



UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH
CONNECTICUT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cynthia Whitcomb, Associate Vice President for Marketing, Media and Communications
Telephone: 860.231.5387
E-mail: cwhitcomb@usj.edu

***Michelle L. Lestrud Named Director of the
Gengras Center at the University of Saint Joseph***



WEST HARTFORD, CT (October 23, 2013) – The University of Saint Joseph announces the appointment of Michelle L. Lestrud, as director of the Gengras Center, a special education program for elementary, middle and high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and related behavioral challenges. The Gengras Center is a state approved, private special education lab school located on the campus of the University of Saint Joseph at 1678 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, Connecticut.

Lestrud, who has served as assistant director of the Gengras Center since 2005, first joined the special education program in 1998 as a teaching assistant and then as a special education teacher. In her new role as director, Lestrud will lead a highly individualized, trans-disciplinary approach to learning and personal development that encompasses the total child through social, academic, emotional, and vocational elements.

“Ms. Lestrud brings the best of two worlds to her new role as director of the Gengras Center,” USJ Provost Michelle M. Kalis, Ph.D., said. “She has the experience and insight of an administrator of a special education school as well as the dedication and commitment that every teacher has for her students. We are also fortunate to have her as one of the University’s adjunct faculty in the School of Education.”

A Torrington resident, Lestrud earned both a sixth year certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership and a master of education in special education from the University of Hartford. After receiving her bachelor's degree at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, she specialized in vocational programs for people with disabilities, first as a vocational coordinator at Touchstone Café, Inc., in Columbus, Ohio, then at Pilot Industries, UARC, in Ellenville, New York. As a vocational rehabilitation specialist with the Vision Center in Columbus, Lestrud conducted evaluations and developed programs for people with disabilities while facilitating relationships with area businesses to employ the program's graduates.

Lestrud was named Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities (CAPSEF) Teacher of the Year in 2003. A member of the National Association of Special Education Teachers, Lestrud also was a contributing author to the *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders* (2013).

###

The University of Saint Joseph (USJ) offers a wide range of graduate, undergraduate, and certificate programs that combine a professional and liberal arts education with a focus on service. Coeducational graduate master's and doctoral degree programs are taught on the University's two campuses in West Hartford and Hartford, Connecticut; at off-campus locations throughout the state; and online. Undergraduate programs for women and for coeducational adult students take place on our beautiful suburban campus and include more than 22 majors and six pre-professional programs, each of which provides personal attention in a caring environment. Founded in 1932 by the Sisters of Mercy, the University of Saint Joseph welcomes students from diverse backgrounds and religious traditions. To learn more, view our website at www.usj.edu.

OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

1678 Asylum Avenue ♦ West Hartford, Connecticut 06117-2791 ♦ Tel: 860.231.5204 ♦ Fax: 860.231.5882