

An Interview with Margaret (Peggie) Constantino

Paige Hendricks

“Happiness is loving what you do. I feel like I now have my dream job working at The College of William and Mary.” Dr. Constantino began her career in education later in life, after some time in both special education and administration. She credits her path in teaching and leadership to wonderful people in the field giving her chances and opportunities.

After teaching in New York and northern Virginia, she moved toward administrative jobs in Georgia and southern Virginia. Before joining the faculty of The College of William and Mary as the Director of the Executive Ed.D. program, Dr. Constantino was the principal of York High School in nearby York County. “I ended up in the right places because of good leadership around me. I want to help the students here [at William and Mary] have similar leadership opportunities, combined with strong advising and mentoring and high-levels of classroom instruction.” Dr. Constantino hopes to help students at William and Mary bridge the gap between educational theory and practice. “I hope all students have the ability to have bad days, keep smiling, and move forward to become their personal best.”

Keeping in line with her educational background in special education, Dr. Constantino knows first-hand how strong instruction combined with high levels of teacher self-efficacy can go a long way in helping all students to learn. She often recalls a situation early in her career where she fought hard for her students to learn and succeed: “I remember working very hard to teach a group of 6th through 12th grade girls a flag routine for an upcoming state band competition.” The girls were struggling with the routine and in danger of not maintaining a winning tradition. The high school band program had won this competition for many years and the pressure was on and resting on the shoulders of the students to perform and come out on top. “The day of the competition, after working very hard for the past few weeks, the routine came together and the girls got it!” Dr. Constantino exclaimed. After returning to school, Dr. Constantino was approached by the administration for a job well done. She learned that many of the girls in the flag group had



difficulties in academic learning and were receiving special education services in the school district. Dr. Constantino reflected on how her high expectations coupled with the students' persistence and perseverance allowed them to excel. “I thought, ‘I am really good at this [teaching] and should consider this path for my career.’”

Dr. Constantino's dissertation and areas of interest combine special education, policies, and practice in schools and districts. She wants to ensure that all educators understand special education law and can confidently implement these legal aspects with students in districts, schools, and classrooms. Dr. Constantino contends that students receiving special education services are affected by administrators' interpretations and behaviors surrounding the laws. “Regardless of the policy in place for these students, we have to do things well.” She wants to ensure that administrators have the knowledge and training to not fear special education, thus allowing students to be properly identified and receive the services and assistance that they need.

Dr. Constantino's current goal for the Executive Ed.D. program at William and Mary is getting as much teaching, pedagogical, and content knowledge as possible in a collegiate leader-training program. “The program is short and I want to help the students here get as much knowledge out of the program as possible so that they can take this knowledge to the next level in practice.” Dr. Constantino wants to take her love of the classroom and provide students

at William and Mary the connections between theory and the “wow moments in classroom practice.”

Through advising and mentoring, Dr. Constantino wants to recognize the sacrifices students make to attend this program and be successful, while still allowing ample time to pause and reflect. Dr. Constantino reasons that reflection helps in both the learning process and in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Taking time to reflect on current and future goals of the Executive Ed.D. program will also help Dr. Constantino continue to recruit qualified, diverse, and dynamic candidates in the future. “I very much admire the people here at William and Mary. I want to not only move myself to this next level but be challenged by the wonderful people here; both the other professors and students. I am excited to explore, give, and receive and move forward in this educational journey.”

About the author

Paige Hendricks is a doctoral student in the Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership program, with concentrations in Gifted Administration and K-12 Administration.