

# Energizing Education

by Kalene McCort

There is an ancient Chinese proverb that poignantly states, "If you want happiness for a lifetime, help the future generation."

Lindy Crawford, UCCS associate professor and associate dean of special education, is guaranteed many days of bliss. When not conducting classes, Crawford is evaluating the teaching methods given to elementary and middle school students and working to ensure that curriculum is delivered in a way that is digestible.

This marathon runner, who received her bachelor's and master's degrees at Western Washington University in Bellingham, makes sure to go the extra mile in the name of bettering education.

"I wanted to become a teacher at a very young age. My elementary school teachers were kind and school was a place where I excelled. I always knew that I would teach, but



I had no idea that I would become a university professor," said Crawford, who has taught college level courses such as Assessment and Instructional Monitoring, Introduction to Research and Statistics, Current Topics in Special Education and Professional Seminar in Special Education.

She has examined both the Colorado and Oregon State Writing Assessment Tests to weigh the effectiveness of having grade-school children rewrite. The research has shown that when the children push pencil to paper a second time in an attempt to improve the first draft, their scores do not advance.

"What I have found is that we 'muddy' the water when we provide students two or three days to complete an on-demand writing sample by allowing extraneous variables to affect the quality of writing, even though the 'extra' days do not improve the writing sample that students complete," said Crawford.

"I also found that students identified as special education made similar types of errors and edits in their writing as students in general education, but they did not score as well because they wrote much less than their peers," said Crawford. "This is interesting because I think it challenges the stereotype that some people have about the skills of students with disabilities."

Crawford has been published in the *Journal of Special Education*, *Exceptional Children*, *Educational Assessment*, the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *Exceptionality*, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, and the *Bilingual Research Journal*. She is lead author on book chapters and articles addressing educational assessment of students with and without learning disabilities.

"The most rewarding aspect of my current position is the opportunity to reinvent myself whenever I get bored with my current responsibilities," said Crawford. "UCCS,

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especially, has supported my career whether it be as a teacher, researcher or administrator."

It's no wonder that this trailblazer, who strives to improve education for all, finds solace in playing music once deemed "the voice of the people." Crawford's long-lived passion for folk music has motivated her to learn how to play piano. When not conducting research, you can find her jamming and belting out

This online program, fittingly named the Math Learning Companion, "will be designed to meet the needs of students with math learning disabilities including foundational lessons, as well as numerous features identified to be effective for students with learning disabilities," said Crawford.

When not swimming in research, Crawford enjoys visiting the salt waters of the West and Caribbean coasts.

"I love to beach walk, snorkel, scuba dive and look for treasures," said Crawford.

One of her favorite teaching experiences was as a middle

tunes in her living room.

Much like the powerful songstresses that expressed their political stances through songs, Crawford too makes her voice heard on Capitol Hill. As a member of the National Center for Learning Disabilities advisory board, she acts as an advocate for the learning disabled.

"I admire their mission and am honored to sit on their board," said Crawford. "I wrote a report for them, 'State Testing Accommodations: A Look at Their Value and Validity' and presented my findings, along with other board members, to Senate and House Committees on Education. One experience that I won't soon forget."

For the past four years, Crawford has researched the effects of an online mathematics curriculum for English language learners. She saw that there was a strong need for foundational lessons, material from previous grades, to be included in the programs so that students behind on math can fully grasp the content.

Recently, Crawford was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support a three-year project designed to assist students with math learning disabilities.

Crawford is teaming up with Digital Directions International Inc. to design the supplemental web-based curriculum.

school resource room teacher, adjacent to a Native American reservation. "My students were mostly American Indians and I learned a great deal from them and their culture."

Crawford, who still owns a cabin in her college town of Bellingham where she "learned to be a teacher," recognizes that "a career in education may begin on one path but merge onto others, and in that way it is very gratifying."