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Silent Devotion

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THU HUYNH



Thu is a freshman. She wrote this essay for Dr.Cox's Profile Essay Project. She would like to thank Dr.Cox for

giving her a chance to send an essay to The Undergraduate Review

On my first day I stepped into class, I attempted to avoid nervousness and unfamiliarity which usually happens to all freshmen. My first class started at 9:05; I saw a lot of people sitting in class, and I thought that I was already late. I opened the door and everyone looked at me like a stranger. The one who looked at me with a tender smile was Professor Jennifer K*, my math teacher. She asked me whether or not I should be in her class at this time; politely, I answered her that my class started at 9:05. Then she told me that I should be in her next class. I was embarrassed and ran out of class. But one thing I realized was that my math professor was a friendly person. She made me feel like I was still in high school.

When the class I was supposed to be in started, I did not know any of my classmates; we sat down without noticing each other. I missed the familiar feeling from high school, where I had a lot of friends and teachers who were very sociable to me. While I was wandering into those memories, my professor started calling people's names out for attendance. Later, she introduced herself to us with a smile that she gave me the first time I saw her. Moreover, she shared her experiences about how to be successful in college, and told us some funny jokes about her nephew who was also starting college that year. There is something about Professor Jennifer K that makes me feel comfortable to get close to her; her attitudes changed my opinion about college professors, whom I had pictured as very strict and tough. Professor Jennifer K not only teaches math, but also shows us how to be good students. She creates a good environment for learning, and that helps everyone understand math problems easily. My curiosity was awakened, and it made me want to discover more about this extraordinary teacher.

Professor Jennifer K grew up in Brighton, which is a small town near Boston. She got her undergraduate degree at Boston State College in 1967 (now part of the University of Massachusetts at Boston). Her ambition did not stop there; she continued with her education to get masters degree at Boston College in 1977. At that time, women seemed not to contribute a big role in society. They had three choices about their careers: teaching, nursing, and secretarial work. People from the upper class had more career choices than the middle class. Unfortunately, her family was from the middle class, thus she had to pick one of those three choices to be her career. She would overcome that discrimination between men and women to go on with her teaching path.

According to Professor Jennifer K, teaching is a good way to help people open up their minds, and to gain more knowledge to serve in their life later on. She loves teaching and loves showing people how to learn math, a subject that can not be missing from someone's life. Indeed, math is related to everything, and no one can achieve their highest ambition without knowing how to solve simple math. Her eyes looked brighter when she shared with me how she could follow this career until today. "My professor realized about my brightness in mathematics when he graded my test. He suggested that I choose a mathematical profession, and I decided to be a math teacher since then." Hence, it opened a new path in her teaching career.

Five years ago, Professor Jennifer K came to Bridgewater State College, and started teaching Math 105, Pre-Calculus, and Introduction to Algebra. If anyone needs to take some of these courses for their major, they may have an opportunity to be in her class. You can encounter a gracious professor with a smile on her face all the time. She will not ever be grouchy, even if the students did not study or decided not to do their work. She used to give us some time to prepare our work, "next Friday is the last day to make up your work. If anyone was absent, you can try to get caught up with your work. I will be here at 7:30 in the morning, and from 11am to 12 pm every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday if any of you guys need help." In addition, she always motivates lazy students to get back to their work by gathering us into groups to work with others. By that way, the students have an easier time of understanding math problems. They get more excited in every lesson. She has forty-two years of teaching experience. It is a big number in a teaching career.

Perhaps her experiences gained more after she traveled to Japan to teach American students there for four years. She said that was a great time for her over there. She said, "Japan is a beautiful country, I love it a lot. I could speak *skochi* (a little bit) of Japanese" It was a big challenge for a young woman to go to a foreign country where she could not speak her native language,

and everything was new to her. I realize that Professor Jennifer K was also a brave woman. Her love for teaching made her fearless, and able to overcome obstacles in her life.

Moreover, her love for teaching was apparent in the stories that she told me. Some say that college professors are bad tempered people; they always force students to study and never pay attention to any student in class. It is not true to describe my math professor that way. She is the most understanding person whom I have ever met before. She told me that there were a lot of students who impacted her during her teaching career; nonetheless, she had one special student who was in wheel chair. He was not like other disabled people. Some of them used to be negative, and they pushed people away when someone tried to approach to help. "He was a very special, outgoing and wonderful person. He tried to pull people up to him" she said to me. Professor Jennifer K had a passion when she talked about this student whom she met a long time ago. She hoped that every student would have a good positive attitude about life like him. It was an emotional story, and it also expressed her attention toward students.

Professor Jennifer K is a great person. She not only teaches math lessons, but also inspires us with her spirit. She encourages us to do our work and to gain more knowledge from math because it is helpful for us. I come to class every other day from Monday to Friday to learn more from her. She is a remarkable professor. She loves teaching and tries her best to make people get into their work. She does not do that for her own benefit, but for all her students. "I enjoy teaching math, and getting to know students, and helping them to learn makes me feel good" she shared with me. There is nothing that can compare to her amazing teaching, and no words can describe her devotion to bring a stable foundation in math for us. It is the silent devotion of my professor Jennifer K.

*The professor's name has been changed.