

# Judith Kuipers

## Vice President for Academic Affairs

Judith Kuipers, vice president for academic affairs, began her career in education teaching young children. Today she is one of about 15 women in the nation to hold the administrative post of academic vice president in a major public university.

"I must admit that when it came to pursuing a career, I did things rather backwards," says Kuipers. "I was married at 18 and had three children by the time I was 22. My goals were short term, like graduating from college. I never even thought of being vice president of a university!"

After completing her baccalaureate degree in child development, Kuipers began to teach three-year-olds and found that she wanted to know much more about human development and the way young children learn. "My need for knowledge literally pulled me back into graduate school to complete my masters in guidance counseling and then my Ph.D. in human development and early childhood education." Her first teaching position at Colorado State University focused her research interests on infant development and parent-child interaction.

Kuipers says she always believed that it was possible to be a wife, a mother, and still have some type of career activity. "But our children were the first priority, and I was determined to coordinate the stages of my education and work with their activities. For example, my doctorate work began after they were all in elementary school and later, my college teaching schedule and vacations coincided with their schedules.

Gradually, Kuipers' enthusiasm and drive lead her into leadership roles. She received outstanding teacher awards, was recruited as department head of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, became acting director and associate professor of the Research Institute for Family and Child Study at Michigan State University, and

later served as dean of undergraduate studies at Oregon State University for more than five years. In 1984 she was appointed to her current position at CSU, Fresno where she is responsible to the president for all matters relating to the academic affairs of the institution. Faculty hiring, tenure and promotion, resource allocation, curriculum, and program planning are some examples of the responsibilities of her office.

### **How did you become interested in the administration side of higher education?**

It was a natural step for me in many ways. I learned very fast from my male colleagues and began to advance in the same way they did. When I was a professor and department head of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee, I received an American Council on Education Administration Fellowship, which is designed to train people for a college presidency or any administrative post below that. In that one year, I probably had five years of administrative experience. It was the first time I seriously thought about becoming a principal administrator. Other factors that sparked my interest were the numerous requests I received to chair committees or head departments. Pushing myself to take risks, I began to take advantage of those opportunities. And although there was a certain apprehension every time I took a new position, each experience built new competencies and greater confidence.



### **Did you find that your experiences as a family person prepared you for leadership positions?**

Absolutely! Obviously with my family, I had to become a good delegator and that was a real plus because I didn't fall into the trap of trying to do it all. By the same token, I learned how to discern when to take the leadership role at key points. Looking back, I must admit that as a woman, I felt that I had to do more and do it better than average in order to receive notice. In my view, the same pressures exist for all minorities.

### **As vice president for academic affairs, what do you consider to be your role on campus?**

The primary role of the vice president and the Office of Academic Affairs is to provide academic leadership and to create an environment that will enhance the intellectual activity of the university. First of all, we encourage the process of inquiry, whether it is on the part of a student, a faculty member, or perhaps someone in the community who has been attending our outstanding lecture series. And in order to accomplish this "open inquiry" policy, the office must facilitate a fair allocation of financial and human resources, as well as a receptiveness to faculty's creative ideas.

Another important role is to help faculty and students look beyond immediate concerns. In other words, reminding the institution that it has a global citizen