

Academic staff member is backbone of UW-L medical technology program

While UW System administrators target programs for reduction, they have identified the medical technology program at UW-La Crosse as a distinguished area of strength and have made plans for continued growth. And the reason for the program's success—Grace Smith, an academic staff member who directs the university's prestigious medical technology program.

"Other allied health programs may be viewed as collective efforts," says Robert Burns, colleague and professor of microbiology. "But Smith is singularly responsible for the operation of our medical technology program." Burns says her efforts have contributed substantially to the university's growing reputation in science and allied health.

Smith, a La Crosse native, received a masters of science in biology from UW-L and was immediately hired in the biology department in 1971. Her prior medical technology degree and clinical laboratory experience enabled her to assume a major role instructing the rapidly growing and understaffed microbiology labs.

Described as "fair but demanding" by her colleagues, Smith has earned the respect and gratitude of hundreds of students, many of whom maintain contact with her long after graduation. "It's always a delight to see how their lives have developed," Smith says. "Not just their careers, but their personal lives as well."

It was clear just how much students valued her instruction when her position was eliminated in the mid-70s.



Students organized and conducted a formal protest to retain Smith. With the support of students and faculty, Smith was re-appointed in 1976 as an instructor in the biology department and director of medical technology. She has maintained both roles for nearly 20 years.

Under her leadership, the medical technology program has been recognized as a model for innovative change and leadership in curriculum development.

Consistent superior student performances on competitive exams prove the program's effectiveness. Since the first pre-clinical competency exam in 1981,

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**--Grace Smith,
1995 Academic Staff Excellence Award Recipient**

UW-L students have ranked first in the state every year in the two specialty areas—hematology and blood-banking—that Smith is solely responsible for teaching.

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Her reputation stretches across campus. Academic staff colleagues selected Smith as recipient of the 1995 Academic Staff Excellence Award. The award is given annually to an academic staff member who has excelled in performance and service.

Statewide, Smith's medical technology peers admire and respect her teaching style, too. Last summer she was selected to teach blood-bank through the new distance education program supported by a UW System grant.

In an ever-changing field, Smith stays current in the medical laboratory field. "Because of new developments, everything is changing so fast," Smith explains. "I need to keep up and keep current."

Smith is pleased with the decision to double UW-L's program and looks forward to continuing the close working relationship with the La Crosse medical community. Despite its growth, she believes the program will not lose its personal touch.

"I'll continue teaching medical technology students to be not only technically competent, but to possess a high degree of integrity, a code of ethics and a compassion for people," says Smith.