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## **ASU Mid-South Math Instructor Earns National Excellence Award**

Stephanie Krehl, Contextualized Mathematics Specialist and Lead Faculty for Developmental/Technical Math at Arkansas State University Mid-South, has earned a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award.



“I’m honored because I consider it a pat on the back from my peers which means a lot to me,” said Krehl who has worked at the college since August 2010. “Like many people here, I put in a lot of hours and work hard. I don’t do my job for recognition like this, but it is certainly nice to receive a ‘good job’ in whatever way, shape, or form. I appreciate the award and am grateful to those who considered me worthy of it.”

Dr. Cliff Jones, ASU Mid-South Senior Vice Chancellor for Learning and Instruction, said Krehl has helped take the developmental math effort to a new level.

“First and foremost, Stephanie is a great teacher,” he said. “Her team approach to instruction is a fundamental element to creating a great learning environment for our math students. She has worked with her full-time colleagues, adjunct instructors, tutors, staff members and administrators to implement best practices in developmental education. The departmental rates for student success have improved dramatically, and Stephanie certainly deserves a portion of the credit.”

Anthony R. Wilkinson, Lead Instructor for College-Level Mathematics, praised Krehl for her efforts to make courses more meaningful to students.

“Stephanie has been very diligent in redesigning the developmental math courses in a way that students who are enrolled in technical and medical fields can benefit from specialized

curriculum,” he said. “Technical Math is a course we had considered for many years, and Stephanie helped us secure state approval that allowed us to provide this option to our students.”

Fellow instructor Sammie Redd said Krehl has helped students optimize their time in the classroom and make connections between their career goals and math.

“Stephanie has incorporated mathematical study strategies into the developmental math curriculum that aid students to work at their best level,” Redd said. “In Technical Math, she has contextualized weekly hands-on projects that empower students with knowledge and skills relevant to their career discipline.”

Math instructor Shermel Brown said Krehl’s focus never wavers from students.

“Mrs. Krehl is very passionate about helping our students succeed,” Brown pointed out. “She has done a great job of implementing several new strategies into the developmental math classes, allowing us to achieve record-level successes. She also established an award ceremony for our developmental math students to highlight their achievements and encourage them to continue their efforts.”

Krehl said her individual success is a reflection of a team effort.

“We have great adjuncts and full-time people in our department,” she pointed out. “Most of our adjuncts have been around awhile, so it’s not new to them. They understand the importance of encouraging regular attendance and effort. It helps to know that everybody’s on the same page.”

Originally from southeast Kansas, Krehl earned a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics & Education at William Jewell College in Missouri. She completed a master’s degree at Indiana University before teaching high school for 10 years at a variety of public, private, and military institutions. Krehl also spent a year in Liverpool, England, as a children and youth worker at St. Bartholomew’s Church.

While teaching in U.S. high schools, she also served as an adjunct instructor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Johnson County Community College, and Labette Community College.

Krehl said she enjoys the challenge of making math more relevant and real to ASU Mid-South students.

“I’m a problem solver by nature, and every semester I discover something else that really needs work,” she explained. “This fall we’re trying to match students in particular academic areas with the classes that will be most appropriate to what they want to do. That sounds easier than it is, and we’re continuing to work on it.”

“There is always something new to try because there are always going to be students we could help more. I think the mark of a great teacher is continuing to work, adapt, and improve. That’s what I keep trying to do as a teacher and as an academic lead.”

In the classroom, Krehl’s favorite course is Developmental Math I. “I love seeing students come in thinking they’re horrible at math, can’t do math, and hate math and then have some success. They’re like, ‘Oh, I can do that.’ I think Dev I, more than any other class, has the opportunity to help students change that kind of mindset. It’s an opportunity to have those big ‘aha’ moments and those life-changing situations.”

She cited a non-traditional student in one of her spring classes as a classic example.

“She had been out of school for a while and came in terrified of the computer and terrified of math,” Krehl recalled. “She was determined it was going to be horrible for her. I said, ‘Just calm down. I’m here, and I’ll get you through it.’ We started working together, and after a couple of weeks she said, ‘Oh, I understand now. Oh, I never got that before but now I get it.’

“It was like all of these light bulbs were coming on. By the time she made it through three quarters of the semester, she was really excited because she was understanding specific math concepts for the first time. That’s very rewarding.”

While she enjoys the classroom, she also appreciates the broader scope of the educational process. “I love teaching, but I think I would like moving into a more administrative role because I could have a broader impact. Before I became a faculty lead, I swore I would never do anything but teach. My husband was the one who said, ‘Look, you have all these ideas, why don’t you try to put yourself in a position where you have the authority to carry out those ideas.’ I really love being in that leadership role.

“I also love working with other areas to make those connections. It’s not always me with the idea, but I’m good at taking ideas, putting things together, and working to find a way to make it happen. I don’t think I’ll teach forever, but I think I’ll always be involved with teaching somehow.”

Krehl, whose contextualization efforts are funded through a Title III PBI grant, has won multiple awards since arriving at the college. In 2014, she earned a John & Suanne Roueche Excellence Award from the League for Innovation in the Community College. Two years earlier, Krehl received the W.L. Barbour Family Award for Innovative Instruction from Mid-South.

A tradition since 1989, the NISOD Excellence Awards program supports individual colleges in recognizing and celebrating their finest at home and on an international stage. Award winners exhibit a positive attitude; show commitment to student learning, student success

through academic advising, and professional development; perform college service and contribute to institutional advancement; and demonstrate innovation, integrity, professionalism, and fairness

Previous faculty honorees at the college include James Ed Cook, Jeff Gray, Michelle McMillen, Jason Carmichael, Jason Carr, Logan Oliver, Dr. Trenia Miles, Sanjay Chowdhury, Wilma Thomason, Topeka Small, Andrea Crutchfield, James Vardaman, Cynthia Armes, Tammy Hovland, Darrell Uselton, D. Steve Nichols, Barbara Simpson, Nancy Rieves, and Gale Allen.