

Remarks for Tribute to Dr. Kate Barany and Dr. Michael Barany

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Good morning to all, with special greetings to Dr. George Barany and his family, Isabelle Barany, representing Dr. Francis Barany and his family, to Dean Azar, Provost Kaufman, Dr. Solaro and others participating in this tribute to Dr. Kate Barany and Dr. Michael Barany. Also, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Meena Rao for her work in organizing this program to recognize the extraordinary lives and contributions of Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany.

As the program indicates, my role here today is to represent the University of Illinois administration in honoring the contributions of Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany to this University and in bringing distinction to the University through their scholarship and service in many areas, because I knew them. In the course of my nearly 35 years with the University of Illinois, I had the wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with both of them and to work with Dr. Kate Barany.

In my service as secretary of the Board of Trustees and of the University for the past 21 years, I was able to inform the Trustees about the University's distinguished faculty members, of whom Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany were outstanding examples.

Once in a while some of us have the rare good fortune to encounter an extraordinary person who impresses us from the start as one who is determined to make positive change based solely on compassion for the situation of others.

Dr. Kate Barany sought me out and came to see me one day in the early 1990's because, as she announced to me very politely, she wanted to change the University's tenure policy. She had been informed that the Board of Trustees would be the power in the University to make a change to this policy, providing the President of the University recommended it. Since I worked for the Trustees and the President she thought I might be able to advise her on how to begin this process. What she sought was a provision for permitting faculty members to temporarily suspend the normal time for consideration for tenure. This was particularly important for young women faculty members who were starting an academic career and a family simultaneously.

She recounted for me in an extremely touching manner the terrific struggles she had witnessed among young women faculty members who were trying to give adequate time to each of these important roles in their lives. She noted that the University was losing some very bright and promising women faculty members because these women often gave up their academic careers due to inadequate time to establish an impressive record suitable for earning tenure.

I later learned that Dr. Kate Barany had shouldered all of these responsibilities herself for many years.

In her work with the Committee on the Status of Women at the UIC campus, she had become convinced that if the University's requirement for considering faculty members for tenure might be modified slightly in terms of time to permit faculty members to stop the clock for a period of time to allow time for them to tend to family responsibilities, more faculty members, especially women with children, could establish records that were impressive in terms of teaching, research and service and earn tenure, which would benefit both the individual faculty members and the University.

Dr. Kate Barany's sensitivity and empathy for faculty members, particularly women, who were working to balance family responsibilities with the expectations of an academic career, were enlightening and moving to the faculty governance groups (the campus senates) and they recommended to the President that her proposal for interrupting the probationary period to make it less rigid for those faculty members who had family responsibilities, such as caring for children, be approved. The President then recommended this policy change to the Trustees who approved. It. As we have seen in the ensuing years, this change has helped many faculty members, both men and women, and provided the University a means for retaining some outstanding faculty members.

In addition to this historic change in a key policy of the University, Dr. Kate Barany also worked with similar dedication to press the campus administration to establish a child care center on the west side of the Chicago campus, similar to the one that existed on the east campus in order to make it more convenient for employees on the west side and increase services for more children. She was also successful in establishing a counseling service at the UIC campus for women returning to college after a hiatus. This service helped these students polish competencies for resuming college course work.

With these breakthroughs and accomplishments, Dr. Kate, along with Dr. Michael Barany, next took on a larger, and more formidable challenge—a policy of the insurance industry. Through patience and persuasion they succeeded in getting these companies to end the practice of paying lower pensions to women who had invested at the same rate as men. Ending this practice brought to a close an inequitable practice that affected thousands of women in our nation.

This type of service in aid of others on the parts of both Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany illustrates the scope of their concern and compassion for others. In their devotion to improving the lives of others, not only did their scientific research improve the health of many lives, their social activism improved the quality of life for many more.

I had never met anyone as altruistic and compassionate as Dr. Kate Barany; then I realized that Dr. Michael Barany possessed these same character traits.

In sociology, a field I have studied, such behavior is described as "other directed." Both Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany were clearly "other directed" and ever vigilant to address unfairness or suffering. Given the horrific experiences of their lives as young people, that included experiences of loss, suffering, and betrayal, it would have been understandable for them to retreat from the world, or commit themselves exclusive to their research and not concern themselves with the problems of others and the society beyond their laboratories.

We hear much about broken hearts as a description of an emotional reaction to suffering, loss, and cruelty. For some who have experienced great suffering and loss, having a broken heart seems to mean that such sadness has shattered their feelings and immobilized them. For others, the stress and tension of suffering, loss, cruelty, betrayal, seem to make them more resilient and open to reaching out to help others to spare them from difficulties. We speak of such individuals as being big hearted, and open hearted, as though this muscle had been exercised and strengthened into a strong heart more open to positive things and filled with hope.

Truly Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany were big hearted, open hearted and committed to helping all with whom they formed relationships of friendships and trust.

Next I would like to comment on their importance to the University of Illinois.

A research university such as this university depends on outstanding, productive faculty members to sustain its multiple missions. These include significant research accomplishments, great attention to teaching students, and service to the university as a community.

Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany served our university in ways that are incomparable in quality and commitment.

As their jointly authored article about their lives as young people who were victims of one of human history's most appalling and dreadful periods, and their lives as partners, parents, scholars, and teachers points out, the Baranys lives were very complex and far reaching. They were colleagues with renown scientists throughout the world, such as the late Dr. Ed Krebs, an alumnus of the Urbana campus, and Nobel Laureate, who was a colleague of Dr. Michael Barany on a grant committee of the American Heart Association in the 1960s, and who suggested a research direction for Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany to pursue which they in turn developed into a funded research project while at UIC.

From the University's perspective, Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany represent the ideal and the model for faculty members. They were tireless in preparing for their students and in assisting them, as well as to their commitment to research (always thorough, punctual, complete, accurate and conducted with absolute integrity).

In addition, they were exemplary citizens of the University of Illinois, serving on committees and working in cooperation with colleagues to strengthen their respective departments.

As stated earlier, women faculty and staff members throughout higher education in our country owe a great debt to Dr. Kate Barany for her amazing efforts to improve the working environment for women on this campus, which served as a guide for other universities. Dr. Kate Barany's path-breaking efforts were recognized by the women of this campus in 1996 when she was voted Woman of the Year at UIC.

In similar fashion, her students honored her with the Golden Apple teaching award and the Urban Health Program Award.

Dr. Michael Barany was elected the first president of the University Scholars at UIC. This was clear recognition of the great esteem his colleagues had for him. For Dr. Michael, this was another responsibility he undertook with typical thoroughness, and consideration for all involved.

Together, they distinguished themselves and made the University of Illinois look good though their efforts to change hitherto sacrosanct practices and policies. Dr. Kate at the campus and University levels, and both of them at the national level. Only such accomplished scholars and complete faculty members as they were, who possessed unusual tact and gracious concern for others could have brought about the changes they did.

A wise person once said to me that in any organization the optimum is achieved if most of the members like or agree with 75% of what is occurring. (He added that those that like 100% of what is going on are not paying attention.) Difficulty occurs when a member tries to change part of the 25% he or she does not like, because that is part of others members' positive 75%.

Both Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael knew to tread lightly and to gently persuade others to change those things they thought needed changing in the University and elsewhere.

It was an honor and quite a humbling experience for me to work briefly with Dr. Kate Barany and a similar experience to know and observe some aspects of Dr. Michael Barany's multifaceted career.

These two extraordinary individuals have provided for me and many others the best examples of what it means to be a university faculty member in all of its dimensions, including: scholar, teacher, adviser, and friend to students and colleagues.

Like all of you, I miss them. However, even though I cannot greet them any more on their walks along Polk Street between their labs and their apartment, I still have the relationship with them that I formed over several years of brief encounters, meetings, friendly exchanges, and in reading of their extraordinary lives and accomplishments, the greatest of which Dr. Kate made clear was their family; and Dr. Michael said included their friends, of which they could not have too many.

My relationship with Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Barany and your relationships are part of their legacy that today inspire us and give us hope for our university and ourselves. We know that it was hope above all that sustained them and brought them to our University and into our lives.

If you wish a memorial, look about you—to their students and colleagues.

Thank you for this privilege.