

*Dr. Michael Probstfeld's introduction of his sister, Dr. Carol Probstfeld, follows: Dr. Michael Probstfeld enjoys being called "the other Dr. P." when in Florida. In Arizona, where he lives with his wife and children, he is the chief of staff at Tucson Medical Center. He is a surgeon and holds a medical degree from the University of California, Irvine.*

Dr. Michael Probstfeld:

I'm delighted and honored to be with you today as "the other Dr. P." and I'm especially proud of the reason for this august occasion, the inauguration of "your" Dr. P., Carol Probstfeld, my sister.

This College and Carol already know each other for she has worked among you as a colleague for 10 years. In thinking about what I could share about Carol that would give insight to the leadership that you can anticipate from President Probstfeld, my mind traveled back in time. So, today I want to tell you the "story of Carol" as her personal narrative has intersected at a propitious time with the storyline of this fine College and community.

This story begins with my secret weapon when I was a boy.

Carol and I grew up in Whittier, California, in a humble working class neighborhood. We didn't want for anything but there was no excess either. It was the "Mad Men" era of the 60's and like most households at the time, Dad was the primary breadwinner and Mom was in charge of child-rearing.

Our parents would never have purchased expensive video games even if they had existed at that time and we didn't participate in any organized activities that could have cost money. So we did what every kid back then did – we got together with the other neighborhood delinquents and made our own fun. One of my favorite things to do was play sandlot tackle football. With no pads, helmets and few rules, it was a rough game. I can't say it was my kid sister's favorite activity but she liked hanging out with her big brother and his buddies, so she tagged along. The other guys didn't want to pick her for their team because--after all--she was just a little girl. But I knew something they didn't know: I knew my little sister could catch the ball. The other guys underestimated her and never really covered her. Since she didn't want to get tackled, Carol would catch the ball and then sit down. Our friends could be tough but she knew they would not hurt my little sister. So she was always safe. And we always advanced the ball.

My sister was my secret weapon in those sandlot football games. This memory still makes me smile and I believe it tells us a lot about Carol, who--even as a little girl--knew how to use her wits and hidden talents to lull those who didn't know her into underestimating her.

In a broader sense, the story also speaks to how early experiences and influences forecast our future selves.

That is at the heart of the challenge, and the opportunity, that this College, this community, this Board, and this President have before you today. The changing of the guard . . . the leader . . . the protector of turf . . . is a time to consider the obligation and the weighty responsibility that you have for influencing and shaping the future. Scientific research tells us that major developmental changes take place in the brain between the ages of 13 and 25. Three-fourths of your first-time-in-college students are under age 20. They are still impressionable, pliable and vulnerable.

The duty to wisely guide and be an encouraging and worthy role model for our youth is one that Carol fully grasps because she has an instinctive understanding of and appreciation for the timeless effect of early, worthy influencers -- like our parents.

Ralph and Madge Probstfeld were part of the Greatest Generation. They both were from large, Midwestern families and came of age during the Great Depression, so they had to get out on their own early. Mom was in the Marine Corps before she met Dad and she helped implement the Toys for Tots program during World War 2. Dad was in the Navy during the War fighting in the Solomon's and Guadalcanal, and then worked in construction. He worked very hard and became a superintendent. When he sustained a crippling back injury, he started a furniture upholstery business in his garage and Mom went back to work to support us. Life for our family changed but there was no complaining. Our parents simply did what was needed.

Both of our parents graduated from high school but that's where their formal education ended. They were determined that Carol and I would have a better education. Our family didn't eat out or take expensive vacations but Mom and Dad managed to send both of us to private parochial school though high school. As for college, it was never a question of "if" but of "where" we would go.

It was Mom who planted the seed for me to become a physician, and if our parents were alive today to see Carol as president of a college, they would be extremely proud. They would say that we have not just met but have surpassed their high expectations for us.

As time passed, Mom developed Alzheimer's disease and eventually had to move to specialized care. After she died, Dad's health rapidly declined. One day when I was out of town, my wife and sister decided that Dad would live with my family in Arizona. It turned out that the women in my life made a good decision. Dad improved, thanks to my wife's great cooking and the warm and loving relationship that evolved with his two grandchildren, my son and daughter. During the eight more years that he lived, Dad came to visit Carol in Florida twice and was as happy as a kid to go to Disney World, and Carol came to visit us in Arizona. We bonded together to keep the family strong.

After parents pass, some siblings grow apart. Carol and I have grown even closer. Thankfully, she still likes hanging out with her older brother. After I persuaded her to try scuba-diving, she went "all in" and has excelled at it, like she does with anything she commits to. Scuba-diving was a fortuitous choice because she met Bill while diving, so I take some credit for matchmaking. Carol is a doting aunt to my son and daughter, who love and admire her. When we can make our crazy schedules fit, we take family vacations together and have had fun times at Carol's and Bill's place in Bonaire and in Mexico on the Sea of Cortez.

Even with a three-hour time difference, Carol and I still manage to connect several times a week. She's my sounding-board. I know who to call when I want a reasoned, unvarnished perspective. I can count on Carol to give her honest opinion, and it's always helpful and refreshing.

So, what does this story of Carol, my sister, tell us about Carol, the President of State College of Florida?

These are the characteristics and traits you have in your President:

She knows how to overcome adversity.

She perseveres.

Anyone who underestimates her does so at their own peril.

She sets high expectations and standards for herself and expects the same of others.

Dr. Michael Probstfeld's Speech – Dr. Carol Probstfeld Inauguration

She is a great communicator, not afraid to speak her mind and always willing to listen.

She is engaging and approachable. People *like* Carol.

She is the real deal.

She is disarmingly strong and truthful. If you ask a question, be prepared for an answer you may not like.

She is loyal and fearless. She will make tough decisions.

She is resolute. When Carol makes a decision, she's "all in" and she has made the decision to be "all in" at State College of Florida.

She is committed to family. That is the core value that our parents instilled in us. And State College of Florida is very fortunate because you are now Carol's College family. She will use her talents, of which there are many, to serve this College, to make it stronger, and to instill in your youth the same high expectations for their own futures that were implanted in her.

Congratulations on your wise choice of my secret weapon as your president, my sister, Dr. Carol Frances Probstfeld.