



# OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations  
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

## 2016-2017 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR KAREN PILLON



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## **CITATION FOR KAREN PILLON**

*Prepared and read by Don Kinder, Ryerson University*

It is with great pleasure that the OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards presents a 2016-2017 OCUFA Academic Librarianship Award to Karen Pillon, head of Access Services at the Leddy Library, University of Windsor.

Karen's valuable contributions as an academic librarian are echoed in the letters of support for her nomination where she is described by many as a passionate and innovative teacher who cares deeply about her students. Having taught information literacy for the past seventeen years she is clearly an expert in identifying the challenges that students face and the role that diverse student needs play in the research process. Karen knows that active learning is the key to a dynamic classroom experience and always ensures that students' research questions and challenges are fully integrated in the content of her classes. In this way the class becomes a forum where students collaborate in working on a variety of research challenges tied to each others' needs rather than being lectured about research databases and how they operate. A former student, who is now a teacher, writes: "[Karen's classes], during my undergraduate and graduate degrees, were building blocks for my life-long career as a budding academic in the field of education at the University. In class, she encouraged in-depth questioning of internalized research practices and supported inquiry for the purposes of authentic learning."

Karen is a firm advocate for the creation of safe, non-judgemental spaces for teaching. Whether she is teaching or mentoring international students, persons with disabilities, high school students, or members from the wider community she always ensures that every student has a voice and that everyone has the right to join in the conversation. "I belong here" "I can learn this" and "I can do this" are the three beliefs that Karen insists on instilling in her students and, judging from the letters of support from them, it is clear she has been very successful in doing so. One former student writes: "She is my role model and I learned from her by observing her ways of interacting with students—she made every effort to make students feel special."

Karen's work with individuals and groups in communities outside the University is also outstanding. At the urging of a professor at the University of Windsor, Karen started the "Early Bird Research Program" aimed at



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secondary school students in their final year who were attempting to make decisions for their future and who were not sure whether they could handle the obligations of university life. This program was recognized throughout the University of Windsor and spread all the way to high schools in Chatham where Karen worked with the English and French school boards delivering information literacy classes to students in both English and French.

Karen's tireless dedication to the Windsor community is also evident in her service to an organization called WEST—Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor, Inc. where, for over four years, she has facilitated leadership and confidence-building workshops for women and girls who are navigating big changes in their lives such as starting a new job, going back to school, or learning about life in Canada.

One former student states that Karen considers all students to be on a journey and that it is her job to walk alongside them. Over the course of her career, Karen has walked many miles with her students, whether they happen to be at a university, a high school, or at a social service agency. "Karen is the model of what today's librarian should be", writes a colleague. "She is passionate about her role as a librarian. She exudes enthusiasm for students' plans and aspirations and shows that she really cares about their success."

Congratulations, Karen, on receiving this award.