SALT's Standing as World Leader Drew New Director to UA

Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques Center
March 2018

In November, the Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques Center [1] welcomed its new director, Gabrielle Miller [2], who has a passion for seeing students who learn differently succeed in school and in life.

Last month, she was named to the Learning Disabilities Association's board of directors. The organization, based in Pittsburgh, aims to empower all people with learning disabilities.

In this Q&A, Miller shares a little about herself.

What is something that you feel is important for people to know about you on a personal level?

It's all summed up in one of my favorite quotes from Marcus Aurelius: "The first rule is to keep an untroubled spirit. The second is to look things in the face and know them for what they are."

What attracted you to the SALT Center?

I have had wonderful opportunities over the course of my career. However, the SALT Center's incredible contribution to meeting the needs of undergraduates who learn differently, its reputation as a world leader and the opportunity to work with colleagues across the UA community who are committed to student success couldn't be missed.

How has your career prepared you for this position?

My professional roots are in special education as a teacher, administrator and a researcher. Most of that time was with the Kennedy Krieger Institute, one of the world's leading clinical and research institutions for children with multiple and complex disabilities. The relationship between KKI and Johns Hopkins University enabled me to not only complete my graduate studies but work in the graduate school of education training teachers and earn an appointment as ranked faculty at JHU.

Following my years in the university/clinical world, I was incredibly fortunate to spend 10 years in the nonprofit world, working with philanthropic leaders with tremendous understanding and commitment to systemic change. Working with and learning from them helped me to understand the needs of communities and stakeholders across the nation.

I am delighted to "come home" to a wonderfully robust and caring community at the University of Arizona, work in a field that I love, and continue to advance the vision and mission of the SALT Center launched by Eleanor Harner [3] so many years ago.
What excites you most about working with SALT Center students, the SALT Center team and campus colleagues?

The opportunity to be continuously and energetically curious—and learn. My sincere hope is that from this learning I can draw on my professional experiences to strengthen the SALT Center’s impact on student success, and meaningfully contribute to the UA’s commitment to bold thinking as a world leader for undergraduates who learn differently.

What are some of your favorite ways to recharge?

Reading, gardening, watching classic movies—and my favorite, spending time with my family.

Favorite food?

I am Italian and Costa Rican, so pretty much anything. Except sushi.

Favorite authors?

Agatha Christie, Alexander McCall Smith, John Mortimer, P.G. Wodehouse

Favorite music?

Depends on my mood. Very eclectic. I love Mozart as much as The Kinks—and anything by Irving Berlin.

Favorite vacation spot?

Tucson, Arizona. And now I’m a resident!

Favorite comic book character?

Uncle Scrooge. I love his adventures through history!

This article was adapted from a Q&A that originally appeared in the winter 2017 issue of SmartNews [4], a seasonal newsletter published by the SALT Center.

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