

# STEPPING DOWN AFTER A CAREER OF STEPPING UP:

## *Lucretia “Lu” Mann Retires After 41 Years at Mercy College*



“‘Consumed in service’ is my life. If there was a need, I’ve always said, ‘I’ll help.’” That is the story of **Lucretia “Lu” Mann’s** 41-year career at Mercy College in a nutshell. Starting as an adjunct instructor and retiring as Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, she was a beloved professor and contributed to Mercy’s growth by leading numerous important initiatives over the years.

**E**ven with all the ways Mercy has changed over the past 41 years, Mann says that the most important things have not changed at all: “What has stayed the same at Mercy is the mission and people’s passion for the mission and educating the students that we so earnestly try to serve — and I think we serve them well.”

The last of six children born to Italian immigrants, Mann had to figure out how to navigate college on her own. She attended Iona College where she earned a B.B.A. and an M.B.A. in Accounting. Her advice to other first-generation college students? “Ask for help. There’s no need to feel embarrassed. Especially at Mercy, everybody is here to serve you.”

After graduation, she joined Arthur Andersen, LLP as one of the first female accountants and was quickly identified as someone on a fast track to partnership based on her

performance. However, she found that working there was not conducive to maintaining a work-life balance, so she decided to explore teaching and became an adjunct instructor in Mercy’s business program in 1980.

“I found that I really did enjoy teaching,” she said. “Being a first-generation student and a first-generation American, I understood how difficult navigating college was for students. It was very important to me to help students in a similar situation. That’s why Mercy’s mission really speaks to me, even to this day.”

By 1982, Mann was hired as one of the first full-time faculty members of Mercy’s newly formed Accounting Department. In this role, she was instrumental in developing curricula and registering several degree programs with the New York State Education Department. Over time, she became a tenured Associate Professor who never lost her love of teaching. “Mercy students are so

thirsty for knowledge, and they are so willing to work hard to get ahead,” she explained. “When you can instill a person with knowledge, the love of knowledge and the ability to continue to educate themselves, you’ve changed the trajectory of their life and the lives of their family members.”

Mann’s students hold her in high regard as well, and she received several awards, including the Sister Gratia Maher Excellence in Teaching Award, the Phi Sigma Honor Society Teaching Award, a Master of Pedagogy degree honoris causa and recognition as an inspiring professor during the College’s 60th Anniversary Founders’ Day celebration.

In 1998, Mann became the Chairperson of the graduate and undergraduate Accounting Department — a position she held for 14 years. In that role, she authored and registered several new degree programs, including the B.S./M.S. in Public Accounting program and the B.S.



(l to r) Ann Medinets, former faculty member, Denise Munoz '11, Lu Mann, Denise Stefano, associate professor, accounting and Kelly Blacker, assistant professor, accounting



Lu Mann, Julio Garcia '87, former Trustee

in Business Administration/M.B.A. program. “I’m especially proud of those five-year programs because they save students time and money,” she explained.

In 2010, she moved into administration at the School of Business — first as Interim Dean and then as Chief Assessment Officer — while continuing to teach. In 2013, she became Interim Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs. While on sabbatical in 2015, the then-Provost asked her to return early in order to bring her institutional knowledge and expertise into the role of Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. “It took some persuading because I was planning to go back into the classroom,” she said. “But I’m the kind of person who, if you need help, I’m here.” Mann remained in that role until her retirement in June 2021.

As Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, she worked with faculty to register over 100 new programs and curricular changes and to expand program offerings across all Mercy campuses. She was instrumental in registering academic programs for the teach-out of the 1,800 students who came from The College of New Rochelle. Mann developed and implemented the academic contingency plan as courses pivoted to fully online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Truly embodying Mercy’s values, Mann also devoted much of her time outside of work to volunteering. She held several leadership roles at the Westchester Putnam Council of the Boy Scouts of America (WPCBSA),

volunteered as a religious educator, and served as a parent advocate at Scarsdale C.H.I.L.D. (Children Having Individual Learning Differences).

Mann passed this passion for service along to her students. At an accounting alumni reunion, a former student, Daisy Pedley '99, told her, “You made such an impact on my life because not only did you teach us about accounting, but you also taught us to give back.” Pedley explained that she volunteered to develop and implement programs to help children integrate with the world outside of their institutional homes. Mann is also proud that two other former students, Julio Garcia '87 and Michael Hayes '92, have served Mercy College as members of the Board of Trustees.

“You don’t even have to pay me — just let me know that somebody’s life got better because they got an education,” Mann said, only half-joking.

Mann’s retirement plans so far involve traveling, spending more time with family and catching up on her rest after several busy years: “My career was very fulfilling. A wonderful experience. I wish I still had more steam in the engine so I could keep going.”

Even now, Mann is still working part-time for Mercy to train the new interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and complete some important projects. And if she gets the call to step up in another capacity, she may very well do so. That is simply the kind of person she is.



Lu Mann and Narasimhaswamy Banavara, associate professor and program director of computer science and interim associate dean of the School of Liberal Arts