



The Collage

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Kutztown University

Oct.
2022



Dr. Lyn McQuaid | Mathematics Faculty Highlight

“Teaching has always been my first love,” says Dr. Lyn McQuaid, a mathematics professor at Kutztown University who recently won the Wiesnerberger Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching. “It’s nice to be recognized for that.” Dr. McQuaid adds that teaching was something she always wanted to do, following in the footsteps of her father, Dr. Larry R. Mugridge, who taught in the KU mathematics department from 1972-2011. Because of him, she grew up seeing teaching as a possibility, while also wanting to be an example for women in mathematics classrooms.

Dr. McQuaid’s interest in women in mathematics began at an early age. She tells the story of her seventh-grade science teacher separating the boys and girls in the class and lecturing while facing the boys. She also tells of her mother’s experience of sexism in the classroom: her mother did A level work in a college statistics course but received a B. “She went to see the professor and he told her that he only gave A’s to the boys; girls didn’t need A’s,” she says. “A story like that really stuck with me, plus then witnessing it myself.... It just got me interested in women in mathematics.”

Creating a Women in Mathematics course was one of Dr. McQuaid’s first accomplishments when she was hired here at KU. “There weren’t any [STEM] classes in the [Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies] minor,” she says. Dr. McQuaid

had no basis from which to design the course, as she says she had never heard of a “Women in Mathematics” course at the time. She created the course by picking six female mathematicians she admired and whose work provided the mathematical concepts for the class, although at an introductory level. The class currently consists of topics on number theory, algebra, and geometry.

As the class also concerns the history of the women, it has changed a bit since the first iteration. Dr. McQuaid notes that although the class is talking about women in a male dominated field, the class consisted of mostly white, European women. “I added Katherine Johnson, after really wanting to [address] DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion),” she says.

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Dr. McQuaid also co-created KU’s chapter of the Association for Women in Mathematics in 2013 with colleague Dr. Amy Lu. The AWM is a national organization that aims to create a more equitable space in mathematics, and a space for women to be able to participate in the field of mathematics without discrimination. “It’s just a group [that] wants to support women studying mathematics,” she says. KU’s AWM chapter won the Community Outreach Award from the national AWM organization last fall for their various community projects, such as a Beyond Pink Collar Jobs event. Dr. McQuaid

notes this as something the club was excited about, as the other award winners were AWM chapters consisting mostly of Ph.D. students.

As far as creating a more equitable space at KU, Dr. McQuaid has been a co-primary investigator for the Research, Educate and Value Equity at All Levels in STEM (REVEALS) project with Drs. Laurie McMillan, Michele Baranczyk, and Moira Conway. The project received a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) earlier this year. “The main thrust of the grant is to address the decline in female faculty members in the

STEM departments here at KU,” says Dr. McQuaid. Although this project is aimed at STEM departments, it should also help all departments in KU because, as Dr. McQuaid also notes, “We’ve been trying to get this grant to pilot some programs that would help encourage women to stay here at KU and... encourage women to want to come to KU if they see that this university cares about female employees.” One of the initiatives supported by the grant was to create the “faculty equity advocate” position to help address equity issues. The grant is also working towards creating a website to house information women working at KU may need, like daycare information in Kutztown or lactation rooms on campus.

For now, Dr. McQuaid’s focus is the grant, but she is hoping to do more with her Women in Mathematics course to further address DEI issues. As for her advice to aspiring female mathematicians, “I would say do it,” she says. “There are opportunities out there... a lot of schools are trying to diversify their math departments; they’re trying to find more women. Now is a good time to enter the field.”

Award Winning Faculty



Dr. Mauricia John
Chambliss Faculty
Research Award



Dr. Lyn McQuaid
Wiesnerberger Excellence
in Teaching Award



Dr. Rolf Mayrhofer
2022 LAS Dean's
Outstanding Faculty Award



Reilly Hannan | History Student Highlight

Kutztown University senior Reilly Hannan decided KU was the school for her after completing her associate degree in history at Montgomery County Community College. She found different opportunities with KU, like being able to study history in Ireland over the summer with the study abroad program and working on a historical research grant as a KU BEAR.

Hannan's interest in history began when she was in elementary school, where she was taught U.S. history. In high school, she began to search for more diverse history lessons. "With anything outside of U.S.

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history, you have to take an elective, you have to go searching," she says. She took a women's history class, and from then on, she began to make it a point to take classes to learn about different people throughout history. "Sometimes they

don't just teach it to you," she notes. "You have to go looking for it."

Now in college, Hannan likes to take different history courses about people and cultures all over the world. "I've done literally everything," she jokes. "I like learning about the people that don't get talked about [much]." Her first semester at KU, Hannan took a Gender in African History course with Dr. Christine Saidi, which looked at how gender was perceived in African history and its differences to the perception of gender in the U.S. Through this course, Hannan had the opportunity to work as a KU BEAR with Dr. Saidi, along with fellow KU student Rebekah Nerius, on a research grant called, "Beyond Gender."

"What we were looking at was how gender is approached and thought of in Africa, because here it is so engrained in our society, we cannot escape it—everything is gendered," Hannan says. "In other societies, like pre-colonial Bantu societies, gender wasn't really that important... it [wasn't] even a part of their language—they don't really have words for man and woman... their society was set up in a more non-binary way."

The project looked at the use of age hierarchies in pre-colonial Bantu societies, how the status of the people was determined not by gender but age and their relationship to others.

"People [weren't] called man or woman, they're called older sibling, younger sibling, mother—which isn't necessarily a gendered term, anyone can be a mother," Hannan explains. "It's basically just showing people that this idea of non-binary is not a new concept... it's been around for thousands of years." She notes that the idea of a gendered society is more of a western concept and was only brought to African Bantu societies during colonialism.

As a KU BEAR, Hannan learned how to look beyond just written texts as primary sources. Much of the African history she had to look at was oral history, and she had to learn how to analyze language. "The

way people talk does say a lot about their culture," Hannan notes, as she had to look at how the spoken language also reflects a non-binary society. She also looked at Bantu language dictionaries and archives, researching gendered and nongendered terms. "It was just a lot of fun to hone in my research skills," she reflects. "And to learn from someone who has a Ph.D., who's been doing this for decades and has actually gone to Africa and done field work... [it] was a really invaluable experience."



Reilly Hannan (left) and Rebekah Nerius (right) working on "Beyond Gender"

In her spare time, Hannan works as a desk receptionist in one of the residence halls on campus. She decided she wanted to do this as a transfer student, already a junior and wanting to meet some new people. "It was a great way to get to know people and sort of be part of the community and forge a little place for myself," Hannan notes. She is also a part of *Essence*, KU's literary and fine arts magazine created by and featuring work from students, which she says is a way to read others' work and hopefully spark some inspiration in herself. As for her advice for other transfer students: "Get involved on campus, join a club," she says. "It can be hard to insert yourself and [find] a group. So go out, join things."

Currently, Hannan is still figuring out her plans beyond graduation—whether it will be finding work in her field or going to graduate school. "I think [the] biggest thing that I learned from Kutztown is [to] say yes to opportunities, kind of go with the flow—just try things out."

New Tenure-Track Faculty



Dr. Meghan Owenz
Tenure-Track
Psychology



Dr. Cristina Cummings
Tenure-Track
Biology