



**Juanita Ward and The University of Akron's
Department of Developmental Programs**

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The University of Akron's Department of Developmental Programs was established in 1968 and has helped "underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, advanced students excel" for more than fifty years. This is the motto of the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), the professional organization that guides the principles and best practices of postsecondary developmental education. In 2012, NADE bestowed its annual award for Outstanding Alumnus of a Developmental Education Program on Juanita Ward, a nontraditional student, alum, and employee of The University of Akron. The story of Juanita Ward personifies the NADE motto and tells the story of

the University's Department of Developmental Programs.

From Juanita Ward:

I worked hard for several decades to raise my children and put three of them through college. Then, they told me that it was my turn. After more than twenty-five years of being out of school and growing up without technology, the placement tests given during new student orientation were a big challenge. However, I survived and learned a lot about those machines called computers in the years to follow.

Two instructors were very influential during my time at the University. Mrs. Renee Croskey taught many of my technology courses, and I subsequently applied that knowledge during my career with The University of Akron. Mrs. Becky McDonald taught my first class at the University, Basic Writing, in Carroll Hall. Before coming to the University, I had operated my own custom cake business. Life had not been easy and Basic Writing became therapeutic for me. Through the free writes and the compositions I wrote during that course, my life began to turn around, and I gained the confidence to continue my education.

Throughout my years as a student, I attended class every day, got to know my instructors, utilized the tutoring areas, and worked very hard. I graduated with two Associates and one Bachelor's degree while maintaining a 3.8 GPA.

Balancing work and studies was not always easy; however, working as a student assistant with Developmental Programs was a big help. The department's faculty and staff were my support family while attending and became good friends during my continued employment at The University of Akron. After

graduation, I was employed by the former University College Dean's office and by Summit College, now renamed CAST.