



News Release

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Ridgewater's biology faculty honored for teaching excellence

HUTCHINSON and WILLMAR, MN – Ridgewater College's Ann Marie Youngdahl was recently honored for her biology teaching excellence by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) System Board of Trustees.

As an Excellence in Teaching honoree for 2018, Youngdahl received her recognition plaque and medallion at a recent celebration banquet in St. Paul.

The celebration program had this to say about Youngdahl: "A committed, positive role model in her classroom and on campus, Youngdahl has the ability to make impressive connections with her students and gives them a strong voice in their educational journey. She successfully challenges herself, her students and her colleagues to grow every day."

Youngdahl has taught at Ridgewater since 2003. She teaches human anatomy and physiology, but has also taught microbiology, general biology, human biology, and personal and community health.

Ridgewater Interim President Betty Strehlow commended Youngdahl. "Ann Marie is a talented and dedicated biology instructor who prides herself in adding value to her students' education and learning experiences," Strehlow said. "Her determination, sense of commitment, and persistence allow Ann Marie to both challenge and support students to reach their full potential in biology classes and life."

And indeed, one of Youngdahl's students confirmed that sentiment in her award nomination letter: "Ann Marie is a wonderful faculty member in many different ways." Sometimes it is by offering students different learning formats. Other times it is about being approachable and listening to student issues, class related or not, she said. "She shows how much she loves her job with every lecture and lab she has; this makes me want to find a career that I am that passionate about as well.... I look to her as a role model and will always look back on the classes I took with her knowing that she has given me the knowledge to be a successful nursing student and an overall great person."

In addition to classroom teaching, Youngdahl has served on various Ridgewater committees, focusing on everything from student learner outcomes, Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and academic quality improvement to institutional

review, safety, and diversity efforts. She also served several years as co-advisor for the student Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the faculty Center for Teaching and Learning.

“Ann Marie’s strengths lie in her empathy and personal commitment to her students’ success,” explained Ridgewater’s Alan Stage, dean of liberal arts instruction. “This is obvious in the relationships she forms and lengths she goes to ensure her students have the best possible outcome from their learning experience.”

Fellow Ridgewater biology colleague Randy Curtiss expressed his sentiments for Youngdahl: “She cares for her students, beyond just the classroom, and challenges them to learn more than they thought they could.... She is an excellent teacher; one I am proud to work with and one that makes Ridgewater and its students better off!”

Youngdahl enjoys being a female scientist, a minority in the field, and strives to be a role model who empowers her students, many of whom are female nursing students learning to love science or male students who themselves can help eliminate minority gender biases as they enter nursing themselves.

“This award is a culmination of years of effort,” Youngdahl stated of the recognition. “It makes me feel like my work has been worthwhile. For all of us at Ridgewater, we do it for the students.”

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 400,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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