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Thanking Our Professors

By Quentin R. Johnson, Ph.D.

Time and time again, SVCC students and graduates talk about the ways instructors have contributed to their successes. With that in mind, I want to take a moment as we begin a new academic year and to publicly honor the hard work of our dedicated faculty.

Listen to Louise, who began her postsecondary education at SVCC before transferring to Longwood University. She recalls, "I had wonderful instructors who were dedicated and very nurturing in helping me decide on a career. My classes were small and, therefore, the instructors were able to provide individualized assistance when needed."

SVCC professors also demonstrated their willingness to do whatever was necessary to maintain quality instruction when pandemic-related changes shifted many classes to online environments. Meeting needs for flexible learning situations still requires adjustments depending on requirements within individual disciplines. Our faculty members have proven themselves fit for the challenge.

Nussy experienced this first-hand. "Chemistry was a class I dreaded taking, especially taking it online. I not only maintained high marks, but I actually loved it and found it very interesting. I am so grateful I had such a helpful and patient teacher. I would recommend Dr. Smetana to anyone who has to take chemistry. Before this class, I always had a hard time with math, but Dr. Smetana found a way to make it fun, interactive, and easy to follow."

SVCC has 48 full-time and 145 adjunct faculty members. Martha Reed, Assistant Professor of Biology, speaks for them all when she says, "Teaching at a community college as compared to a larger university gives me the opportunity to get to know my students on a more personal level."

This type of personal connection was especially important to Chelsea, a student in SVCC's cosmetology program. Chelsea reported, "The instructor is not only incredibly knowledgeable, but goes the extra mile to make sure I have the hands-on experience to feel confident in what I do."

These important connections don't end with graduation. Andrew, who currently serves as lead welder with Buckingham Branch Railroad, remembers the strong foundation he received from his welding instructor, "Mr. Braun taught me the fundamentals that I still use today as a welder. He was instrumental in helping me decide that I had a future career in welding, and eight years later

I'm still perfecting my craft."

William, who serves as a sergeant with the Virginia State Police Training Division in North Chesterfield, says, "SVCC was instrumental in helping me start a career in law enforcement. I am still in contact with several of my former professors, and I would not be where I am today without their tutelage."

Denice, who works for VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital, likewise reports, "I was fortunate to have been taught and mentored by intelligent and passionate instructors. They were the fundamental driving force behind all that I have accomplished as a registered nurse today."

Teachers are the life's blood of our country's educational system. Without hardworking and dedicated teachers, we have no future. In Southside Virginia, public and private schools at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through senior postsecondary institutions, traditionally begin a new academic year in August. Here at SVCC, our doors for the Fall 2021 semester will open on August 23. It seems a most fitting time to offer a big "Thank you!" to all teachers everywhere.

Dr. Quentin R. Johnson is president of Southside Virginia Community College, an institution of higher learning that provides a wide variety of education opportunities to a diverse student population within a service area that spans ten counties and the City of Emporia. He can be reached via email at quentin.johnson@southside.edu.

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