

IRENE BOWDEN

Irene began her UW-Whitewater career in 1998, working for Facilities Planning & Management. She started working the night shift in Drumlin Hall and was later able to switch to a day shift in Hyer Hall. Following a brief seven-month interlude for the Purchasing Department at UW-Madison in 2003-2004, she returned to UWW in a different capacity, going to work in the Financial Aid Office, where she has been quite happy.

Irene and Jim, her significant other, live several miles from Whitewater, by Lake Lorraine. She enjoys the area and can see the lake from her house. They share their home with Irene's mother, for whom they have been providing care for a number of years. Irene's son and daughter, John and Tania, are both married and have children of their own. John and wife, Kim, have a handful with five boys – Kris, A.J., Trenton, Chase and Dylan. Tania and husband, Kevin, have three girls – Mariah, Cassandra, and Samantha. Irene indicates that sometimes it's a challenge keeping track of them all, but it's obvious that she considers them all a blessing.

Rounding out her family are two dogs (Heidi and Spuds), two cats (Pudg and Whitey) and Einstein, the parrot. Irene cannot maintain a straight face when she discloses that Einstein's vocabulary leaves much to be desired. Before they adopted him, his former home was a bar. Needless to say, he was undoubtedly exposed to some unsavory patronal conversations and continues to display some of that influence in his new surroundings. Irene calls him her "dirty bird" and says that occasionally he shocks her mother when he speaks. He creates a colorful climate in a number of ways.

Asked about her job in Financial Aid, Irene pauses, considering everything that she enjoys about her work there. Top on the list are working in customer service and the staff in her office. She really likes working with people and helping them, even though some can be difficult. She says the staff is wonderful and fun to work with. She likes the one-on-one contact with customers, students and parents alike, and gets a lot of positive feedback from those people. The fact that things are continually changing with her work keeps it interesting for her.

What Irene likes most about UW-Whitewater is the atmosphere on campus. She feels that people all over campus are generally very positive – the students, especially. She is particularly impressed by the attitude and determination of the students with disabilities, with whom she occasionally works. As for the construction and changes that have been taking place, she feels that the changes have all been positive and there have been some good upgrades. The construction may cause a bit of a mess right now, but Irene just shrugs it off, indicating that it's well worth having to work with a little inconvenience for awhile because it represents progress for UW-Whitewater.