

INVESTING IN STUDENTS

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There are two things Dr. Karen Spohn is passionate about: encouraging economic literacy and helping students achieve their full potential.



After spending the early part of her career as an economic forecaster in the private sector, Spohn later joined a university where she worked full time in research and taught classes during her lunch hour. This experience motivated her to return to school and pursue a doctorate in economics. Upon completing her degree, she moved to New Hampshire with her family and began searching for a teaching position.

“I found Rivier University and discovered a warm, caring community that was student centered and founded on Catholic tradition,” Spohn says.

Today, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in economics and finance and is co-chair of the Division of Business’s Finance Advisory Board, which includes regional financial service employers as well as graduate finance and accounting faculty. Spohn

also serves as the Division’s representative at the Regional Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) conferences.

In the classroom, she teaches and encourages economic literacy and emphasizes the importance of knowing how to understand an economy in voting, investing and other major life decisions. She also tries to keep her classes interesting and engaging for her students.

“I am constantly experimenting with new ways of teaching,” she says. “I try to make use of the latest technology and resources that are available. In a typical course, I present the information necessary to understand the models and data needed to analyze a problem. I then give students opportunities to apply these concepts to an area of their interest.”

Working with students is Spohn’s favorite part of her job—she gets fulfillment from guiding them and helping them to succeed.

“I enjoy helping people,” she says. “I get a good feeling from helping students become confident in their abilities and understand concepts that they had considered difficult at first.”

Spohn currently teaches a course titled Environmental Social Governance (ESG), in which students learn about the ESG factors used in sustainable investing strategies. The course is a hands-on workshop where students practice sustainable investing using Stock-Trak portfolio simulation, and is recognized on Stock-Trak’s website as well as in an ACBSP Best of Region 1 award for addressing corporate social responsibility in the classroom.

She welcomes every opportunity to invite new technology and teaching methods into the classroom, and has begun incorporating iPads into her classes this semester to help introduce real-time case analysis in the classroom.

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In the spring of 2014, Spohn will be on sabbatical continuing her work on Environmental Social Governance factors and their role in sustainable investing and estimated firm value. This work will lay the foundation for future business student research projects as well as an online ESG course.

Spohn has much to be proud of over the course of her career, but says receiving the 2013 New Hampshire Business Educator of the Year award recently was a “special honor.” In general, some of the most rewarding moments, she says, are when former students contact or visit her after graduating to update her on what they are doing and how they are applying what they learned at Rivier to their current positions.

Rivier’s mission of ‘transforming hearts and minds to serve the world’ is something that Spohn says she has seen first-hand during her years teaching at the University. “Rivier attracts students interested in having a positive impact in the community and the world,” she says. “As faculty, we offer different avenues for them to consider.” ■