

## 2017-2018 STANLEY J. DRAZEK TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS



LEASA L. PERKINS  
COLLEGIATE  
ASSOCIATE  
PROFESSOR

When Professor Leasa L. Perkins says that it is easy to get excited by computer science classes, she is not trading in hyperbole. When she tells you that math equations are a joy and a pleasure, believe her. After 18 years and 200 courses, Ms. Perkins knows for certain the miracle of rocket science. Which is to say that there is magic in a parabolic function, and she has seen more than 3000 students “launch” what they have learned in theory and in practice. Summarizing her teaching philosophy, she said, “I am passionate about the material I teach, and I care deeply about the students.”

She emphasizes real-world scenarios in all of her courses providing practical learning experiences. Of all of the courses that Ms. Perkins has taught for UMUC in Europe and the Middle East, she has most enjoyed introductory math. It is a foundational class for helping students build confidence and overcome apprehension, and is one that has immediate real-world applications. She notes that once students “stop worrying about memorizing things for tests and begin to explore how they can use concepts to solve problems, they are hooked.” The key for students is to go from being terrified by math to thrilled with it, which is a transition she sees them make time and time again.

Furthermore, she genuinely cares for her students beyond the classroom and extends this interest to their goals, aspirations, and career tracks. She reviews with them degree plans, scholarship options, and internship opportunities; she celebrates their achievements; and she guides them over bumps in the road. For her, teaching is as much passion as profession—a life’s calling that rewards and renews in perpetuity.

Living in Europe for more than 25 years, Ms. Perkins previously worked as a civilian systems administrator for the Air Force and as an instructor under contract for the Space and Naval Warfare Command. She holds a BA in English and an MS in Information Technology from UMUC.