



Charlene and Greg Schofield, who met at Cal Poly Pomona, have provided a major gift to promote and develop leadership.

Photo by Cindy Corstange

LESSONS LEARNED ON AND IN THE FIELD, AND THE BEST TEAMMATE POSSIBLE

alumni

Learn by doing is the essence of a Cal Poly Pomona education, but it was a *nearly* hands-on experience that was instrumental in **Greg Schofield's** life.

Back in the 1970s, several years before the football program was discontinued, Schofield played free safety for the Broncos. A self-described “decidedly average player,” he counted on his knowledge of the opposition and an ability to read the field to make plays.

A big opportunity came in the game against Cal State L.A. “I see it’s a run and come racing in, and about halfway to the line I realize that the quarterback is going to pass, and the chances are that the guy who’s going to catch the touchdown is my guy. I was pretty sure I was going to get a chewing out no matter what happened, so I rushed the quarterback. ... Although I got there in time, he ducked down and I flew over the top of him, and as I laid flat on my back looking up to the sky I thought, ‘You know, it would have been better if he’d just thrown the touchdown.’”

The lesson, Schofield says, is that you have to adjust on the fly. “I made a good decision to go after him, but I’m sure the coaches worked on my tackling technique the next week.”

It was a lesson that informed his thinking when he was making his mark in sales at The Upjohn Company, a major player in the pharmaceuticals industry.

“I used some of the things I learned in football in my early years before I had more sophisticated coaching and training,” he says. “What’s important to a football team and to a business is having a mission, knowing your

competition, attracting and retaining the best talent you can get, and then developing them. You measure your results and make adjustments throughout the game.”

But the lessons of football can take you only so far. Schofield’s career success, honed through talent and drive that took him to the boardroom as executive vice president and head of global sales for Novartis Pharmaceuticals, was grounded in understanding the essence and nuance of leadership.

Now, as a business consultant specializing in executive coaching and sales force effectiveness, he helps future leaders cultivate essential listening and verbal communication skills. He also looks for intangibles that might spell the difference between adequacy and excellence.

“You’ve got to have enthusiasm for what you’re doing. I always check the mental box when I’m interviewing someone: Do they have a passion for what we’re about to do? Do they have the fire in their belly — a burning desire to be successful? And are they able to communicate enthusiasm for what they’re doing? You have to check that box.”

Schofield does not let the conversation pass without highlighting his most defining experience at Cal Poly Pomona — one that transcended whatever lessons he learned on the football field or insights he gained as a resident advisor or aha moments he had studying in the lab. It happened on his first day as a freshman in 1972 when he arrived at his biology class as “probably the only guy who didn’t have a book.”

He did the wise thing and sat next to someone who did. “As luck would have it, she had read the assignment,

TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE, YOU SHOULD STUDY THE PAST

Curiosity about the world — both the familiar and the unfamiliar — and a commitment to continuous learning are critical to success in a dynamic workplace, Greg Schofield says.

When he was executive vice president of global sales at Novartis, his CEO took him aside during a development weekend and recommended that he reserve time each day to think strategically about things not directly related to the business at hand. “That was really helpful because it gets you to slow down and say, ‘OK, what of interest did I read this week, and how might I apply it to my situation?’”

He says succeeding in a world that requires adaptability and resilience is not new, and we can draw inspiration from those who preceded us.

“You might say that things today are rapidly changing, but when my now-deceased grandfather was starting out, there was no such thing as an automobile or electric light, let alone a computer, but he got to see a man go to the moon. ... If you think we see are seeing change, think about that generation. Those who came before us saw tremendous change, yet they were able to thrive. There were a lot of factors in their success, but you have to think attitude was one of them.”

so I asked if I could borrow her book and get it back to her. She asked, ‘How are you going to get it back to me?’ and I said, ‘Just put your name and phone number on the inside.’ ... I was closing even before I was a salesman.”

He and Charlene were a couple throughout college and married shortly thereafter. “I met her in biology but the chemistry was right,” he says, adding that she always “shakes her head at that groaner.”

The anecdote and its delivery underscore the deep partnership that has buoyed them professionally and personally.

“We raised four very successful young men, and I was traveling a lot, but Charlene was a leader. Some of it she undoubtedly learned at her home, but a lot of it she learned while earning her degree in foods & nutrition. We kind of joke that the person out in the workforce gets the accolades, but I can tell you, having just gone through my last son’s wedding, witnessing the end product — her impact has been much more impressive.”

That bond is why they made sure that the major gift they gave to College of Business Administration to promote and develop leadership skills was in both of their names. The Schofield Leadership Fellows fund will help faculty develop new curricula on the subject of leadership, which will pave the way for a leadership minor available to all Cal Poly Pomona students.

“We’ve always been a team,” Schofield says.

alumni

FAILURE? IT’S MORE LIKE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LAUNCH A CAREER

“I will have my hands on a rocket that goes to Mars. I will have put my hands on a part. That’s going to be cool.”

Kyle Craig’s enthusiasm is palpable. He is a fresh face in the newly energized aerospace industry, creating parts for satellite launches and other missions. It is a job that demands attention to detail, collaboration, technical expertise and initiative — attributes forged over three years in a machine shop at Cal Poly Pomona that is an incubator for engineering success.

The shop is home for the Baja and Formula SAE teams, which design vehicles that compete in events across the country and in Europe.

Baja SAE empowers team members to push the limits, and Craig did just that when he designed and built a lightweight, efficient and complex forward-neutral-reverse gear box and helped shepherd an electronic continuously variable transmission, or CVT, that drew the attention of judges and competitors alike. (A CVT allows drivers to seamlessly change gears by simply pushing down on the pedal.)

Spend five minutes with Craig and you will see that he knows his stuff, but he will acknowledge that an experience punctuated with failure was instrumental in opening the door to professional success.

The final Baja SAE competition of the year started June 7 in Peoria, less than 24 hours after Craig had wrapped up finals. The flight to Illinois arrived just in time for him to pick up a rental car. No time for sleep. No time to prepare the Baja car for competition. The team shined during early judging, but in the “dynamic” events, with a driver behind the wheel, the car broke down — again and again and again and again.

The team managed to nurse the vehicle onto the track four times before the engine succumbed. Despite the setbacks, the team finished third overall in the design competition.

“There’s no manual in Baja that says ‘Here’s how you solve it.’ You have to develop your problem and solve it. The manual is the shop. ... Baja lets you prove that you have what it takes to get the job done.”

The aerospace professional who recruited Craig agrees. He’s a Baja alumnus.