

TALENTED LEADER

FORMER MUSIC PROFESSOR FINDS HARMONIC BLEND in the impossibly diverse School of Arts, Communication and Social Services by working hard to support innovative faculty and students

BY LILIANA ANGUIANO

Dr. Cynthia McGregor is not one to blow her own horn.

Well, actually, that is not true.

Southwestern's dean of the School of Arts, Communication and Social Sciences is an elite classical French horn player who once performed with the legendary rock band The Who.

It is more accurate to say that she is remarkably humble in a profession known for some outsized egos. She never told anyone on campus that she was named Administrator of the Year recently – by three organizations.

CALLING DR. YES

"When people say 'Cynthia, I want to do this. How can we make it happen?' my attitude is that I want to get as close to yes as we can."

McGregor, dean of the School of Arts, Communication and Social Sciences, was named, in short order, Outstanding Administrator by the California Music Educators Association and the recipient of the Arts Empowerment Ovation Award for Creative Leadership in San Diego County Region 1. Oh, and Southwestern College Administrator of the Year by her peers.

Time management, energy and a passion for her work fuel her, she said.

"We all have the same number of minutes in a day," she said. "We all have seven days a week, 24 hours. How we choose to spend our time is what makes us all different and I pack it in. I love the challenge of trying to support as many things as I can."

A constant challenge she has faced since becoming dean in July 2018 is finding

McGREGOR • PG 11



MUSIC OF THE NIGHT –

McGregor juggles her daytime job and family while maintaining her love for the French horn, which she plays at an elite level for the La Jolla Symphony. She once performed with the legendary rock band The Who, playing many of John Entwistle's iconic French horn lines.

Empowering dean is also an elite French horn player

the resources for so many worthy ACSS projects.

"Resourcefulness is huge for (Southwestern) because we don't have a lot of money lying around," she said. "So if we want to do something, how do we get the resources? How do we get people to get excited about it?"

Unlike the James Bond villain Dr. No, McGregor said she tries to be "Dr. Yes" – or at least "Dr. Let's See What We Can Do."

"When people come to me and say 'Cynthia, I want to do this. How do we make it happen?' my attitude is that I want to get as close to yes as we can," she said.

When McGregor finds her way to "yes" she often continues to support projects the best she can, even if it is a less-than-glamorous task. At a recent high school band pageant hosted at Southwestern, McGregor rocked a highlighter orange vest and tackled traffic control.

"I spent like an hour standing in a parking lot making sure nobody parked behind the cones because that's where all the school buses go for the evening band pageant," she said. "And I was on my phone, so I was still doing emails and all the things I would be doing in my office, but I was in the parking lot with an orange security vest."

A Ph.D. in music, McGregor is also the principal French horn of the La Jolla Symphony. Keeping her musical chops up requires some time.

"That adds another layer of complexity to my schedule because I have to actually get some time in to play my instrument," she said. "So sometimes that happens at six in the morning. I'm blowing through my French horn, which is 16 feet of piping, just so I that I exercise those muscles for 20 minutes before I walk the dogs and take my daughter to school."

Much of the credit for the success of the frantic ACSS school belongs to her staff, she said.

"At Southwestern we serve so many different parts of the student," she said. "We have to make sure they meet requirements. We want to challenge their critical thinking. We want them to question and to take ownership of how they can do their part to make this world better, and we have to feed their souls. We want them to be happy."

Dr. Gerard Rios, who created the Chicana and Chicano Studies program and updated the curriculum in Latin American and Latino American history, said McGregor is forever supportive of worthwhile projects.

"She handles a humongous workload as dean of an array of disciplines, many of which are very different thematically and methodologically," he said. "In my case, she was dean through my entire tenure-track process and was very supportive. Now that I am a tenured professor, I appreciate the value of her stewardship and counsel."

College President Dr. Mark Sanchez said McGregor is a champion for her faculty and their students.

"Dr. McGregor brings exceptional commitment to the work of serving students and our community at Southwestern College," he said. "She is a consummate professional and exemplifies Southwestern College pride."

McGregor said it was hard to stop teaching music at Southwestern, but she has kept her hand in it by volunteering at Sunnyside Elementary School. When she learned the campus had no band program, she started one. The Sunnyside School Mighty Bulldog Band is a five-time winner of the Bonitafest Twilight Parade Musical Excellence Award.

A former Girl Scout, McGregor is a troop leader and the area's source for cookies. Thin Mints are her fave, she confessed.

Seven days in a week, 24 hours in a day does not seem like enough time, but McGregor, more than most, has found a way to make it work.