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The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Ellie Bunting, Professor of English.



Ellie Bunting
Professor of English

Where are you from?

I was born in New Jersey, but I moved to Fort Myers Beach when I was two years old. Although my family would return to the Jersey Shore every summer, we always came back to the beach for the winter.

Since graduating from college, I have been living on the Beach year-round.

Which college or university did you attend?

I graduated from the University of South Florida, but I earned my AA degree from what was then Edison Junior College

When did you begin teaching at FSW?

I started as an adjunct in January 1980 and was hired as a full-time instructor in the fall of 1980.

What made you become interested in your academic discipline?

Originally, I wanted to go to law school and was advised to major in English because a lawyer needed to be able to read and write well. Once I got into the program, I realized how much I loved literature, so I was glad I made the decision to major in English even though I decided against law school.

What jobs or positions have you held that were formative for you and from which you draw experience that shapes your approach to teaching?

I have been very lucky in my career because I have had some very good leaders. Right after grad school, I started teaching at Canterbury School. The headmaster, Don Bartels, was an excellent mentor and instilled in me a strong work ethic. He also encouraged me to teach outside the box and was always supportive of my trying new techniques and reaching beyond what I thought possible. When I first came to FSW, I worked for another very good administrator who taught me the importance of never giving up on a student and gave me the freedom to lead the English department without any micro-management.

What is your favorite food and favorite local restaurant?

I grew up on the water and have always enjoyed fishing and diving for lobster, so I would have to say that my favorite food would be fresh caught fish and lobster. My favorite restaurant is Charlie's Boathouse Grill on Fort Myers Beach.

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?

I would love to have dinner with William Shakespeare, and I would have to ask him if he really did write all those wonderful plays and poems.

What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?

I have not been in my office in almost a year and I do miss interacting with my colleagues and the students. However, since I have been teaching online for many years, I did not really have any issue switching to all online instruction. Working from home has made me a better online instructor. When I am home alone all day, I focus on my courses and I have been spending more time working individually with students on Zoom than I ever did in my office hours. I also spend more time doing enrichment videos to motivate students and keep them engaged. As a result of COVID, I have become much more appreciative of the time I have to spend with my friends and family and can't wait until this is over and we can have larger gatherings again without worrying about the virus.

COVID-19 has increased online learning, and as a result, the need for promoting inclusivity in virtual learning environments. What ideas can you share with your colleagues about how to ensure inclusivity in the virtual classroom?

This is a difficult question and I am not sure I have any real answers. I do my best to have the students engage in the course through discussion postings and short mini-lectures that I post once a week. I haven't had great luck with online office hours as most students choose not to attend. When students appears to be struggling in the class, I have found that if I offer a private Zoom meeting, they respond well.

What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes

from COVID-19?

For me, having a routine has helped. Being online at certain times for office hours has helped to structure my day. I also try to take time out each day to take a walk on the beach, go for a bike ride, do yoga, and meditate. I do miss going to the gym and I hate my COVID hair, but I am hopeful this will change now that I have had one dose of the vaccine and will get my second dose next week.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator of Marketing & Technology for the Teaching and Learning Center: kwestfield@fsw.edu

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