

Massage therapy professor melds spirit, mind, body

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The College of Southern Maryland presented its Annual Faculty Excellence Award Honoring Permanent Faculty to Tara McManaway, professor and coordinator of the massage therapy program at the college.

"Through Professor McManaway's leadership of the massage therapy program and her innovative approach to massage education, CSM graduates are well prepared to successfully apply business principles and advocate for professional massage practice while providing holistic client care," CSM Health Sciences Chair Dr. Laura Polk said about the selection of McManaway for the award.

"A recent example of Professor McManaway's creativity is the design of a collaborative experience between massage and nursing students during behavioral health and end-of-life simulations," Polk said. "Each group of students came away with a new perspective of the value of touch when working with these

vulnerable populations.”

As a result of such visionary teaching, Polk said, massage therapy program graduates consistently attain a 100 percent pass rate on all licensing exams. In addition, two CSM students in the past four years have won national contests sponsored by professional massage associations.

“These accomplishments are a testament to Professor McManaway’s commitment to the CSM massage therapy program,” Polk said.

McManaway believes the responsibility of the massage therapist extends beyond simply teaching facts and theories.

“As an educator, I see my role as facilitating learning, delegating responsibility for learning and demonstrating professional behavior onto the students, coaching students, setting a model for classroom and professional behavior, imparting knowledge and upholding professional boundaries necessary for successful massage therapy practice,” McManaway said.

She instructs students from ages 16 to 77 in all courses in the massage therapy program.

Her goal is to create independent, self-motivated learners and adapt instructional styles to the maturity of the classroom, but set the bar high knowing that students will rise to the challenge.

“Learning massage therapy is transformative for students,” she said.

Her students develop in physical and psychological ways by receiving and providing massage, she said, by the inner reflections about their practice, and the scientific thought processes informing massage practice.

“While one can become misty-eyed about the transformative processes of massage therapy education, there is a balance to education which holds both the educator and the student to a very high standard of professional practice,” she said. “Whether massage therapists are working as part of a health care team or practicing massage as prevention and wellness, there should be an awesome respect and awareness instilled in each student practitioner.”

And even if the student realizes that massage therapy is not the profession of choice for them, she said, they learn so much about themselves in the process.

“We cannot call it a failure,” McManaway said. “It’s an awakening.”

The self-described U.S. Marine Corps brat recalled how she got into the massage therapy field.

While she was a counselor in the 1980s, she received a massage and had an “ah-ha” moment. The experience ignited her curiosity as to how touch therapy could integrate with talk therapy.

“I attended the Baltimore School of Massage, driving two-plus hours one way from West Virginia to Fells Point for 18 months to learn about massage,” she said.

At the time she was a Presbyterian minister, a counselor and then a massage therapist.

“I had what a dear friend calls the trifecta of training: spirit, mind and body,” she said.

Her training in the field is extensive. She is a licensed professional counselor supervisor, licensed massage therapist in Maryland and West Virginia with 30 years’ experience and an integrative and body-oriented therapy educator.

As a professor and program coordinator at CSM since December 2003, McManaway advises students and develops curricula, both face-to-face and in web-based courses in the massage program and in the college’s Division of Health Sciences.

McManaway serves on the Behavioral Review Team at the college, is the vice president of the Faculty Senate Executive Board, and chair of the Faculty Wellness Committee and Massage Program Advisory Board. She has served as a conference coordinator for the mental health first aid instructor training, chair of the Massage Therapy Program Advisory Board and a member of the Academic Standards Committee.

While at CSM, she has created two new Maryland Higher Education Commission-approved Certificates in Massage for basic and advanced training for massage therapists. McManaway also reviews textbooks for major publishing companies.

At CSM, she has spearheaded the Mental Health First Aid Certification Training Program and she received the college’s Community Service Award in 2004 for supporting the Calvert 350 Celebration event by providing a massage and wellness booth.

Most recently, she presented a research poster session at the International Massage Therapy Research Conference in Seattle, Washington. The poster, “Integrating Body-Oriented Therapies in Trauma Informed Practice,” also was displayed at the Australian Association of Massage Therapists National Conference in May.

McManaway holds a bachelor of arts in philosophy and religion from James Madison University, a master of divinity in counseling and theology from Vanderbilt University’s School of Divinity, a certificate from the professional massage program in advanced massage and bodywork from the Baltimore School of Massage and Holistic Health Center and a certificate of advanced graduate study in counseling and supervision, and mental health counseling from Johns Hopkins University’s School of Education.

CSM’s Annual Faculty Excellence Award recognizes outstanding contributions to teaching; curriculum and professional development; college community and the community at large. The award, which has been given since 1989, is announced during spring commencement.

The Annual Faculty Excellence Award Honoring Adjunct Faculty recognizes outstanding contributions to teaching, professional development, the CSM mission and the community at large. First awarded in 2007, this award is presented during winter commencement. For a full listing of recipients of the annual faculty excellence awards at CSM, visit <http://www.csmd.edu/about/faculty-excellence-awards/index.html> . For information on CSM, visit www.csmd.edu.

