




Professor Q&A



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Professor of Psychology

1. Please provide a brief background about yourself.

I grew up as a daughter of immigrants in Syracuse, NY. My parents were born in Korea and they each came independently to the US with very little to start their lives as young adults. My parents worked long hours for my education and it was very difficult for me to see them struggle throughout my childhood. Yet, I believe this background helped shape my ambitions and motivated me to work very hard in my life.

2. From which institutions do you hold degrees?

I graduated from Oberlin College in 1995 with a B.A. in Politics and International Policy Analysis. Adhering to the Oberlin tradition, I took my first steps into adulthood highly motivated and confident about changing the world for the better. I worked for labor unions after college and my job was to show people from many cities across the US, who lived vastly different lives from each other, that they are more similar than they are different to each other. However, when I witnessed someone hear and see things that no one else did, it was a major turning point in my life. One of the biggest consequences of this experience was that it brought me back to academia with a great deal of focus and motivation. I wanted to study psychology because I had many questions about “reality” and

one’s subjective experience. Psychology also offered the use of a sound method for ferreting out “the truth.”

Since I did not take a single psychology course at Oberlin, I went to Teachers College, Columbia University and earned my M.A. in Psychology. I went on to University of California, Irvine, and earned my Ph.D. in Psychology and Social Behavior.

3. What attracted you to SUA?

“Soka University is founded upon the Buddhist principles of peace, human rights and the sanctity of life.” I am not Buddhist but this mission resonated with me a great deal in 2007 and it still does today. Soka is also a liberal arts university with a general education curriculum that I believe is more relevant today than when I graduated college. By coming to work at Soka, I felt that my own liberal arts education and my experience working with people from diverse social backgrounds would come full circle in the classroom.

4. What distinguishes Soka students in your opinion?

In my opinion, Soka students can be distinguished from most students elsewhere by their purpose and intention to learn what I have to offer in the classroom. It is a humbling experience that has always motivated me to be a better teacher as a result.

5. What inspires you?

I’m inspired when a relatively quiet student who spends most of their free time in the library gets up in front of a class and sings karaoke to a rocking love song in Chinese for extra credit. I’m also inspired when my capstone students convince me of where the line is between ethical and unethical research methods. I’m inspired when younger siblings of former students are in my classroom because it gives me a second chance.

6. Do you have other reflections about your experience as a faculty member at SUA?

I have a few. First, I am very happy to be a part of the faculty at SUA. I’ve learned a great deal about myself and about life, in general, through my interactions in the unique teaching environment here. When a class goes very well, I feel gratified and it feels like I’m floating in the air. Second, I am extremely grateful for the relationships I have been able to develop with other faculty members at SUA. These relationships have allowed me to flourish and thrive throughout the last 9 years and will most likely be the longest friendships I will ever have in my life. Finally, I hope that my presence on the faculty encourages young women to pursue professional careers with authenticity and compassion for oneself.