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Going Above and Beyond for Linfield

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Going above and beyond for Linfield

For Brenda DeVore Marshall, life in the theatre began as a blue forget-me-not.

She was six and sang in the class operetta. “My debut!” she said.

It was a sign of things to come. Marshall, professor of theatre and communication arts, has spent a good part of her life in the theatre. This fall, she begins her 13th year as department chair, first for the Department of Communication and now for the Department of Theatre and Communication Arts. For her service to Linfield, she earned this year’s Samuel I. Graf Faculty Achievement Award, given each year to a faculty member who has performed some outstanding achievement beyond his or her regular duties.

Marshall is well-rounded and excels in the three main roles the college expects of its faculty: teaching, service and scholarship, according to Marvin Henberg, Linfield interim president.

“She’s gone above and beyond the call of duty in every aspect of her career,” Henberg said.

Since joining the faculty in 1987, Brenda and her husband, Ty, professor of theatre arts, have been instrumental in shaping the Linfield theatre program. Not only has she helped to develop the department’s curriculum, she played a leading role in the design of Ford Hall and Marshall Theatre, from planning through opening.

But her impact is not just limited to the theatre. She directed the forensics program for 14 years, developed the communication arts minor, provided leadership in the development of new majors in communication arts and intercultural communication, managed the speaking center, became the first woman to serve as chair of the college’s Faculty Executive Council and served as Title IX officer and chair of the Experiential Learning Task Force. She is also an accomplished author, co-editing with Molly Mayhead *Navigating Boundaries, The Rhetoric of Women Governors* (2000) and co-authoring *Women’s Political Discourse: A Twenty-first Century Perspective*, which will be out this fall. They are now working on a third book, *Women’s Political Autobiography as Historical Narrative and Political Inspiration*.

The secret to Marshall’s accomplishment? Long days, usually 12 to 18 hours, and an intense work ethic instilled by her parents. But curiosity may be her driving force.

“I have very eclectic interests,” said Marshall, who plays bassoon and enjoys exploring ideas in the sciences and social sciences in addition to the arts. “My involvement in various activities occurs because I’m genuinely interested in them.”

Of all the hats she wears, teaching continues to be her favorite. Marshall encourages active involvement in the classroom and urges students to try new things without fear of failure.

“The day I stop being excited about learning I should quit teaching,” said Marshall, who was named the Edith Green professor in 1992. “I see learning as a real adventure in which I become the guide for the students. I map out a path and we start down it. We always get to the place I intend, but we sometimes take different routes.”

In 1999, Marshall, along with other women faculty members, helped establish the gender studies minor and continues to team teach the capstone course with Barbara Seidman, professor of English and interim dean of faculty. As her work in the feminist arena progresses, Marshall said she’s learned the importance for women to make their voices heard and for men to see females who can lead and express themselves.

“I hope I have been a mentor to students and have illustrated some of the ways one’s voice, male or female, can be heard,” she said. “It’s hard to tell students they should be involved if you’re not involved. That’s why I do what I do.”

– Laura Davis



Brenda DeVore Marshall (right), shown here with Katie Dolph '08 in the Ford Hall design lab, earned the Samuel I. Graf Faculty Achievement Award for her dedication to Linfield.