

2013-2014 STANLEY J. DRAZEK
TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS



SUSAN T. DEAN

COLLEGIATE
PROFESSOR

Dr. Susan T. Dean made the journey from traditional-style university teaching in Alabama to teaching military students in Europe on a whim, with the goal of, as she put it, “doing something different for one year.” Twelve years later, she has yet to leave Germany, fueled by her passion for making a difference in the lives of military students.

The Birmingham, Alabama, native has taught information technology to graduate students throughout Germany. Involved in education since 1975, she taught computing at Samford University before joining UMUC Europe in 2002.

An expert in a male-dominated field, Dr. Dean’s interest for computing started at the age of 16. “I was one of those girls who no one ever told couldn’t do math,” she said, with a laugh. Upon winning a high school math tournament, she was given the chance to do some programming at a local university — a rare opportunity in 1965. The experience was monumental. “It changed my life,” she said, “I was hooked on computing.”

While working at various times as a programmer, systems analyst, and project manager in the areas of medical information systems, small business support, and life insurance, Dr. Dean found joy in teaching part time. “It was something I gravitated naturally toward,” she said.

Her teaching philosophy focuses on hosting an environment for meaningful interaction, where students learn not only from her, but each other. For Dr. Dean, the most important gift she can give is ensuring her students learn how to learn — a skill they’ll use for the rest of their lives. “I hope that my lifelong desire for learning will be contagious,” she said.

Retiring at the age of 65, this recognition from her students is a humbling end to a memorable chapter. “I’m very honored,” she said, “That’s the highlight for me: my students nominating me for this award.” She plans to continue teaching part time with UMUC, while dividing her time between upstate New York and Oftersheim, near Heidelberg, Germany.

Dr. Dean has twice been president of the Consortium for Computing Sciences in Colleges (CCSC) and currently serves as associate editor of the *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges*. She holds a BA in Mathematics from Vanderbilt University, and an MS and PhD in Computer Science from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.