

For Immediate Release

PSYCHOLOGY INSTRUCTOR EARNS ACM'S ADJUNCT FACULTY AWARD

CUMBERLAND – Dr. Patsy McKenzie, Garrett County resident and college-level instructor in psychology, has been honored as Allegany College of Maryland's outstanding adjunct faculty member.

McKenzie is the first recipient of the Adjunct of the Year Award, which was created to recognize the contributions that part-time faculty members make to the college and its students.

The award is based on excellence in teaching and learning and service to the academic department or division and service to the institution.

The college established the award to recognize the corps of part-time instructors who contribute greatly to the success of the institution but who often go unheralded.

ACM's Office of Instructional and Student Affairs invited the college community to nominate part-time instructors for the honor and selected McKenzie from among seven finalists.

Their choice was announced at a meeting attended by members of the all college faculty and staff member groups.

McKenzie began teaching at ACM in January 2014 as a long-time psychology professor was preparing to retire at semester's end.

She was an experienced classroom teacher when she arrived, having taught a half-dozen years at Head Start, the child-development, school-readiness program for pre-kindergarten students.

With a master of education degree completed in 2005 and considerable progress made toward a doctorate in psychology, McKenzie took the leap to higher education.

Since joining the college McKenzie has earned a reputation as an instructor who is committed to the education of her students and to the advancement of the institution.

She teaches three courses each semester, among them General Psychology, a general education offering, and Death and Dying, which is cross-referenced with philosophy.

She also teaches Human Growth and Development, which is co-coded as an education course, and Child Psychology.

McKenzie strives to create an engaging atmosphere in the classroom by facilitating dialogue and small group activities that encourage interaction. “They learn better when they are interacting with each other,” she says.

“It’s a lot of fun to watch them grow,” she adds. “I think that’s what I like most about teaching. Freshmen and sophomores have a lot of enthusiasm and eagerness to learn.”

McKenzie, who also teaches part-time at Frostburg State University, enjoys her work at the community college, where the many non-traditional students bring unique life experiences to the classroom.

“We’re very learner-centered,” she says, “and that allows everyone to bring their unique experience to the classroom.”

She jumped at the chance to be part of the first group of faculty members in the Teaching and Learning Community, an interdisciplinary initiative that furthers ACM’s goal of becoming a community of learners.

“I learned a lot about myself, about how I teach and how I wanted to teach,” she says of her year-long commitment. “It was a productive experience.”

McKenzie also volunteered to be part of college-wide efforts to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning, uncompensated committee work only expected of tenure-track faculty and full-time staff members.

“I wanted to learn more about the institution,” she said. “I believe that if you are going to be part of something, you need to be part of it.”

She appreciates the inclusiveness she encounters at ACM. “They’ve been wonderful. They’ve fit me right in. No one ever said you’re an adjunct so you can’t do this or that,” said. “Allegany College makes sure you are a part of the community. That’s important to me.”

A community college graduate herself, McKenzie belatedly discovered the discipline that would become her passion in an introductory psychology class at Garrett College.

“Three weeks into it and I changed my major,” she recalled. “I got really interested in learning and how the brain works. The more I learned, the more I saw all the possibilities.”

After earning an associate degree at GC, McKenzie would earn a bachelor’s in psychology and the M.Ed. at FSU. And she has since completed her doctoral degree in psychology, from Walden University.

Her activities at ACM include Psi Beta, the national honor society in psychology for students in the community college. She initiated ACM's Psi Beta chapter and serves as its advisor.

McKenzie also participates in The Democracy Commitment, which encourages civic learning and democratic engagement by community college students. Her involvement includes a presentation at a national conference of the organization.

“Adjunct instructors are the unsung heroes in teaching,” said Dr. Kurt Hoffman, senior vice president for instructional and student affairs. “Patsy epitomizes the best ACM has to offer. I cannot think of a more worthy person to be the first to receive this award.”

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Allegany College of Maryland has named Dr. Patsy McKenzie as its first adjunct faculty member of the year. McKenzie, instructor of psychology, is pictured with Dr. Kurt Hoffman, senior vice president for instructional and student affairs, and Dr. Cynthia S. Bambara, ACM president.