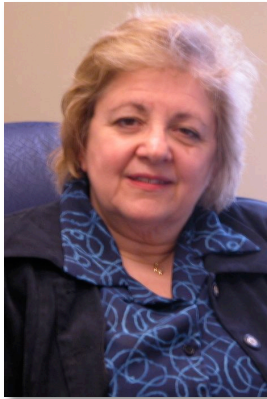




OCASA Doug Light Award winner brings the community to the college



Georgia Quartaro is involved in her job, her community and the world. She combines all three in fresh, exciting ways.

The opportunity to do is what she finds most rewarding as an academic administrator.

“It’s the ability to help other people do what they want to do,” she said in an interview. “. . . to make the system move a little bit at least some of the time. I can identify resources. I can say, ‘Okay, you want to do this. Let’s figure out how we can do that.’”

For her approach, fellow administrators describe her as “a courageous, creative and extremely hard-working administrator.”

In addition, she has been named recipient of the 2006 OCASA Doug Light Award for Administrative Excellence.

Ms. Quartaro has combined her approach to the administrative role with the wider community. She has been involved for several years now with PEN Canada, and has been instrumental in providing writer-in-residence positions for three exiled writers at George Brown College. (PEN stands for Poets, Essayists, Novelists. PEN Canada is affiliated with PEN International.)

“We’ve had three now lecturers in residence (at George Brown),” she said in an interview.

“Three writers, for the winter term for the past three years, who come to the college and get an office.”

“We provide an office, we provide a telephone, we provide a computer, and we try to provide some links for this person to start getting out into the college community --initially into classes in community services, because that’s the easy thing.

“(We) . . . send them to the political science class; we can send them to classes like that where it is quite obvious that the students are likely to have an interest. And then build bridges out to some of the rest of the college, which we’ve been enormously successful in doing.”

Ms. Quartaro sees the whole project an outgrowth of the Social Services area.

“We have a bit of a track record. Something or other is happening and do we want to sponsor it, or will we take on the responsibility for it.”

“They devote about half their time to activities in the college and half their time to their own work.”

“The first was a Mexican poet who then went on to do a writer-in-residence for a year at Acadia; the second is a journalist from Eritrea . . . and the third has just been with us for a few weeks now is a former physics professor and journalist from Afghanistan.”

“(There are) enormous benefits to the writer who can stop being a pizza deliverer, or training to be a personal support worker, or whatever, and actually have this period of time in which they are supported – not extravagantly, but enough – so that they can write.”

Closer to home, Ms. Quartaro has been involved in a special project for those dually diagnosed (with developmental and mental health challenges) to attend programs at George Brown.

“I was working with these people I kept thinking (they) belonged in a day program in a college because that would be so normalizing, and that’s so much better place to go.”

When the supporting agency was searching for a new home, Ms. Quartaro was able to assist in bringing the program downtown.

“There isn’t the same sense of stigma that there would be going to a treatment program at the Clarke or a treatment program at any number of other sites. You’re a student, and you have student ID card, and you can use the library. Even though the things that the students are actually doing in that program are much more focused on basic life skills, and basic literacy, and what can they do.”

“It’s a one-year transition program into something longer term. So the college works out well. It also provides placement opportunities for students from a couple of our programs who get to work with the young people in that program.”

Ms. Quartaro joined the faculty of George Brown College in the 1980s, and entered administration in 1992, shortly after receiving her doctorate from York University.