

# Sandra Fowler, 65, communications professor, dies at 65

The Boston Globe



Sandra Fowler founded the SSC communications department. (Brett Rhyne)

By Christine Judge  
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MARBLEHEAD - Dr. Sandra (Brandmark) Fowler's influence was apparent at the beginning of every semester: A glance into the Communications Department at Salem State College would always reveal a long line of students waiting for her advice.

Before helping found Salem State's department of communications in 2001, Dr. Fowler had taught all over Massachusetts, written for nationally distributed newspapers and magazines, and lived on a boat for nine years. She was working on developing a graduate program in communications for Salem State.

Dr. Fowler died Jan. 4 at her home in Marblehead after a long battle with cancer. She was 65.

Born and raised in the Bronx, Dr. Fowler earned her undergraduate degree at City College of New York. She moved to Boston, where she earned her master's degree from Boston University and her doctorate from Harvard University.

Dr. Fowler held a number of jobs, all of which focused on her love of writing and teaching. She taught literature and journalism at local high schools, and wrote for The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald, and Time, Inc.

In addition, she worked as a speechwriter for the Massachusetts Governor's Committee on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

She found her calling at Salem State College, where she began teaching communications in the English Department in 1990. Along with a staff of five professors, she led the movement to create the college's independent communications department.

"She was really the guiding spirit," said Ellen Golub, one of the five professors who helped found the department. "She was like a mother to all the communications students. She made working in the department special for everyone."

Dr. Fowler recognized the need for a communications department after numerous students requested a more hands-on approach to the field. Under her guidance, the communications department doubled in size in seven years.

"I took one of her classes and quickly took all the other classes she taught in my major," said Julie Danahy, a former student. "She was a tough teacher, but she made it worth it - she was very inspirational."

She was noted not only for her intelligence and strength, but also for her quick wit and calming influence, which made her a popular student adviser, according to Golub. Her ability to solve problems made her one of the most valued members of the communications faculty.

"When the communications department was finally established, Dr. Fowler hung a picture of a pig with wings on the door, because "Everyone always said we'd get our own department when pigs fly," said Golub. "At our first faculty meeting we gave her a plastic magic wand, because she was like our fairy godmother - she made things happen."

She leaves her husband of 39 years, Thomas; a son, Devon; a daughter, Darcy; and a sister, Wendy Brandmark.

A graveside service was held Tuesday at Waterside Cemetery in Marblehead, followed by a memorial service at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Marblehead. ■

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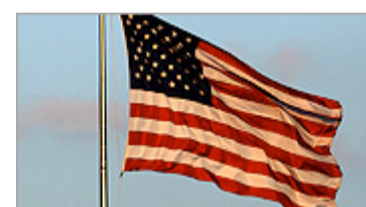
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