

# Gordon R. Alley Partnership Award

## Janet Marquis

For more than a decade, Janet Marquis has relentlessly questioned the goals and plans of researchers at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. And the Center's researchers, far from taking offense, welcome her questions.

"She had us think about our work in a much different way so that it was much clearer and I think greatly enhanced our proposal," says Mike Hock, associate director of the Center and one of the beneficiaries of Janet's questioning.

Janet, a nationally recognized research design and analysis expert, works closely with Center researchers as they develop proposals, conduct research, and analyze results. Her guidance—and questioning—on issues of statistical analysis and research design has been vital to the success of many of the Center's projects over the years.

"She elicits the good answers from

us, and she leads us through the whole process," says Jan Bulgren, associate research professor. "The only way we can deliver what we think are good interventions and studies is the partnerships that go on up here. Janet is a big part of the partnership of the Center."

Janet appreciates the collaborative nature of her work with the Center.

"It isn't always easy for a faculty person or for a researcher to have somebody who is always asking them questions. Sometimes, they can get kind of defensive about that," she says. "What I find really satisfying about working here with the Center is that somehow or other, we haven't had that."

Janet began working with the Center at Jan's request. The nature of the Center's research on Content Enhancement—large groups of students, general education classrooms—presented new challenges



for researchers whose previous work involved fewer students in smaller settings.

"That required analysis that was very cutting edge," Jan says. "I knew that Janet had the background to work with that type of population, with the large group designs and the analysis required."

The Center's Content Enhancement research not only pushed researchers to new levels, it also afforded an opportunity for Janet to

*Gordon R. Alley, one of the founders of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, was a master at mentoring the young and inexperienced assistant professors who were assembled to conduct the first research studies at what was then known as the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities. He generously shared his expertise and time to enable others to reach their goals and taught that partnership is vital to successfully conducting large-scale research and development efforts. Dr. Alley passed away in 1997 as the result of a tragic accident several years earlier. To honor his legacy and ensure that the trail he blazed never be forgotten, we give the Gordon R. Alley Partnership Award to other professionals who contribute to the work of the Center in the same spirit.*

grow in her field.

"There's a whole new world of analysis that we've done," Janet says. "That's been very interesting for me because it gives me an opportunity to expand my knowledge and skills, but also because it's a much better way to analyze the data and for us to learn more about how youngsters learn."

Janet's background in mathematics education and her experiences as a classroom teacher give her added insight into the importance of the work undertaken by the Center.

"Nothing is really more important for the success of a person or of our culture than to have a good educational system," she says. "One of the things that really draws me to the Center and makes me grateful that they're willing to invite me in on their projects is that there's something going on here that's extremely important and improving education."

Janet's contributions to the Center's work go far beyond running statistical calculations. The statistician plays a role in refining the research design, refining the research questions, helping to collect and manage data appropriately, and then analyzing

the data.

"She brings such expertise in these areas, and it's enabled our Center to really elevate the quality of the work that we do," says Don Deshler, director of the Center.

Janet currently works with Jan and with Jim Ellis, associate professor in the KU School of Education, on a National Science Foundation-funded project to design a method to teach students how to make rational arguments and reach conclusions based on what they've read or know.

"I've always been really interested in how scientists think," Janet says. "Trying to develop a curriculum to teach youngsters how to draw conclusions is a very interesting project to me."

Much of her work on the project involves making sure results are reproducible, another attractive aspect of the Center's work for Janet.

"You can get involved in a lot of research projects and not know for sure what the practical impact of this is ever going to be. That's not the case here," Janet says. "I feel like it's work where I make a difference."

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