

## **Reflections on Mentorship**

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I have always believed that God places people in our lives for a reason. Sometimes it is because we have a role to play, but more often it's the other person who shapes and changes us. Growing up I have been blessed with a few teachers and professors who taught me lessons and skills that have shaped my way of thinking and ability to succeed in a career I love. More importantly however, they became my mentors; teaching me far more than what was included in the syllabus or learning objectives.

One such mentor is Ann Angel. When I came to Mount Mary in Spring of 2002 I admit I was a very lost lamb. By 2004, when I finally figured out my major (having changed majors twice) I found myself gaining some confidence and discovering I had a voice that was worthy of being heard. Although, it wasn't until my class with Ann that I was able to discover not only did I have a voice, but I had talents that could allow my voice to sing in ways I never thought possible. Ann challenges, guides, and supports her students in ways that I remember fondly. I can vividly recall the first time I submitted an idea I had for ARCHES, a new layout design, and how excited she was. Before I knew it, the girl who NEVER thought she would be involved in journalism, was now the design editor, and contributing articles that were getting attention. Had it not been for Ann I would not have taken other technical writing classes that have proven extremely helpful when working with nonprofits and health promotion campaigns.

Yet Ann's impact on my life was far deeper reaching than just the skills or course concepts. The countless hours and late nights in a windowless basement or coffee shops afforded me valuable time talking and sharing life stories and struggles. Ann was always there when I needed advice and given some shared connections I truly felt I had gained not only an amazing teacher, but in some ways a second mom. Like any mom she had goals for me to reach, and (strong) suggestions for where my path should lead. But like any great mom she allowed me to choose my own path and encouraged me to achieve my goals. Although I was not an English or Journalism major, she still extended the tradition of giving the gift of a book. My book, *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times* sits on my desk has been read through countless times; providing a physical of the mentors who have seen me, heard me, and empowered me.

So needless to say, when the opportunity arose to invite a mentor to join me on a panel at the Central States Communication Association Conference this past April, I knew I wanted to back to where my roots began. Before I knew my area of research, before I knew I was going to be an academic, even before I knew how I wanted to put my ideas into action. Though four professors at Mount Mary played gigantic roles in my life, Ann's face immediately appeared before me. I instantly found my now friend on Facebook and within minutes had a confirmation. Elated I could hardly wait to be able to reconnect.

Everyday teachers have an impact on the lives of their students. But not often enough do those same teachers get to hear just how important they were. I do my best to tell my mentors how much I appreciate them, but this panel afforded me that opportunity to publicly express my gratitude, and share our story. Better yet was the fact that I got to introduce two of my dear

friends from grad school to one of the professors that helped me get there. Had it not been for mentors like Ann I doubt I would be doing even half of the work I do today.

Now as a professor myself I understand on a whole new level just how much it means to take the extra time for students. It is so easy to get lost in the meetings, grading, prepping, and writing. Yet God puts people in our lives for a reason. Ann Angel was put in mine to help me to believe in myself, and because of her I do my best to help my students to do the same. Thank you Ann for all that you do for your students each and every day.