to give back a little of what Anna Maria made possible for me."



Dr. Lyman (center) is pictured with husband Benjamin Lyman and fellow trustee Kimberly Kennedy '97G.