

## MCRPA Member Spotlight September 2021

### Denise Williams



**How long have you worked at Montgomery College, and what is your current role and department?**

I have worked at Montgomery College for 2 years and 8 months. I am a learning skills support specialist in the Health Sciences Department at the Takoma Park, Silver Spring campus.

**How long have you been in your current profession?**

My profession is being an educator. I started teaching elementary school in 1988 (taught 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade all subjects, K-6 mathematics, k-6 nutrition) until June 1995 in Harlem, New York. During that summer of 1995, I relocated to Maryland and taught 4th and 5th grade all subjects, and 6th grade English (junior high school) for 3 years (until 1998). During the spring of 1998, I started working as an academic advisor for 16 years at Coppin State University where part of my duties was to teach a freshman seminar - orientation to college course. In addition, by 2008, as an adjunct professor, I started teaching evening courses in psychology (general psychology, and three other upper division psychology courses) until 2018. I began my tenure here at Montgomery College as a learning skills support specialist in January 2019. My duties entail teaching, guiding, facilitating and assisting students with college academic skills so they can be successful in their health sciences programs. Therefore, I have been in my current profession for 33 years and counting.

**Who inspires you?**

My mother, who died 34 years ago, is my biggest inspiration. From my vision and memory of her, she was quite a sensation. Ever since I was at least 4 years old, my mother instilled the importance of education. She always told her children that "knowledge is power, the power that no one can take from you so make sure you get an education – be intelligent". My mother was a strong, determined individual who spoke up for herself and her family because we were poor. My mother was one of the original community activists who helped shaped and formed what is now District 5 in Central Harlem, New York City. She was a hard-working woman who worked two or three jobs

to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. Most of all, she was protective and always expressed concern, attention and equal love for all of her children. My three sons are also my inspiration. As a single parent giving birth to twins with special needs, I instilled the importance of respect, education, consistency, determination and productivity. Today, I am proud to say that my sons are all adults and doing very well. Every single day, they inspire me to continue to conquer my endeavors.

Lastly, the students at Montgomery College inspires me. When I assist the students, my goal is to help make a difference in their lives, possibly be an inspiration to them. In addition, I am passionate and inspired to give assistance, guidance, and ensure that they know that I am here for the betterment of their education. Helping students achieve academic success greatly inspires me.

### **What is your favorite thing about working at MC?**

I have been working since 1973. However, throughout my work experience, I have never worked at a place like Montgomery College and this is a huge compliment. My favorite thing about working at Montgomery College is that employees are given numerous choices and opportunities to attend professional trainings, leadership cohort classes, management and supervisory training, employees have multiple opportunities to not only cross train but actually work in other departments to assist, join multiple organizations, make connections and meet wonderful people, and the list goes on and on. I am so delighted to be a part of the Montgomery College family.

### **What are you currently passionate about?**

The first thing I am very passionate about is continuing to brand the importance of family, love, and respect in my sons. Especially as time goes by, we get older, begin to start more generations of families, and step off and live separate lives. I am very passionate about keeping my son's bonded, being openly communicative, and especially support each other to the best of their abilities. My sons are now grown men ages 36, 27, and 27 (two are identical twins). The second thing I am really passionate about is reaching an educational goal where I am empowering students to achieve academic success. My passion is really working with students in detail, being thorough and clearly giving them connective examples that assist their academic concerns. The third thing that I am naturally passionate about is being there for others; family, friends, colleagues, students, etc. Anyway that I can help, reassure, and support someone, if it is in my power, I would love to be of assistance.

### **What is one goal you hope to achieve this year?**

I would like to join a motivational speaking professional group.

**What is your favorite quote?**

My favorite quote is “Forward ever, backwards never”. I first learned of this quote during my undergraduate study years at Stony Brook University. I enrolled in a “Slavery” course (AFS 375) taught by the historical Professor Amiri Baraka. I never forgot Professor Baraka shared that this quote, “Forward ever, backward never”, is a quote from Kwame Nkrumah, the man who looked into the future and actualized his dream to free Ghana. Nkrumah was a revolutionary leader who led Ghana’s fight to gain independence. This quote was used as our graduation quote that year and I loved the quote ever since.

**What hobby would you get into if time and money were not an issue?**

One of my hobbies is cooking. I enjoy making tasty, decorative pans of food that are delightful, healthy dishes. There has been some thoughts and conversations in my family about opening up my own restaurant. A part of my enjoyment with this hobby is actually noticing how much everyone enjoy the food that I cook.

**What do you want to be remembered for?**

In January 2015, I founded the Coppin Student Parent Organization (CSPO). CSPO’s mission was to assist students who are parents with making college more manageable academically, financially, and socially. I would like to be remembered for starting this organization because so many students were able to benefit by getting assistance with financial support to stay in college, get daycare vouchers, housing, food, shelter, etc. Overall, I would love to be remembered for making a difference in someone’s life.

**What profession did you want to work in when you were younger?**

During high school, my favorite subject was mathematics. I earned a Math Regents High School Diploma. When I graduated from high school, my major entering college was math. I originally wanted to be either a mathematics teacher or a mathematician for the government.

**Where do you see yourself in 10 or 20 years?**

I see myself retired in 10 years, travelling around the world, writing and publishing a few books, mentoring students, and having a motivational speaker consulting business.