

Voices of FACCC: Meet our Members

Q&A with FACCC Member and Board of Governor, Leslie Banta

Discipline: Mathematics
Years of Service: 20 years

College: Mendocino College
Committee: Legislation & Budget

Q: What inspired you to become a teacher?

A: I was inspired to teach after helping in my children's classrooms. I was often out in charge of the math table and helping one particular student (a young immigrant learning English) made me realize that I could love teaching as a profession. After that, teaching in higher ed became a dream and, finally, a reality.

Q: Do you have a personal quote that inspires you?

A: One person can make a difference and everyone should try. - Jacqueline Kennedy writing about her husband's beliefs

Q: What was your original career aspiration?

A: I wanted to be a translator at the United Nations. I thought it would be fascinating to be in a place where nations came together to work on shared interests. As a result, I took both Spanish and French in high school and sign language in college.

Q: If you could change one thing for faculty and staff, what would it be?

A: It's difficult to pick one thing but, given where we are in this moment, I'd choose for all faculty and staff to have no-cost health insurance.

Q: What's a memorable teaching moment that stands out to you?

A: I suppose it would be with a student who told me she had such math trauma in her past that she would sit out in her car and cry before coming to class and had to convince herself to get out of the car. But, eventually, that went away. By the end of the semester, having passed the class, she felt like she could do anything (and she was right).

Q: What are some of your hobbies outside of teaching?

A: I enjoy trail walks, boating on the lake near my home, travel, watching the birds that visit my yard, and tending my vegetable garden.

Q: What is something new you'd like to learn?

A: I would learn how to draw and paint with watercolors. My grandmother was a painter and her work is beautiful. I plan to take up learning to draw and paint when I retire.

Q: What is something about you that might surprise people?

A: One thing that I didn't expect is that I enjoy faculty leadership and I love advocacy. It is empowering when you can lend your voice to something bigger than yourself. I spent a lot of my early years feeling that my voice was not something that was of value. It took me a long time to get to the place where I understood that my voice is a gift that I am meant to use. There are still people, I am sure, that would prefer I pushed down this part of who I am, but I've found a place where I can be true to myself and use my voice for things that matter.

Q: What's the most memorable place you've traveled to?

A: St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is beautiful, seeing wild donkeys outside my door was a lovely way to begin the day, the snorkeling was amazing, and the beaches are unmatched.

Q: What advice would you give to new community college faculty?

A: Being a community college professor is one of the best jobs in the world! You have amazing



students and colleagues and you get to truly make a difference in the lives of others. One piece of advice - keep growing and try new things. When you get into a routine, teaching can feel like any other job, but when you challenge yourself and stretch yourself, you learn right alongside your students and that creates amazing experiences.

Q: If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be?

A: I'd have dinner with my dad, who is no longer with us. It would be a big family affair where my kids could see him again and my six grandchildren could meet him. But you probably mean a historical figure that I'm not related to. In that case, it would like to have dinner with Eleanor Roosevelt and Audre Lorde. These are women who used their voices for causes they cared about, particularly related to women and their place in this world. I wonder what they would think of where we are today and how we should use the power of our collective voice to defend women's rights.

Q: What's your go-to beverage?

A: Chai latte, if you please (but I also like tequila).

Q: What's your educational background?

A: MS from Dominican University (Fun fact: I'm currently finishing up an Associate's in Ethnic Studies at my own college. Never stop learning!)

Final Thoughts:

A: The work that FACCC is doing on behalf of community college faculty and our students is nothing short of amazing. Community college educators and FACCC staff join together as advocates and there is power in our collective voice. With FACCC, there is a place for anyone who is called to service and advocacy. If anyone out there is looking for a place where they can be part of making a difference at the legislative level, this is where you belong.