

Mary Mogge's Journey from Professor to Donor

Professor Emerita Mary Mogge understands the challenges of college students. She was a first generation college student from a working-class family. Her mother only had two years of high school but encouraged Mary to go to college. "I went to college, in part, because no one told me I couldn't," Mogge confided. Her best friend in high school had parents who didn't believe it was a good investment to educate women.

Mogge was always interested in the sciences and decided to major in chemistry but also had an interest in math. Her first chemistry course included some physics curriculum which she liked and by sophomore year she made up her mind to major in physics. At Carleton College Mogge was one of only three women in the physics program. The physics cohort immediately before and after hers had none. Mogge said, "It was alright because we gave each other moral support and the faculty were supportive as well."

Mogge was destined to become a supportive faculty member herself. She's provided generations of students at Cal Poly Pomona with educational opportunities, encouragement, moral support, and financial support in the form of scholarships.

After completing her Ph.D. at Florida State University Mogge taught for a year at Colorado State University. Eventually she moved to Southern California and took an adjunct teaching position at Cal State Long Beach. Mogge said, "I was a freeway flyer, adjunct teaching at three community colleges and three universities, driving back and forth between them. One of them was Cal Poly Pomona."

Her adjunct teaching led to a permanent position at Cal Poly Pomona and she was Physics Department Chair from 2001 to 2007. Mogge served on the national board of the American Association of Physics Teachers and is still active in the organization. She's been a coach and academic director of



the U.S. Physics Team, made up of high school students, that competes in the International Physics Olympiad and has led them to several victories. In that position she's been a role model for high school students, particularly women, who have a passion for physics.

"I like the diversity at Cal Poly Pomona," Mogge said. "I especially want to support women, under-represented minorities, and DREAMers."

Mogge's journey from professor to donor gained momentum when she taught a first year experience class in physics. She was one of the people who helped develop the course, a major purpose of which was to help students stay in college. The class opened her eyes to what the students were going through and how student life had changed since she was in college. She said, "I was on scholarship and work-study, and with help from my parents was able to make it. Now a lot of students are burdened with student loans, mortgaging their future, or must work full time while going to school. One student I remember had a full class load, worked full time, and on top of all that drove 500 miles every weekend to work another job."

This awareness inspired Mogge to start supporting the physics department's scholarships. As time progressed and she was able to do more she made an endowed gift to ensure that physics scholarships would continue. In addition to her generous support of scholarships she has recently named the College of Science in her estate.