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**Subject:** Ten Questions for Faculty Series  
**Date:** Thursday, April 1, 2021 9:46:53 AM  
**Attachments:** [pastedImagebase640.png](#)  
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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 Dr. Robert Cappetta, Professor of Mathematics.



**Dr. Robert Cappetta**  
**Professor, Mathematics**

**Where are you from?**

The Southside of Chicago. Go White Sox!

**Which college or university did you attend?**

BS University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
MS Illinois State University  
PhD Northern Illinois University

**When did you begin teaching at FSW?**

Fall 2020. All of my classes have been online-asynchronous, and I am eagerly awaiting the Fall 2021 semester when I can return to the classroom.

**What made you become interested in your academic discipline?**

I love the puzzle nature of mathematics. The “Aha” moment that one gets when finally understanding a difficult concept is extremely gratifying. Mathematics is difficult, but teaching mathematics is even harder. I plan to spend the rest of my professional life trying to “solve” that problem.

**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 taught at the high school level, so I am aware of the challenges that students face when they arrive at FSW. I have taught at the university level, so I am aware of the challenges many will face

when they transfer from FSW. If I can help students develop self-confidence and effective study skills,

I know that they will be successful. If I can get a person to like mathematics, or hate it a little less, I may not only help that student, but their children as well.

**What is your favorite food and favorite local restaurant?**

Due to the pandemic, I have not had many opportunities to try new places, but I love DaRuMa Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi. My grandmother was born outside Naples, Italy. She taught my dad how to cook and he taught me. Unsurprisingly, my favorite cuisine is Southern Italian, so I welcome restaurant recommendations.

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

Nelson Mandela was one of the greatest figures of the second half of the twentieth century. He was a paragon of grace and dignity despite tremendous difficulties. I would like to know how he was able to forgive and work with his tormentors. During these times of political tumult, we have much to learn from his example.

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

This is my thirty-sixth year of teaching and it has been one of the most challenging. I have never worked harder, and I have missed the classroom tremendously. The informal conversations, the personal connections, and the sense of community are very difficult to develop in an online environment. I now recognize how important these are to the teaching and learning process. I have a much greater appreciation of what classroom teaching means to me.

**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?**

Teachers must make an effort to make a personal connection with their students, and try to understand the unique difficulties that they face during these unprecedented times. Recognize that students from marginalized groups may be experiencing more extreme challenges. Respect all students and avoid the temptation to gripe and vent about them. Be fully present regardless of your teaching modality.

**What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?**

Get vaccinated. Talk to your family and friends, (although maybe not on Zoom.) Reach out to your peers at FSW and elsewhere to share ideas regarding teaching and learning during this strange time. Education professionals are exerting tremendous effort, but all must strive for work-life balance. Find time to reflect and meditate. Enjoy a creative pursuit. Know that better times are ahead.

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](mailto:kwestfield@fsw.edu)

*the Title IX Coordinator/Equity Officer online, in person, via mail, via email, or with the US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Atlanta Office: 61 Forsyth St. SW Suite 19T70, Atlanta, GA 30303-8927.*

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