

Distinguished Graduate Teaching Award

**Professor Kathleen Collins McCabe '69, '87G, '01CAGS
Doctor of Learning, Leadership, and Community Program**

Several years ago, as the "Your Three Words" phenomenon was sweeping the nation, Kathleen Collins McCabe and her husband David McCabe '69, '73G were attending an alumni event on campus when she was asked for the three words she'd use to describe PSU. "My response was instantaneous; 'home sweet home'," McCabe says. "There's a level of familiarity and comfort here that I've never experienced anywhere else, and the fact that this is combined with an energy, excitement, and stimulation you can only find on campus makes PSU a very special place."

In fact, McCabe has come full circle. She was once a student at the university where she now teaches in the graduate program, earning her bachelor's degree in 1969, master's degree in 1987, and certificate of advanced graduate studies in 2001, and she has deep roots in the region; McCabe has worked as an educator and administrator in New Hampshire for more than four decades. She has taught everyone from kindergartners to adults in the course of her career. While teaching younger learners was an experience she valued, McCabe is especially passionate about her work with graduate students. "In the classroom with my fellow educators, I get to spend time talking about teaching, something that matters a great deal to me," she says. "How often in life do you get an opportunity to spend meaningful time with a group of individuals with whom you have something so vital in common? I'm a 'co-learner' as much as a teacher in the classroom. I get to collaborate with students and refine my own thinking as they work to meet their personal goals."

One area in which McCabe is expanding her own learning is in the role of the brain in teaching and learning. "Scientists can now pinpoint the neurons in the brain related to reading," notes McCabe, who is known as an education innovator. "Think about the implications for teaching and learning. Gaining a deeper understanding of the brain and how it works can help us be better teachers. When I started my career, we thought about the human brain in very general terms, but now we have the potential to use new scientific discoveries to transform experiences for our students."

Those who know McCabe well say her enthusiasm for integrating the latest thinking into her teaching is nothing new. A case in point: McCabe was teaching in a third-grade classroom as she and her husband were saving to buy their first computer—an Apple II—for their son Brian. "The following year, I requested a computer for my classroom. When the principal asked, 'Why?' I replied, 'Why not?'" McCabe remembers. "I believed then, and I believe now, that as educators, we have an obligation to expand our students' worlds in any way we can—whether through technology or the latest scientific discoveries or virtually anything else we can bring to our classrooms." McCabe was the first teacher at that school to have a computer in her classroom.

"Plymouth gave me an invaluable gift: a love of teaching," McCabe acknowledges. "Throughout my own education, I'd had teachers who were wonderful—and some who were not so great—and it really was the perspectives of those phenomenal teachers that helped me feel more confident in my abilities and come to understand the gift of being, and having, a great teacher. I appreciate when students call me 'doctor' and acknowledge my scholarship, and I value when students refer to me as their coach or mentor, but I was thrilled a few years ago when a Saudi student respectfully addressed me as 'teacher.'"

— Donna Eason '85



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Distinguished Graduate Teaching Award



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