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Bernadette “Bernie” Bach : Distinguished Achievement in Education

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2019 Distinguished Achievement in Education

Bernadette “Bernie” Bach (B.A.) ’79 (M.T.S) ’15

The St. Norbert College motto, “*docere verbo et exemplo*,” or “to teach by word and example,” stands as an aspiration for us all. Bernadette Bach has wholly embraced the motto as a guiding principle in her life.

As an educator, Bernadette believes in being a student first, last and always. True to her St. Norbert College liberal arts tradition, she enjoys learning, as evidenced by her first majors in education and religious studies; her subsequent master’s in community leadership from Regis University in Denver; another master’s in curriculum and instruction in multicultural education from the University of New Mexico; and yet another master’s, in theological studies, from St. Norbert through the Abbey of Santa Maria de la Vid in Albuquerque, N.M.

Bernadette considers her lifelong learning the key to expanding her ability to reach and teach others. She has made a significant and tangible impact in the field of education and in countless lives. Her positive influence has generated life-improving changes for students in her purview – from the single classroom to an entire school, and across the state of New Mexico.

New Mexico’s poverty rates are among the highest in the nation. This correlates to an educational system that perennially ranks near the bottom. Bernadette has responded to those needs by committing herself fully to addressing the issues at hand. She started by teaching elementary students at Catholic, public and reservation schools. With its large Hispanic and Native American populations, teaching in New Mexico required new perspectives beyond what Wisconsin prepared her for. So Bernadette pursued multicultural education studies – through a master’s degree, no less.

She then served as principal at Española Elementary School and assistant principal at Española Valley High School, working with staff and families to continually move the education needle. This rich experience earned her the position of director of professional licensure for the state’s department of public education. Not only was Bernadette responsible for issuing professional education licenses to teachers and educational staff across New Mexico, she worked to develop

dynamic training materials for school districts and shepherded accreditation teams to generate improvements.

With a desire for more active involvement in her faith, Bernadette became director of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults at her Santa Fe, N.M., parish in 2008. In true Bernadette fashion, she took the reins, developed curricula and oversaw lessons to ensure the best coursework for those undertaking the journey. She continues to lead conversion efforts and embraces the cultural diversity of New Mexico, welcoming all who seek insight.

For her tireless dedication to her profession and her faith, for her admirable record of achievement, and for her unwavering commitment in supporting the betterment of everyone – both in and out of classrooms – we are pleased to honor Bernadette Bach with the Distinguished Achievement Award in Education.

St. Norbert College

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