Meet SU’s Newest Dean

In summer 2013, Dr. Cheryl Parks became the newest dean of the Seidel School of Education and Professional Studies. Here she answers a few questions about her professional background and her aspirations for SU.

**Q:** How was your first semester at SU?

**A:** Seidel is an exciting and thriving place to be! The faculty, staff and students have been actively engaged and absolutely wonderful to work with. During the fall semester, we began several new initiatives that are now or will soon be coming to fruition, including our new satellite program in exercise science at the Universities of Shady Grove, planning a new doctoral program in education and offering the M.S.W. program in Germany.

**Q:** Where were you previously, and how did that experience help inform your approach as dean of the Seidel School?

**A:** I spent 14 years on the faculty of the University of Connecticut (UConn) School of Social Work. In my last four years at UConn, I served as associate dean for research and established the School of Social Work Office of Research and Scholarship. As associate dean, I generated more than $3 million in state and federal grants to fund research on children, families, sexual minorities, homelessness, substance abuse and mental health.

Previous to UConn, I was an assistant professor at Florida State University and an adjunct instructor at Bryn Mawr College, where I also earned my Ph.D. in social work. I completed the M.S.W. at the University of Washington in Seattle and spent nearly two decades in agency-based and private social work practice before moving into higher education. All of those experiences – in research, in graduate and undergraduate teaching, and in professional practice – inspired my interest in the position and have informed my vision for Seidel.

**Q:** How active of a role would you like to have in the community?

**A:** Volunteer service to one’s profession and community is a commitment I take seriously. At UConn, I served on or chaired several school and university committees, including a community engagement initiative. I also served three terms as president of True Colors, Inc., a Connecticut family service agency for sexual minority youth. Prior to UConn, I was a founding board member of BerksTALKLINE, a hotline that has served Pennsylvania youth for more than two decades. These are just a few examples of the service activities in which I have taken part over the years. I hope to become as active and involved in Salisbury University and the surrounding community as I have been elsewhere.

**Q:** What drew you to SU, and what are your immediate goals for Seidel?

**A:** This new role at SU intrigued me because of the natural connections between the disciplines of social work, education and health. In many of our first initiatives, Seidel faculty and I have been exploring ways to build and enhance the connections across all of the disciplines within the school. As one result of that process, late this past semester, I appointed a committee of faculty and staff to develop and manage a strategic planning initiative specific to the Seidel School. That committee will soon be sending an e-mail survey to alumni, adjunct faculty, field supervisors and community partners of Seidel.

I believe the voices of our alumni are vital to the growth and continued excellence of our school, and I am eagerly looking forward to hearing about everyone’s unique experiences at and expectations for Seidel. Together I am certain we will sustain the excellent educational experience and career preparation of our more than 2,400 graduate and undergraduate students.