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PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIPKATHERINE VANDER VENNET WILL TEACH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AFTER
GRADUATIONby [Kelli Caplan](#) | May 16, 2023*Read time: about 3 min*

Katherine Vander Vennet has received the Initial Licensure Scholarship from the [Virginia Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators \(VACTE\)](#). She was one of only three students in the state to be chosen for the prestigious award.

"I was so pleasantly surprised to hear I had received this scholarship!" she said. "Throughout the nomination and application process, I was flattered, but, of course, very aware that each institution nominating a student would be trying to put 'their best candidate forward' and there would be many amazing candidates."

Vander Vennet, '23 [Master of Arts in Teaching](#) and '22 [psychology](#), has accepted a job with Newport News Public Schools as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

The excitement Vander Vennet possesses for teaching was evident in her application, said Ellen Rodgers, chair of the VACTE committee that selected the winners.

"Katherine submitted an exemplary narrative: well-written and framed beautifully in the context of being a passionate learner who believes in the importance of understanding culture, languages and content to facilitate collaboration and impact," Rodgers said. "The reviewers were in complete agreement that this essay reflects the potential for a future leader in the field work with English language learners, who will thoughtfully, intentionally

and meaningfully impact her students, their families, and the global community.”

Vander Vannet knew as a child that she wanted to be a teacher. Her journey toward making her dream come true started at CNU. After graduating in 2022, she decided to further her education and set her sights on earning her MAT.

“To use a cliched (but true) saying, ‘I didn’t choose teaching, teaching chose me.’ I never necessarily chose to be a teacher, but I have a conscious memory of being passionate about teaching as early as kindergarten. Although I did briefly consider business and law as alternatives,” she said “It’s always been clear that I would be a teacher. I like to say this is because I actually love being a student and learning, so I never wanted to leave the learning environment and hoped to pass this passion on to my students,” she said.

During her years at Christopher Newport, Vander Vennet took full advantage of an array of opportunities to help her expand her teaching skill set. She also worked tirelessly to acquire the traits that come together to form the foundation of a dynamic and effective English as a Second Language instructor.

Vander Vennet was a Ferguson Fellow, during which she developed a peer mentor program for English learners that was implemented in public high schools. She also served as a graduate assistant in the Office of Teacher Preparation during the 2022 summer and fall semesters. In addition, she was a research assistant for Dr. Kelly Cartwright, exploring cognitive and linguistic predictors of successful reading comprehension in monolingual and multilingual English speakers. Vander Vennet embraced all four of the pillars that form the framework of a CNU education: study abroad, internships, community engagement and research. To advance her global perspective, Vander Vannet studied abroad twice, once in Thailand and once in New Zealand, where she was a tutor for both university and elementary school students.

“The culmination of these opportunities, as well as many others, is that I already have ample experience with education inside and outside of the classroom. I am confident in my ability to advocate for my students, as well as work with them effectively in the classroom,” she wrote in her VACTE essay. “However, regardless of how well prepared new teachers are, there will always be room for growth over time. Thus, more importantly than anything else, I have practice reflecting, and asking for feedback throughout my classroom experience, which I believe is what will truly help me to be successful as a teacher beginning next year.

“It has helped me to better identify my current strengths and weaknesses, and track progress over time,” she wrote. “Learning from and teaching others has been the foundation of my life since I began kindergarten, and I am incredibly excited to begin my life as a formal educator this upcoming school year.”

Vander Vennet was recommended as a candidate for the scholarship by Dr. Jean Filetti, professor of English and Director of Teacher Preparation, based on her hard work and strong commitment to the teaching profession.

“KC, as she is called, is in my professional opinion, as well-prepared as any current teacher in the field and works in tandem with her colleagues in the schools where she is completing her internship, sharing ideas and building quality professional relationships,” Filetti said. “She is dedicated, hard working and always interested in growing professionally and experiencing new cultures.”

Vander Vennet initially applied to move abroad to teach. However, after completing her internship with the ESL Department in Newport Newport Public Schools, Vander Vennet changed her plans.

“When I began my student teaching internship in January, I had intended to move abroad after graduation,” she said. “However, I had an amazing experience with the ESL Department and students this semester, so I felt compelled to continue my work here.”

Filetti said she has no doubt Vander Vennet will achieve great success in the classroom.

“KC Vander Vennet is without a doubt an excellent teacher candidate with a promising future in education,” Filetti said. “I commend her for her dedication, professionalism and her many accomplishments to date and know she will make her mark on the professional as she moves forward.”

