



News Release

May 14, 2008
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Century College Mathematics Professor Wins State Award

If you pass by Century College mathematics Prof. Beth Hentges' classroom and see her standing on a chair, dropping items to the floor, don't be surprised.

Hentges has many ways to demonstrate the principles of mathematics, and this is just one of them.

This spring, the Minnesota Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges presented Hentges with the 2008 Distinguished Teaching Award at the group's annual meeting in Duluth. The award honors instructors who foster curiosity and generate excitement about mathematics in students, and are widely recognized for their successful teaching.

Known for going the extra mile to illustrate a mathematical concept, Hentges' students say she is also a caring person who will go "above and beyond" to assist students to achieve their educational goals.

Hentges continually receives glowing student evaluations that characterize her in the following ways:

"very encouraging and the most helpful teacher I've ever had." "If you have problems with math like I did, she is an amazing teacher." "I especially appreciated that she was willing to sit with you and work with you until you got it." "Take math with her if you need things explained well and in depth." "She is passionate about her teaching and her students' success." "She made learning fun."

Colleagues praise Hentges' teaching skills, leadership and attention to detail. "Beth knows and supports student understanding and learning by creating a variety of experiences and activities, both in and outside the classroom," wrote one. "She has the ability to break complex mathematical ideas into simpler forms that are more easily understood by her students."

An instructor at Century since 1992, Hentges teaches mathematics classes that range from the developmental to the advanced. "I enjoy teaching all levels of mathematics," said Hentges. "I particularly enjoy teaching lower-level classes when I have returning adult students. It is so gratifying when they have those 'Aha, I get it' moments." For the upper-level students, it is satisfying to try to broaden their horizons about what mathematics is and what it can do."

A lifelong learner, Hentges said her favorite branches of mathematics include group theory, probability and statistics, cryptography and error-correcting codes. "I love the beauty and power of mathematics," said Hentges. "For example, when things on the surface seem unrelated, but are closely related in mathematical structure, it comes as a surprise, but a nice surprise."

Hentges served for many years on the college's Academic Affairs and Standards Council, and currently serves on a statewide committee dealing with assessment for course placement of incoming students. Active in the community, Hentges served on the planning committee for the "An Eye to the Future" conference, a mathematics and science career conference for middle school girls. For four years, she volunteered as a teacher for gifted and talented mathematics students at her son's elementary school. In addition, she worked with author Alan Tussy in creating and proofreading a geometry textbook that is used at Century College and at colleges around the country.

Raised in Rochester, Minnesota, Hentges is currently a resident of Champlin. She and her partner, McAuley, have two boys ages 12 and 6. Hentges earned her Master of Science degree from Michigan State University and her Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of St. Benedict.

Century has had one other winner of this prestigious award - Prof. Edward Bender, who won it in 2005. He is currently retired.



Photo: Beth Hentges