

Connected to the Campus

By Katherine Amanda Kingsland, modern languages and linguistics '02

Although **Bach-Tuyet Tran-Jeffrey**, biological sciences '79, attributes a lot of her success to UMBC, she almost didn't attend.

As a student from Switzerland, Tran-Jeffrey came to the United States in 1975 to visit her cousin living in Towson, Md. During her visit, the fall of Saigon ended the Viet Nam war and Tran-Jeffrey was considered a refugee by her native country. With only a student Visa as her passport, she was forced to remain in America until her situation could be resolved. On the advice of her cousin, she looked into continuing her studies at UMBC.

Fluent in French, Tran-Jeffrey became involved in the French club and soon found herself helping her French professor teach lessons to her classmates. She also conducted biological research as part of a work-study program. "I began extracting proteins from tobacco to see what other foods could be made," says Tran-Jeffrey. "I used the greenhouse on campus to plant and harvest tobacco for our research."

In the research lab, she found a close connection with the biology department. She remembers the helpful biology faculty and most of all Martin Schwartz, the former chair of the biological sciences department. "The professors encouraged us to do well in everything," says Tran-Jeffrey. "When I found that I had excess credits, I was encouraged to use them and I minored in French." It was this kind of one-on-one attention and sense of community that Tran-Jeffrey feels helped her to achieve her own success.

Although Tran-Jeffrey modestly describes her post-UMBC career as uneventful, her steady, straightforward drive to succeed speaks volumes about the way in which her ambition was shaped by her college experience. "I went directly into dental school and immediately found a place for myself in the workplace," says Tran-Jeffrey. She now works as a dentist for mid-Atlantic Dental Associates.

Tran-Jeffrey lives in Columbia, Md., with her husband Bob, and her sons Alexander and Zachary. She remains strongly connected to the campus through the Alumni Association and attends such events as the alumni night at Camden Yards and the Clipper City cruise. "I owe a lot of my success to the biological sciences department and to UMBC," says Tran-Jeffrey. "I want to continue to be connected with the campus."

Katherine Amanda Kingsland is working toward her certification in Japanese and plans to pursue a career in international relations.