

# Virginia Bouie

## JJC professor discusses her passion for encouraging critical thinking in her students

Virginia Bouie's roots at JJC run deep. Born and raised in Joliet, she was first introduced to the college when her mother was taking classes here in the 1970s. Bouie earned her associate degree from JJC in 1985 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University and a master's degree in English from Governors State University.

In 2000, Bouie found herself back at the college teaching in the English and World Languages Department as an adjunct faculty member. Nine years later, she is a full-time professor teaching core writing, composition and literature classes.

### **As an educator, what is the most important goal for you to achieve in your classroom?**

I try to create an environment conducive to critical thinking. A student that is comfortable doing that becomes an effective contributor to society. I want my students to be able to freely explore their thoughts on a subject, first and foremost. I help them explore those thoughts. Thinking and expressing yourself freely... we are able to do this as Americans and I value that.

### **What compelled you to become a teacher?**

My enthusiasm and passion for teaching cannot be hidden. [Teaching is] an opportunity to give back. If you enjoy engaging with people and talking about different topics, JJC is a great place to do it. As instructors, we're helping students shape their thoughts as they journey through life. I don't take that lightly. At the end of the day, I reflect back on if I've done a good job helping my students process information and express their thoughts orally and in written form. If I've helped them, I feel I've done what I've been hired to do.

### **You've had an affiliation with the college for over 20 years. What is it like for you to be back and working in this capacity?**

I definitely feel a connection with the campus. JJC was a great place to get those early years of education.

I appreciate the fact that I work for an institution that offers its students so many resources. I'm very happy to go into work every day. I love standing in front of my students, sharing views on a topic and seeing the light bulb click on. As an educator, in a small way, you shape society. The future that I prepared for in the past has arrived. I want to do a quality job every day preparing each of my students to be successful in the present and in the future.

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