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Michelle Naylor '93, M.S., MT (ASCP)

Assistant Professor and Director, Clinical Laboratory Science Program, School of Health and Natural Sciences

Michelle Naylor '93, M.S., MT (ASCP), a first-generation college student, followed her older sister to Mercy as “a shy international transfer student” with dreams of entering the field of laboratory science. Naylor recognized the value of a culturally balanced workplace. “The clinical laboratory is a diverse environment,” she said. “Mercy taught me how to work with others for the benefit of the whole team.”

After graduating from Mercy with a bachelor’s degree in clinical laboratory science (then called medical technology), Naylor was hired immediately at a local hospital. She continued advancing her career through a succession of positions at prestigious hospitals, but something was missing. “I loved being a technologist and clinical lab manager, but the best part for me was training staff and teaching students. That’s when I realized my true passion.”

Today, as Director of the Clinical Laboratory Science Program at Mercy College, Naylor embraces the opportunity to develop future clinical laboratory scientists. “I love the Mercy community. I feel valued and heard,” she said. “Mercy is graduating well-trained health care workers for the greater New York area. It’s very rewarding.”

Julia Zavala '08, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor
Co-Activity Director, STEM Mentoring Program, Department of Psychology, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Julia Zavala '08, Ph.D., heard about Mercy while attending a community college near her home in Southern California. As a first-generation college student, the notion of transferring to another college across the country was, in her words, “challenging to say the least.” But Zavala made the move and has never regretted it.

Zavala cites many of her Mercy professors for playing a role in her success. Dr. Lisa Ecklund-Flores “always believed in me and helped me develop my research skills,” she said. Tapped to present a student research poster at a travel conference, she relied on the steady support of professors who “guided me as a researcher and educator,” Zavala said — a gift she now tries to pass on to her own students.

After earning her bachelor’s degree in psychology in 2008, Zavala went on to earn both a master’s degree and a Ph.D. at Columbia University Teachers College. While still working on her doctorate, she joined Mercy as an adjunct in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, becoming a full-time faculty member in 2017.

“Mercy put me on a path to success,” she said. “My mentors were great role models who provided opportunities to grow. I constantly use what I learned and apply it to my own students.” In sum, she said, “Mercy College is ‘home’ to me.”

The Lure of Coming Back home

As Told by Alumni who now Teach at Mercy



Photo provided

Teresa Quackenbush, M.S. '06

Assistant Professor,
Department of Early Childhood
and Childhood Education,
School of Education

Teresa Quackenbush, M.S. '06 had a steady career as a news producer until 2001, when the September 11 terrorist attacks prompted some “soul searching. I was grateful for my television career, but I wasn’t finding value,” she said.

Growing up in the Bronx, Quackenbush was inspired by a teacher whose values “sparked a dream that never left me.” After leaving her job with the hit CNN show, Larry King Live, she enrolled at Villanova University to begin laying the groundwork for teacher training. “For the first year I doubted my decision, but I stayed with it,” she said.

Arriving at Mercy on a prestigious New York City Teaching Fellowship, she stayed on after earning her master’s degree in early childhood education, eventually joining the Early Childhood Education faculty. “I always felt very supported by Mercy,” she said. “My professors taught me that a leader is someone who tries to find their piece in the puzzle.”

Quackenbush is proud of the College’s growth from the small college she’d barely heard of to the “hidden gem” it is today. “I feel like I grew up with Mercy,” she said. “And at age 47, I finally found what I love.”



Photo provided

David Wang, M.S. '11, Ed.D.

Associate Professor and Chair,
Department of Mathematics &
Computer Sciences,
School of Liberal Arts

David Wang, M.S. '11, Ed.D., is an early adopter.

In 1998, when most computers ran DOS and the Internet was still in its infancy, Wang accepted an offer from Mercy College to join its emerging faculty in the Department of Mathematics & Computer Sciences in the School of Liberal Arts. In one fell swoop, Wang not only landed his first teaching job, but also found his niche.

As the computer science boom was transforming the entire IT industry, Mercy offered one of the first programs in cybersecurity to be certified by the National Security Agency.

But for Wang, that was only part of the appeal. “Mercy is committed to providing students — many of whom are minorities, low-income, and first-generation — the opportunity to transform their lives,” Wang said. That philosophy prompted Wang to earn his master’s degree in cybersecurity from Mercy in 2011. As the first in his family to attend college, the triumph of earning his advanced degree was that much sweeter.

Today, Wang becomes effusive about Mercy’s mission to open doors for students who would not otherwise have the chance. It meshes with his own belief in going all in to help any student who truly wants to succeed.



Photo provided

Mark Chmiel, M.S. '16

Instructor, Economics and
Strategic Marketing,
School of Business

Mark Chmiel, M.S. '16, joined the School of Business faculty in 2014. With decades of high-level corporate experience under his belt, including 10-plus years in the C-suite, Chmiel had a lot to offer the next generation of business leaders. It wasn’t long before Chmiel, attracted by Mercy’s supportive stance toward the unconventional student, decided to go for his master’s degree in organizational leadership. Chmiel relished his time as a student, learning “to appreciate and celebrate the diversity of today’s youth and the difficulties they face.”

Chmiel had a lot to offer the next generation of business leaders.

Chmiel chose teaching as a way to make a difference in the lives of students — in his words, “to leave a footprint.” But at times he had his doubts. During a lecture near the end of a capstone class he was teaching, he said, “I asked them point blank, ‘Are you getting it? Are you absorbing what I’ve been talking about all these weeks?’ A student raised her hand and answered, ‘Professor, don’t you remember? In our first class, you told us you weren’t going to teach us how to memorize, you were going to teach us how to think.’ That moment was a home run for me — they got it.”