REMARKS, Mar. 29th, University of Houston
Dr. Peggy Ingram

University of Houston or The University of What’s Next?

** I know that we are gathered here to commemorate a gift that I am giving to the University of Houston School of Optometry. I am proud to do this. However, I am going to tell you what the University of Houston has given to me.

**Reflecting on all the intersections in my life involving this university, all the times I had a need for a class, a chance, some knowledge, a certain professor, a direction, some training, U of H provided all of these and more. Therefore, I call this university The University of What's Next?

The University of What’s Next?

**My first time on this campus was in September of 1965, just married, new to Houston, transferring to U of H, with my transcript from my previous studies in my purse. It took me awhile to figure out U of H, and who came here, and why. People like me, that is who was here with me. My first graduation from U of H was in December of 1969, and I was pregnant with my second child. Young, confident, a teaching job in hand, my first time owning a home, my work life was beginning. Off to tackle life!

**By the 70's I was back on campus, taking a course at the School of Continuing Education, a pivotal course for me called Women and the Workforce!! The culture of America was changing, women were growing, questioning, speaking up about equality, and I was certainly a part of this movement. I needed more knowledge, more facts. My desire for a role in the future work direction was bubbling up inside!! So, here I was at the University of What's Next? The course was riveting to me.

**Within a few years I was back on campus in pursuit of a Master's in Counseling, and I took a fast track, well-publicized course in Women and Psychology. Full of hot topics, we studied challenges facing women within the new trends of work/life. All of the women were on fire with change! That course was stunning and stimulating!! I mean that course was HOT!!

** I put that degree aside for a few years, pursued studies elsewhere, but I found myself at the University of Houston Clear Lake in 1987. I was searching a new career path, studying career counseling with an amazing mentor, Dr. Robert Wegmann. I was learning fast, working hard, facing new challenges. I graduated with a Master's Degree, a private practice in career counseling, a focus on a research project and was on my way to a decade of fast track learning. I refer to this time in my life as the time when my brain was on fire!!! And so was I!!!
**Once again The University of What’s Next?**

First things first, I came back to U of H to take graduate statistics to qualify for another degree. I was heading off for a Ph.D. in Adult Leadership and research in the field of Midlife Career Change. I had found a heck of a lot of stimulating study with work and career issues, and women’s role in management.

**While pursuing research and writing a dissertation, I simultaneously began 9 years as a professor at the University of St. Thomas, teaching Women and the Workforce, Business Ethics, and Business Communication. These years were fulfilling, stimulating, and I worked closely within the very issues I was privileged to teach.

**However, life then shifted fast for me. I became a grandmother for the first time in 2001, followed by 3 more grandchildren in 2002, and four more kiddos soon after. And even later, a ninth grandchild joined our family circle!! I was having to turn down time with my grandchildren as an eager babysitter because of the night classes I was teaching. My big family was growing even bigger, and I entered into an advanced degree in being a grandmother!!!

**So, I thoughtfully reevaluated my primary motivation and decided to retire, and I have never regretted it. It was a time for family, a harvest time! However, the sacred issues of work are still often on my mind. And I am so grateful for the University of Houston and the What's Next education they provided me.

**And Next?**

**While living in The Woodlands, I, of course, was a client of Woodlands Eye Associates, and as I aged, my eyes aged, I spent a lot of time there with Dr George Kaufman and the wonderful people he employed. I always knew that we shared a background and interest in the University of Houston, and we talked sports, of course.

**Naturally, with advancing age comes a good deal of sentimental reflection. I confided to Joby that I wanted to give back to U.of H. I was grateful for all the experiences I had here, and for all the times I received information and education in great measure. I just wasn’t sure where or how to move forward. We didn’t have to talk long about how I could participate in the future growth of the school I so appreciate. It was time to make a move on my urge to contribute. The College of Optometry was important to me, mainly because I followed the changes here, but also because it met my criterion of useful education, and, for sure, this is a place of useful education!! This school makes an impact and a difference in the world.
**And here I am today. With many of my women friends and work colleagues! Thanks to each of you. And thanks to the office of Woodland Eye Associates for being here. I am so glad that we came together to make this happen.**

**One of the most important and gratifying parts of this process was meeting and working with Sarat Pratapchandran. He was a great listener, intuitively amazing and so patient and kind as we wove this effort together. The plan for how this award will work for women in this department was the brainchild of Dean Smith. What a patient man!!! He listened to my entire work life history and came up with the perfect plan for this gift. I am very grateful!**

**In conclusion, this has been a collaborative project, designing this targeted opportunity for women faculty to continue their learning and career objectives. I have high hopes for continued success of this program and I am delighted to forge this relationship with the School of Optometry at What’s Next University!! Good luck to each of you!**