

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Melinda Anne Carroll Blackman

September 13, 1969 – July 10, 2026

Melinda Blackman's death was deeply felt throughout the Psychology Department. Former department chair Eriko Self captured what so many colleagues were feeling *"I still can't believe Melinda is no longer with us. 'She went too soon' is an understatement. I think many of us are still processing this incredibly sad fact."*

Melinda was, first and foremost, a master teacher — one of the most dedicated and accomplished teachers and mentors in the history of the Psychology Department.



Michelle Gomez and Melinda Blackman

She received numerous awards recognizing her excellence in teaching, including the Outstanding Professor of the Year Award (five times!), the Carol Barnes Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Western Psychological Association's Outstanding Teaching Award. Her commitment to students extended far beyond the classroom. Melinda mentored countless graduate and undergraduate students and served on more than 100 thesis committees. She also mentored students through the Honors Program and the McNair Program. One of her McNair students, Michelle Gomez, reflected on Melinda's mentorship:

"It has been such a great learning experience. This is my first research project and my first time working with a faculty mentor. She is so approachable, friendly, knowledgeable, flexible, and helpful — all the characteristics one could want in a mentor."

— **Michelle Gomez, McNair Scholar**

Melinda also worked tirelessly to improve students' educational experiences at the structural level. She chaired the Psychology Department until her cancer diagnosis and led the MA program for more than twelve years. For two decades, she worked to facilitate student internships through the Internship Committee. She organized the Western Psychological Association

conference at CSULB and authored an instructor's manual for one of the most important social psychology textbooks, Elliot Aronson's *The Social Animal*. Reflecting on some of the work that was most meaningful to her, Melinda wrote:

"I saw great interest from our students in the topic of autism. I decided to create a course on the topic and teach it. The course is titled Autism Spectrum Disorders, and I taught it this past summer. The course was very well received by students from a variety of majors."

— **Professor Melinda Blackman**

Melinda joined California State University, Fullerton after completing her Ph.D. at UC Riverside. She was an expert in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and a nationally recognized authority on the employment interview process. Her research on the theory and practice of employment interviews appeared in high-impact journals, including the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* and the *Journal of Research in Personality*, as well as in popular media such as CNN.com. In recent years, she also translated psychological science into accessible books focused on improving dietary adherence and was featured in local media, including the [OC Register](#).



"She Always Says 'Diet'" — Orange County Register

Melinda was also a beloved and caring colleague. Professor Christy Scher wrote "What I'll remember most is Melinda's unfailing kindness, her support and encouragement of fellow faculty, and her willingness to give her time — both before and during her illness — by taking on challenging department leadership roles." Melinda's warmth was a quality echoed by colleagues throughout the department. Jewel Lee reflected on Melinda's mentorship:

"Melinda was kind, warm, and genuinely caring. Even in our brief time together, she became a cherished mentor and role model. Her loss is still felt deeply. I hope to honor her legacy by offering the same kindness, generosity, and warmth she showed me."

— Assistant Professor Jewel Lee

Melinda's generosity toward her colleagues was a defining part of who she was. Professor Yuko Okado shared two experiences that illustrate the profound impact of Melinda's kindness and solidarity:

"There are a couple of times when Melinda had lit a path for me that I deeply appreciated. When I was in a pinch due to an upcoming maternity leave that coincided with a thesis student needing to graduate the same semester, Melinda took over my thesis student's supervision without any hesitation, telling me she 'got it' and not to worry — a generous act, and one of such understanding and solidarity, that helped two people at once. Another time, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was trying to study college students' psychosocial and academic adaptation to the pandemic but was having trouble securing funding to conduct this research; things were changing fast, and I wanted to capture students' experiences as soon as possible. In her position as department chair, Melinda secured departmental funding for this research... Thanks to Melinda, we have data that capture an important time in history and shed light on how best to support college students during a period of rapid change."

— Professor Yuko Okado



Melinda's legacy lives in her compassion and generosity Chair Jenn Travitt writes:

"When I think of Melinda, I am reminded of a poem, 'The Laughing Heart.' Melinda truly had a laughing heart, and she shared that gift with everyone she met."

— Jenn Travitt, Department Chair

Melinda's life was rich not only in professional achievements but also in the activities and relationships she cherished beyond the university. She was a competitive sailor, and she volunteered as a therapeutic riding instructor at the Back Bay Therapeutic Riding Club. She is survived by her beloved children, Grace and Jack; her mother, Marcia; her sister, Sarah, and brother-in-law, Jeff; her niece, Maddie; and her nephews, Caden, Ethan, and Charlie.

She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

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