

2013-2014 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR WINNER DR. DONNA KOTSOPOULOS

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

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CITATION FOR DR. DONNA KOTSOPOULOS

Prepared and read by Judy Bornais, University of Windsor

On behalf of the Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee, I am honoured to recognize Dr. Donna Kotsopoulos as a 2013-2014 teaching award recipient.

In Dr. Kotsopoulos' nomination letter she was described as a, "Phenomenally Phenomenal women" and it is clear by her nomination package that she distinguished herself through her exceptional classroom instruction, dissemination of knowledge, research on university teaching as well as her mentoring of others.

Dr. Kotsopoulos designs and develops a learning environment that is engaging and inspiring. One student wrote, "Dr. Kotsopoulos is able to effectively modify the content of anything in order to appeal to the audience, whether it be parents, researchers, professors, students, or educators....her charismatic way of presenting...is exactly what sparked my interest in children's early mathematical development." Another former student wrote, "I know that she continuously motivates and inspires students to do their best, push their limits, and work hard." Colleagues also share this perspective, "She prides herself not only on the learning opportunities provided to students, but the way in which these opportunities dovetail with the goals of each individual student."

Dr. Kotsopoulos is very familiar with designing and developing courses and curriculum. According to one of her colleagues, the central concern in the development of the numerous courses she has developed is, "attending to what is emerging as the most relevant and current knowledge and pedagogy for effective teaching and learning." This is also reflected in her teaching philosophy whereby she ascertains that, "effective teaching is about being current and



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relevant.” One student wrote, “There have been a handful of people introduced into my life since I started teaching who have blown me away with their knowledge and compassion. I am grateful to say that you are one of them”.

Sharing knowledge based on research, and best practice, extends beyond the walls of the Faculty of Education to the department of Mathematics and the broader academic community. In recognizing that there was a gap in early childhood texts related to early mathematical cognition, Donna co-authored a book titled, “Let’s talk about math: The LittleCounters® approach to building early math skills”. The book has been espoused as a, “A carefully organized and sequenced guide to appropriate learning opportunities in mathematics at the early childhood level” by the Past-President of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Equally as impressive as her teaching and research is her ability to mentor others. In her teaching philosophy Dr. Kotsopoulos wrote, “Teaching is about building relationships that empower individuals to shift their view of their ability to both do, and to be effective teachers of, mathematics” and “the professors’ role in supporting student success should extend beyond the course and beyond the contact hours. Excellent classroom teaching is not by itself enough”. This philosophy is clearly evident in all that Dr. Kotsopoulos engages in to empower and mentor her students and numerous undergraduate and graduate students commented on how they were mentored by her. But mentoring is nothing new to those who know her well. She has a long history of mentoring others which extends beyond her classes to mentoring students in other courses who are interested in math inquiry. She also initiated and provided faculty mentorship for two student-based societies in the Faculty of Education at Wilfred Laurier University. She has also been instrumental at supporting colleagues. As one colleague wrote, “she seizes whatever opportunity she is given to guide and mentor others on an upward trajectory”. A part-time faculty member concurred, “My success as a contract academic staff member is because of Donna.” Another colleague wrote, “When I first started teaching at WLU [Donna] naturally took on a mentorship role to ensure my successful transition into teaching.”



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In conclusion, Dr. Kotsopoulos is an exceptional teacher and researcher. She is engaging and inspiring; knowledgeable and compassionate; passionate and empowering; and she is cited as a mentor by students, colleagues and members of the broader academic community. A recent student wrote, “I hope you are...touching the lives and making such a difference of your current students as you did with me”. In recognition of the difference she makes in and outside the classroom, Dr. Kotsopoulos is being recognized and awarded the prestigious OCUFA Teaching Award.