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WESTWORD

WEB EXCLUSIVES

Rigby to replace McTague as dean

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Students in Mark Rigby's math class who are familiar with anecdotes about his days as a second lieutenant in the United States Army might envision a gritty scene from Patton upon hearing that he has been appointed as next year's dean, replacing dean Ryan McTague, who was recently named Assistant Principal of Operations. However, Rigby said he won't bring a strict, military mentality to his new position.

Although this may seem like an unlikely position for the math teacher who once donned a wolf costume and received pies in the face during a spirit assembly, Rigby said a desire to help troubled students has compelled him to leave the teaching position he held for eight years. "I tend to gravitate toward kids in lower level classes and kids that are in trouble. I like to try to figure out ways to help them through and to motivate them. I thought a dean's job would be able to help me have contact with more of those kids."

Rigby's love of teaching deterred him from following through with his desire to become a dean until he was approached a few weeks ago about the open position. "I've been interested in [becoming a dean] for a while," Rigby said.

Rigby admitted that the transition will be difficult. "I truly love being in the classroom with the kids. That was one of the hardest things to give up." Along with teaching, Rigby said he is sad to leave the "close-knit" group of teachers in the math department. "It's going to be different not having them right next to me every day— leaning on them, having them lean on me."

Moving 11 times in 18 years, Rigby grew up as an "Army brat," the son of a military officer, and spent five and a half years as a commissioned officer in the Army after graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point. However, Rigby said his teaching philosophy and approach as a dean aren't akin to a drill sergeant. "Certain people think, 'You were in the army so you have to be this mean guy who yells a lot,' but I actually disagree. I think you can get people to do the right thing without getting angry and yelling at them."

Rigby, who described his style as "upfront and honest," said one of his greatest strengths that will help him in his new position is his ability to "get people to do the right thing."

Math director Lisa Stone called Rigby's style "tough love."

"He holds his students to a high standard and I know that he will hold students accountable and to a high standard in the dean's office," Stone said. However, she also recognized that Rigby will continue to have fun in his new position, as he has during his teaching career. During the 2004-2005 school year, Stone said, Rigby dressed up as the school's mascot.

"He's always such a good sport about those kinds of things, which I'm sure will continue with him in the dean's office. He's going to want to have fun, too, with students the same way he always did when he was a teacher," Stone added.

Many of Rigby's current students admit he doesn't fit the stereotypical mold of a dean. "Deans are supposed to be mean," freshman Nasheet Quraishi said. "He worked in the military, so he could be strict, but he's also a really nice guy [in class]. I'm sure he will be a good dean."

Another current student of Rigby's, freshman Adam Provost said, "Most deans are very strict, but Rigby [won't be] like other deans."

Junior Reenu Mathew receives help from Rigby on a daily basis in the Literacy Center, and also feels that Rigby won't be a "typical" dean.

"He's a really good teacher, but I can't imagine him as a dean," Mathew said.

Rigby said he doesn't have plans to change any specific policies, but intends to focus on "being proactive." With idealistic plans to target next year's freshman class, Rigby hopes to "stop the problems before they start."

"If you get [the freshmen] early and let them know your expectations, identify kids that had trouble in middle school before they get here and you start watching them and making sure they understand how things run at Niles West...I think you can forgo a lot of the problems that might happen later on."

In order to qualify for the position, Rigby is currently working towards a Type 75 administrative certificate, which he plans to receive by the end of this year. Although Rigby doesn't have hands-on experience in administrative work, he said his time in the classroom and as an Army officer will help him navigate his new post. Rigby will also spend the last few weeks of school observing daily activity in the dean's office to familiarize himself with the job.

Stone has already interviewed prospective teachers for the coming school year and said that Rigby's move creates one more spot to fill.

Although the math department is sorry to see Rigby go, Stone said, "If there's one silver lining in losing him from the math department, it's knowing that he's still here in the building, being a positive influence for all of Niles West: teachers, students and administration alike."



Rigby