

## **Brick, Bands, and Binary Numbers: Ouachita Technical College Gets New Academic VP**

by S. G. Seals

He's passionate about jazz, math, and the mission of two-year colleges. And he knows a LOT about brick. These interests make Martin Eggensperger the perfect fit for the Vice President of Instruction for Ouachita Technical College, the college located in "the brick capital of the world."

Eggensperger, who joined Ouachita Technical College in August, hasn't always been in the field of academe. Working on tasks as diverse as kiln supervision and architectural sales, Eggensperger learned about brick from his father, by following his father's footsteps in the brick business. Then he also followed his dad into the two-year college education business. Eggensperger hails from Maynard, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee.

He also plays blues guitar, he does a bit of magic, and he savors opportunities to work with students on their math homework. Indeed, his heart is in the work of two year colleges. "Community college students come from every walk of socio-economic, religious, racial, and ethnic life. Because community colleges are open access institutions, they are among the most egalitarian of public education resources," says Eggensperger, and he loves the "melting pot" aspect of Ouachita Technical College—because it mirrors his own past experience in his life.

Eggensperger is especially pleased to be working at an Achieving the Dream institution. Ouachita Technical College is one of only four colleges in Arkansas to have Lumina Foundation and Winthrop Rockefeller grant funding specifically focused on using math (data and statistics) to improve the success of low-income students and students of color. He is interested in "improving retention and graduation rates of all students," and his facility with numbers is a benefit to him in difficult economic times.

"I believe the strongest college leaders openly discuss the college's mission, vision, and the best use of limited resources. Limited resources fuel the college to be more focused on its mission, to rally around the College's central purpose." At Ouachita Technical College that means serving a variety of stakeholders—students in high school career education programs, in adult education, in health sciences studies, in technical programs. It also means meeting the needs of the students of all backgrounds who start at Ouachita Technical College en route to a four-year college degree.

"I am convinced," Eggensperger notes, "that education is of the utmost importance in empowering individuals and in changing lives. It awakens within us a realization of those characteristics that make us unique, as well as those that are shared by all." He believes that "through education, one hones the skills necessary to contribute productively to our community," whether as a brick kiln operator or as college mathematician.

Eggensperger comes to OTC after serving as both General Studies Division Co-Chair and as Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness at Southeast Arkansas College. He and his wife Jennifer have two children, Zoë and Ben. He and his family look forward to living in Malvern.