What do you call a gold-level ice-dancer, seven-book author, world traveler, who taught college geology and meteorology, and still finds time to substitute as organist and choir director in area churches? “Organized!” If you want to be more formal, however, you could call her Dr. Sandra F. Mather.

“Skating and music have taught me discipline and goal setting. I do one thing at a time, and go for quality, not quantity,” Mather says of her busy schedule. Monday through Friday she can be found at the ice rink and, although “on paper” she retired in 1999 from her position as a professor in WCU’s Department of Geology and Astronomy, today she spends no less time dedicated to the campus than she has since arriving in a hurricane 45 years ago as an undergraduate.

She began her educational career by earning a bachelor of science degree in elementary education in 1964 followed by a master’s of education in geography in 1968 from what was then West Chester State College. Her memories of West Chester include some familiar names. She was hired by Earl F. Sykes, for whom Sykes Student Union is named, to teach in the laboratory school. She had the opportunity to student teach with Ruby Jones, the first African American to graduate from WCU with a teaching degree, for whom the very building in which they taught is named.

“I loved teaching second grade as well as undergraduate and graduate students,” Mather recalls. “You have to remember you are teaching students, not just the subject. You have to relate to all students in order to get through to them. The laboratory school was a great environment and it is fun to see some of the same students I taught back then walking around the campus today.

“When a position in the Department of Geology and Astronomy became available, I was asked to fill the role. I jumped at the chance. I have always taken opportunities; I never worry about how it will fit, I just let it happen.” Naturally when the opportunity arose to travel across the continent to pursue her doctorate at the University of Oregon, her only question was, “Where do I sign?”

Having traveled extensively across the United States for research in her field and for her seven books focusing on the geology and historical geography of Summit County, Colo., Mather acknowledges that West Chester remains her favorite place to live, geographically and otherwise.

“West Chester University is growing and changing; it’s not just a teacher training college anymore. There are so many good faculty members who know their stuff and care about the students. West Chester has many administrators and faculty who are dedicated to the students. There is an energy here that is fun to see.”

Mather cleverly mentions Tanglewood’s romantic side, where she met her late husband and great influence, Dr. John Russell Mather. He was one of the “fathers” of climatology in the United States and a distinguished professor at the University of Delaware. “I handed him his name tag at the door for a geography meeting, not knowing that I would eventually be married to him for seven years.”

Music was always a part of her life. When she was little, Mather “played” the radiator like it was an organ. In eleventh grade, her parents bought her an organ and her career as a church musician blossomed. Today she has been able to carry on the gift of giving by endowing an organ practice room in the under-construction Swope Music Building and the Performing Arts Center.

“West Chester University has been a big part of my life for the last 45 years. I consider myself lucky.”

Her commitment to giving back and preserving the energy she finds at West Chester University is also exemplified by her gift endowing the map room of the Francis Harvey Green Library, which will be named the “Dr. Sandra E. Pritchard Mather and Dr. John Russell Mather Map Room.”

“I want people to get a hint of what can be done. There are so many ways to help the University.” Although she no longer teaches at WCU, through the Sandra E. Pritchard Mather Endowment in the Department of Geology and Astronomy, she makes sure that each semester several students in that department have the opportunity to do their best. “I want them to have the same, if not better, opportunities than I did.”