

Assistant professor Robyn McVey loves that with math, once you arrive at the right answer, the task is completed.

While there is only one correct answer, McVey has discovered multiple ways to explain how to solve problems during her decade teaching at Black Hawk College.



“Some people do need a different take,” she said. “I’ve learned different ways to explain the same thing.”

While McVey loves the black and white certainty of math, she appreciates that much of life comes in many shades. When she’s not at work, you might find McVey playing her guitar or doing embroidery.

Her office is a wonderful surprise. Entering from a plain, industrial-type hall, you are welcomed with a turquoise accent wall, artwork by her father, intricate embroidery work and star-shaped lights. It’s a cool collection of color and design that is totally unexpected.

Attending college

McVey always knew she would begin her college education at Black Hawk College.

“I never really considered going anywhere else for my first two years,” McVey said. “My older sisters and my mother had gone to Black Hawk and it was affordable.”

In addition to attending Black Hawk College being a family tradition and cost-effective, she knew she would get the education she needed.

McVey grew up in Rock Island and graduated from Rock Island High School in 1981 before becoming a BHC student.

She then earned bachelor's and master's degrees, eventually ending up back at Black Hawk College in another capacity: as an instructor.

McVey encourages prospective students to attend Black Hawk College.

The opportunities are varied, and she knows students with their sights set on bachelor's degrees can complete their first two years of classes in a great environment.

"At Black Hawk you will be in smaller classes and have more contact with the instructors teaching your courses," McVey said.

McVey said she got a great mathematical foundation as a BHC student that allowed her to succeed.

Her favorite instructors were from her calculus sequence, and she credits them with helping her establish that foundation.

Her best moment at Black Hawk College was scoring the highest on a calculus test in a class full of students planning to be engineers.

"I loved that," she said.

McVey transferred from Black Hawk College to St. Ambrose University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics.

She worked as a tutor while at St. Ambrose.

After graduating from St. Ambrose, McVey earned a master of science in statistics at the University of Iowa.

Working with numbers

After earning her master's degree, McVey accepted a job at Kraft General Foods in the Chicago suburb Glenview as a consulting statistician.

She worked with product developers and process engineers on improving the flavor, texture and appearance of various foods.

"It was always kind of neat to see it when it rolled out in the grocery store," McVey said of the products she was involved with at the beginning stages.



Five years later, she returned to the Quad-Cities and was a stay-at-home mom to her two children.

When her youngest started school in 2005, she began teaching math part-time at Black Hawk College. Now she has been a full-time faculty member for 10 years.

It wasn't a career she anticipated while in college, but she enjoys it.

"I like that it's different all the time," McVey said. "Even though I teach a lot of the same classes, it's always different students."

She likes helping students succeed and get closer to their goals - whether they plan on continuing to study math, or are simply completing a math requirement for a program.

McVey takes satisfaction knowing the students get to move forward and better their lives.

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