

Women in Leadership Seminar #180 with Dr. Kathy Schwaig

May 25, 2018

Dr. Kathy “Kat” Schwaig (pronounced SCH-W”Y”G) is Dean and Dinos Imminent Scholar at of the Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University. She’s also Chair of Entrepreneurial Management and a Full Professor of Information Technology. But even with all those titles, she’s so much more, e.g., wife, mother, researcher, inspiring speaker, fundraiser, motivator, mentor, community volunteer, award recipient, etc.

Long before her current roles came to be, however, Kat was born, raised and educated in Texas. Her father, a Baptist minister, was a major influencer in her life. “My dad was authentic, wise, strong in character and conviction, and had a profound impact on me and many others,” she said.

That impact, however, did not include making her a particularly good student even though she attended Baylor University and received her BBA. But beyond that, she said, “I had to really work hard to get into grad school there.”

Fortunately, all that changed and she fell in love with the college atmosphere and continued her journey to her PhD. Along the way, Kat was mentored by one particular woman – a master teacher - who saw something in her, and asked, “Have you ever thought about being a professor?” Soon after, she began teaching Information Systems and the experiences she had from then on changed the trajectory of her professional life.

On the path to where she is today, Dr. Schwaig (Kat) has held various positions at Georgia State and at KSU. She has learned from many others, like Dr. Tim Mescon, former dean of the KSU business school, as well as from fellow deans like Dr. Faye McIntyre, Dean of the Richards Business School at West Georgia University. (Note: there are currently 7-8 female business school deans in the state of Georgia, a statistic that has risen significantly since Kat began her career in higher education.)

During her tenure at KSU, Dr. Schwaig has had various challenges that have made her think even more about the importance of culture. In that regard, she’s studied the work of Dr. Harry M. Kraemer, faculty member at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University. He’s the author of two best-selling

books including *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership*. He focuses on a framework for authenticity.

In her remarks, Dr. Schwaig shared the following key insights:

- Being a “complete” leader (a perfect leader) is a fallacy. Research says that great leaders are NOT perfect. But leadership is complex and involves being a visionary, planner, relationship builder, and much more.
- Surveys say that 70% of leaders experience some aspect of the “imposter syndrome”
- The best leaders show their vulnerability.
- “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” To build a strong culture, you need to have values, values that are consistent with your mission.
- As a leader, YOU define the values. First you need to lead yourself, know who you are (inside out leadership.)
- Your behavior as a leader MATTERS. You’re the model.
- Four important things to consider for any leader:
 - (1) Keen self-awareness – Self reflection
 - (2) Balance – Connection of personal and professional; total perspective, i.e., input from others; ask for / accept feedback
 - (3) True Self-Confidence (not arrogance)
 - (4) Genuine humility (everyone’s replaceable)
- “Success is an intoxicant. Intoxicated people seldom have a grasp of reality.”
- Nothing wrong with ambition, just watch out for “raw” ambition.
- Everyone deserves respect.
- The real job of a leader is to develop and empower others.

Q & A

How do you set the tone when you enter a new leadership role?

A: Do your research before you begin. Gather different perspectives. Why were you hired / why are you there?

How has your personal life influenced your professional life?

A: Adopting a baby daughter (now 9) reframed her whole life and career. Wants to be a great mom. Being a mom has made her kinder.

How do you lead a team in truly difficult times?

A: Try to fill the void. Communication. Stay focused, message something good / positive as a counteraction for the discouraging signals around you.

How to address so many negative societal or political issues, etc?

A: Focus on the fundamentals. In college, the classroom matters.