

Notes of Excellence

from the Center for Teaching Excellence



Fall 2011



» Welcome to Our New Associate Director!

Dr. Joshua Eyler joined the CTE this past July, and he quickly hit the ground running. Already, Josh has led the planning of our annual Innovations in Teaching & Learning conference; facilitated new faculty, adjunct, and graduate teaching assistant orientations; is currently teaching our pilot *Preparing for Careers in the Academy* graduate seminar; and is our resident Twitter aficionado (find out more about all these in this issue!).

Josh joins us from Columbus State University in Georgia, where he was recently tenured in the English department. He also served as Assistant Chair and former Acting Assistant Dean at CSU. A specialist in medieval English literature with an emphasis on Chaucer, he also has interests in medieval drama, disability studies, children's literature, and sports literature.

» Teaching Tip: End of Semester Grading

Towards the end of the semester, grading can become an onerous task. To stay afloat, keep these tips in mind:

- Make assignments worth grading. If the assignment doesn't clearly link to your student learning goals, then change it or remove it.
- Understand the goal of grading the assignment. If the assignment will be returned to the student and used to improve their work on the next project, then make necessary comments. If you are grading a text or assignment at the end of the semester, your time will be better spent making few notes.
- Separate commenting from grading. If many students are making the same mistake, note it for yourself and lead the class through it, rather than making individual comments on each page. Note it for following semesters.
- Use a rubric to grade assignments. The time spent making the rubric will be time saved in grading.
- On multiple choice tests, do a quick item analysis. You can quickly see where students showed strengths and weakness. If more than half the students miss a question, check to see if the key was incorrect or answer unclear.
- Get students to help you organize your grading by giving them a checklist of important elements to be included with an assignment and a clear deadline.
- Create a procedure for student questions about grading. Rather than allowing them to come individually or crowd you after class, tell them that you will (for instance) consider any questions that come by email in the next week, with clear questions or explanations of why a grade should be changed.

In the CTE library, we have materials to help you formulate a plan for grading. *McKeachie's Teaching Tips* (Svinicki and McKeachie, 2011) and *Effective Grading* (Walvoord and Anderson, 1988) are good references.

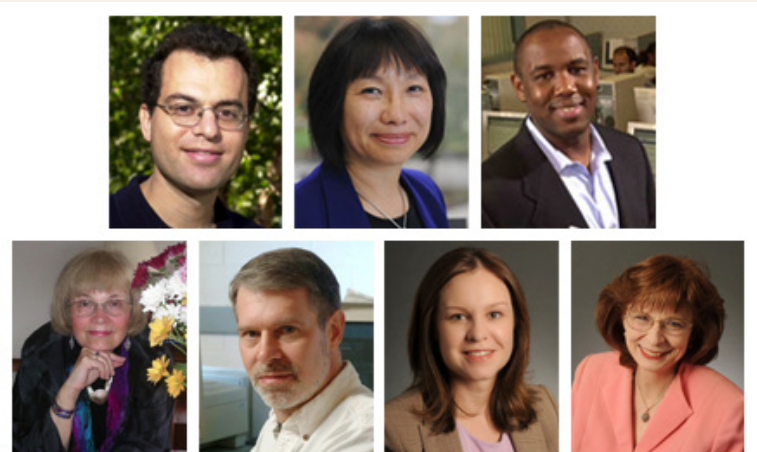
2012 SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award Nominees

We are pleased to announce that 7 Mason faculty members have been nominated for the 2012 SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Awards.

These awards recognize superior accomplishments in teaching, research, and public service and are the Commonwealth's highest honor for faculty at Virginia's institutes of higher education.

Our nominees are [left to right] Giorgio Ascoli (NEUR), Rita Chung (GSE), Kevin Clark (GSE), Paula Ruth Gilbert (MCL/WMST/NCC), Robert Hazen (Robinson Professors), Jaime Lester (Higher Ed), and Linda Monson (MUSI).

Congratulations and good luck to each of our nominees!



» PROV701: *Preparing for Careers in the Academy*

This semester, the Center for Teaching Excellence, in collaboration with the Associate Provost for Graduate Education, launched a new program focusing on graduate student professional development. Kim Eby and Michelle Marks worked together last year to design this new signature program, which includes a one-credit graduate seminar in the fall, as well as an online discussion forum and a series of teaching consultations and observations in the spring. The program is competitive, and there was a selection process for students to apply for admission.

The seminar is called PROV 701: *Preparing for Careers in the Academy*, and it meets every other Friday morning. One of our Associate Directors, Josh Eyler, is facilitating the seminar. There are 17 participants, whose disciplines vary within CEHD, CHHS, CHSS, COS, SPP, VSE, and the Krasnow Institute.

The major areas covered by the seminar are effective college teaching and preparing for the academic job market. The goal is to help participants hone their teaching skills and be as competitive as possible on the academic job market, regardless of whether they are seeking a tenure-track position, a postdoctoral fellowship, or another kind of employment in a university. The final project is an academic career portfolio made up of a teaching philosophy statement, a research statement, an updated CV for an academic job application, a cover letter for an academic job application, and a course syllabus.

This is an exciting new program, and we have an impressive group to work with. Calls for participants for next year's seminar will go out in the spring.

» Students as Scholars

What an exciting time to be supporting undergraduate student scholarship, creative activities, and research! With the help of many faculty and students, we are moving beyond writing the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) into making the *Students as Scholars* initiative an integral part of the Mason experience. Structurally, Bethany Usher is now the Director of *Students as Scholars*, and we will open the new Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) this spring semester.

CTE and OSCAR are partnering on the Scholarship Development Grants that support the integration of student scholarship into undergraduate courses and the associated faculty development. Scholarship Development Grant proposals for Curriculum Development (Track B) and Collaborative Projects (Track C) will be accepted until early February. Additional activities include the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, Undergraduate Student Travel Fund, Excellence in Student Scholarship and Mentorship awards, and the Celebration of Student Scholarship.

Please see the blog link at oscar.gmu.edu for updated information and feel free to contact us at oscar@gmu.edu.

» Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference

The CTE's 3rd annual Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference was held on Monday, October 3, in Research Hall and the Johnson Center Cinema. Once again, the event was a great success, with over 160 faculty and graduate student attendees taking part in 16 interactive sessions, 9 teaching tables, and lunchtime discussions led by Teaching Excellence Award winners and finalists.

We also had 2 keynote addresses, the first by Dr. Robert Baird of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, whose talk was entitled, "Have We Created a New Science of Teaching Yet? Early College High School as a Case Study." Later in the day, social activist and author Paul Rogat Loeb spoke to us about "Teaching for Engagement: Innovative Perspectives to Get Your Students More Involved."

We would like to thank all of our university sponsors, as well as our student, staff, and faculty volunteers and participants whose passion and enthusiasm helped to create such an intellectually engaging atmosphere. Very special thanks go to the CTE Coordinating Circle for assisting with the organization of the conference. Finally, we are very grateful to Shelley Reid, the conference's co-director, whose dedication to the success of this event over the last three years has been unparalleled.

» Connecting with Mason's New Faculty and Graduate Students

This August, we continued our tradition of welcoming new faculty and graduate students to Mason's campus through a variety of workshop offerings. Our *Strategies for Success* workshops were attended by approximately 60 faculty members from units spanning the campus, including CEHD, CHHS, CHSS, COS, CVPA, SOM, SPP, VSE, and the Confucius Institute. One of the most popular features of the workshop, the panel discussion on "Things I wished I had known as a new faculty member," included insights from Richard Craig (COMM), Christopher DiTeresi (PHIL), Jim McNeil (ESP) and Bethany Usher (CTE/ANTH). Beyond these sessions, we offered or participated in several departmental workshops and continued our involvement in Mason's new adjunct faculty orientation.

In addition, we conducted a number of workshops for graduate teaching assistants in the College of Science, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Computer Science. Taken together, there were 120 attendees who participated. In collaboration with our new *Preparing for Careers in the Academy* seminar, we are excited to be reaching out to graduate students and look forward to expanding potential offerings for this population.

We want to thank our collaborators, including the Office of Disability Services, University Life, Human Resources, the Division of Instructional Technology, the Office of the Registrar, and the academic units across campus. Through our teamwork, we have been able to connect with over 300 faculty and graduate students to support their teaching and learning practices. Thank you!

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