Thesis: The main idea of the entire paper, written as a single sentence, that the rest of the paper will go to prove.

PROFESSOR DOREE ROBINSON RETIRES “TO ENJOY LIFE”

Doree Robinson seemed to have a sudden epiphany when she told me earlier this semester, “All I’ve ever done in my life is work! I have a new grandson and another little one on the way, so I’m retiring to enjoy them and the rest of my life!” For Professor Robinson, work seems a sorely common and insufficient word to describe what she has been doing at Gateway for over 30 years. When assessing a legacy such as hers one doesn’t think of work, but rather of words like passion, devotion, caring, excellence, mission, impact, guidance, leadership—and I don’t use those words lightly. Professor Robinson’s focus has been on involvement across the board in Gateway’s academic affairs has been impressive and integral to the College as an institution of higher learning. One cannot think of what they do as work or just a job if they live and breathe the way Professor Robinson does. For her it’s all-encompassing, all-consuming, living each day with a noble purpose that transcends the concerns and expectations of most mere mortals. Anyone who talks to her immediately sees her preoccupation with a million thoughts and concerns far beyond simply teaching students to write. Undoubtedly, teaching students to write has always been her primary mission, but that has in no way diminished during her stewardship of the college’s Writing Center over the last eight years. Dr. Mark Kowinski, Gateway’s Dean of Academics, believes the WC will be remembered as Professor Robinson’s most lasting mark. “Doree has made extraordinary contributions to Gateway Community College. Foremost is her inspiration and success in touching students’ lives, and her wisdom in helping them achieve exceptional learning results. Her legacy will live on in the Writing Center which she has nurtured and supported into a resource that continues to empower students to new intellectual levels.” Professor Robinson approached the Writing Center with a philosophy that focused on teaching students to be better writers and instilled in them skills they can rely on for the rest of their lives. Clare Callan, herself an English professor and a Writing Center tutor for 14 years, explains, “Doree has been passionate about making the Writing Center a place where tutors teach writing skills rather than just edit papers, which would be a far simpler task. She has made the WC a place where students are welcomed, feel supported and are guided to greater independence and self-reliance. She really cares about students and goes to great lengths to help them. Her compassionate nature and dedication to students’ academic development will be missed.” Professor Robinson’s commitment to her students is tried, but by no means eclipsed, by extra-curricular activities that have enlisted her participation on countless committees and councils. As a leader, she has served as chair of the Humanities Department and also as Acting Associate Dean of Academics. As a professional writer, she has frequently contributed her expertise to the composition of major institutional documents and, over several recent years, the college’s accreditation through NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges). Vicki Borsello, Gateway’s Dean of Continuing Education, who has worked closely with Professor Robinson on NEASC assignments, says, “In the 20 years I’ve worked with Doree, she has consistently encouraged and supported recognized practices in order to assure that quality instruction remains a primary focus. Doree has participated on several NEASC site visiting teams over the years, and has been a lead for each of Gateway’s last four NEASC submissions. Doree’s accreditation and assessment knowledge will be missed.”

The mind boggles to imagine a Gateway without Professor Robinson. In the whirling midst of her last weeks at the college, and whilst moving plans throw her life into disarray, I took a walk around the New Haven Green with her to ask one specific question. What is the most proud of amongst her accomplishments at Gateway? “I suppose I am most proud of the value the Writing Center places on the work that goes into actually getting a finished product, work that beginning academic writers often minimize, overlook or dismiss. Instead of just cranking out a paper at the last minute because their ‘work better under pressure,’ we’ve been able, by practicing a conference pedagogy that addresses an individual writer’s process—the composing, rather than just a single product, the composition—to make visible the previous ‘invisible’ phases of writing a college-level essay. I am so pleased as well that the WC is now perceived by so many students as a safe, nurturing place for them to talk about ideas, ideas that come from what they’ve read and go into what they are writing.” At that moment, we both saw a robin suddenly yank a worm out of the grass nearby and we smiled at the birth of Spring. As much as Professor Robinson’s retirement will be felt in the college community as an end and loss in many ways, for her it is a new beginning. The look on her face when she talks about her grandson reveals a grandmother who’s eager to be one full-time—except maybe for the children’s book she’ll be writing while the kids are napping. Fare thee well, Professor! —HE DELO

We’re Looking Forward to Seeing You in the Fall!