

'Campus Mom' Petersen is friend, mentor of students

Lori Petersen came to campus in 1979 with dreams of becoming a physical education teacher and coach. Now she's back helping others reach their dreams in the exercise and sport science department.

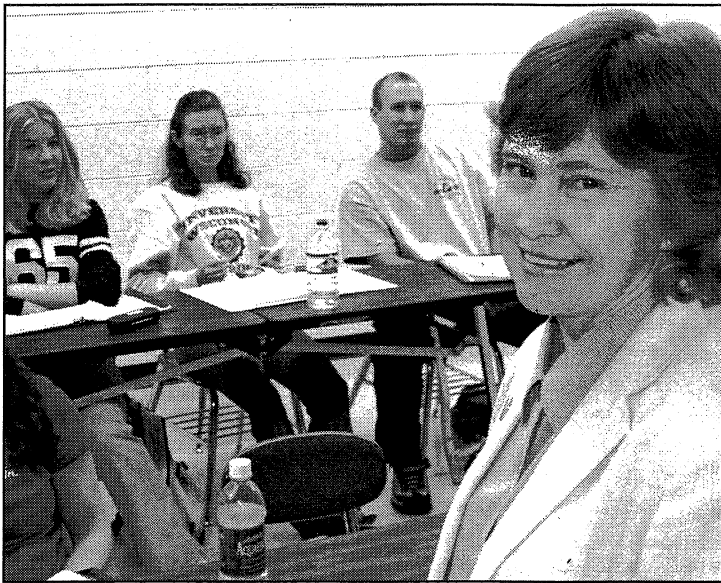
Petersen, a 1982 graduate, never expected to return to teach. But when her husband, Paul, also an '82 graduate, became minister of Lutheran Campus Ministry in 1997, she found herself looking for work. Having taught at elementary and secondary schools since graduating, Petersen planned to search out a similar position in the area. That's until she was helping her husband move into the Lutheran Campus Center, State and 17th streets, and she saw professor emeritus A.B. Culver, her former adviser, on a walk.

"She nearly literally marched me over to Mitchell Hall to see Sandra Price about any available teaching positions available," Petersen recalls. "I left my name on a Post-it note because my resume and materials were somewhere between La Crosse and Arizona. Two days later I got a phone call, which eventually turned into my first teaching responsibilities on campus."

Petersen was hesitant about returning to the department where she earned her bachelor's degree. "It was scary at first because many of the professors that I had in college were still here," she explains. "But, everybody made me feel like an equal. And eventually, many of them became colleague mentors."

In the five years she has been on staff, Petersen has made quite an impression - especially among the students she teaches and supervises. In fact, one referred to her as his "campus mom."

Petersen humbly accepts the title and believes it comes from, simply, helping stu-



Lori Petersen, right, with exercise and sport science students. Petersen is one of the 2002 Academic Staff Excellence Award recipients

with them line-by-line, if that is what it takes."

Petersen says she strives to give them time and their money's worth. "But, I certainly don't bake them cookies," she notes.

The educational environment is important to her. "The students keep me thinking and learning," says Petersen. "They're energetic and fun to be around."

Petersen finds her job satisfying in the countless e-mail and thank-you notes she receives from former students. A highlight was receiving the 2002 Academic Staff Excellence Award after being nominated by three students. "It meant a lot to me that students took time out to complete the paperwork

to nominate me," she says.

Along with being a campus mom, Petersen is mom to two, Philip, 15, and Mitchell, 13. The family lives in Holmen.

The Lori Petersen file

- Native of Barron, Wis.
- Holds a bachelor's degree from UW-L, 1982; master's degree from Arizona State University, 1994.
- Former elementary and secondary teacher, coach in Altoona, Wis.; Sacaton and Tempe, Ariz.
- Academic staff lecturer at UW-L since 1997. Teaches "Methods of Teaching Elementary Physical Education," "Advanced Activities," "Youth and Family Fitness"; supervises student teachers, graduate assistants; Continuing Education programmer; director of exercise and sport science activity classes.
- Adviser for Physical Education Majors Club; member of the Academic Staff Council.
- Volunteer for CROP Walk, Rotary Lights, Holmen Middle School, Holmen Youth Baseball, church activities.

dents. "It's probably because I take time to listen to them," explains Petersen. "I return their phone calls promptly and go through things

Academic Staff Excellence Award recipients

- 1994-Mary Torstveit
- 1995-Grace Smith
- 1996-Chris Bakkum
- 1997-June Reinert
- 1998-Jim Jorstad
- 1999-Dianne Morrison and Larry Ringgenberg
- 2000-Jon Hageseth and Sara Slayton
- 2001-Brad Quarberg
- 2002-Nelda Manter and Lori Petersen