

# Notes of Excellence

from the Center for Teaching Excellence

Fall 2009



## »Meet Our New Associate Director!

Dr. Bethany Usher will join us in January 2010 from the State University of New York at Potsdam where she established the Center for Undergraduate Research and serves as its Director. She is currently an Associate Professor of Biological Anthropology, has served as chair of the Anthropology Department at SUNY Potsdam, and has a long history of collaborating with undergraduate researchers. She looks forward to working at the Center for Teaching Excellence and collaborating with Mason students, faculty, and staff in developing the QEP on fostering a culture of student scholarship and creative activity.

## »2010 SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Awards

We are pleased to announce that six Mason faculty members have been nominated for the 2010 SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award. 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. Congratulations and good luck to each of our nominees—recipients will be notified in January.

- ◆ Todd Kashdan, Psychology, early career Rising Star Award (CHSS)
- ◆ Kevin Clark, College of Education and Human Development, Teaching with Technology Outstanding Faculty Award (CEHD)
- ◆ Kenneth J. Hintz, Electrical and Computer Engineering (VSITE)
- ◆ Jefferson Offutt, Computer Science (VSITE)
- ◆ Margo Mastropieri, College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)
- ◆ Carol Mattusch, History and Art History (CHSS)

## » 2009 Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference

In collaboration with numerous academic units and campus offices, the Center hosted the 2009 Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference on October 5. The conference was organized around concurrent one-hour presentation sessions and teaching tables, in which faculty from a variety of ranks and disciplines shared their teaching tips and ideas with student and faculty colleagues. The conference also featured a luncheon where Mason Teaching Excellence Award winners and finalists facilitated conversations among conference participants on a variety of topics.

We thank the over 200 graduate student and faculty participants who helped make the conference a place of high energy and enthusiasm about teaching and learning. The Center is grateful for the assistance of the CTE Coordinating Circle, and particularly Shelley Reid, the Conference Co-Coordinator, whose time and enthusiasm helped make this event a resounding success!

## 2009 Teaching Excellence Award Winners

The Provost and the CTE are proud to announce the 2009 Teaching Excellence Award winners. Recipients for this year's awards are:



Pamela Hudson Baker  
(CEHD)



Karen Hallows  
(FNAN)



Kumar Mehta  
(ISOM)



Linda Monson  
(MUSI)



Chawky Frenn  
General Education (AVT)



Esperanza Roman-Mendoza  
Teaching with Technology (MCL)



Debra Bergoffen  
David J. King Award (PHIL)

The winners were selected through a competitive process and were honored with a celebration that took place last spring in the Center for the Arts. We invite you to visit our website to learn more about our winners.

## >> An Update from the QEP Planning Committee

The topic of our QEP is to foster a culture of scholarship and creative activity between students and faculty by engaging departments across the institution in disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and co-curricular inquiry, exploration, and activities.

In order to be successful, we need the support and participation of the entire Mason community. Get involved by visiting the QEP Café ([masonqep.onmason.com](http://masonqep.onmason.com)), sharing your ideas, and visiting the QEP website ([qep.gmu.edu](http://qep.gmu.edu)).

For those who are just learning about it, the QEP is a five-year plan that engages the entire Mason community in addressing a well-defined topic that will significantly enhance undergraduate student learning and strengthen the student experience.

## >> Curricular Innovation Group

The CTE has joined the College of Science (COS) in promoting and supporting a science faculty learning community, the Curricular Innovation Group (CIG). The members of this group were selected in a competitive process among faculty who submitted proposals for curricular innovations for new and existing courses. Faculty participants are from Atmospheric, Oceanic, & Earth Sciences; Chemistry & Biochemistry; Computational and Data Sciences; Biology; Environmental Science & Policy; Mathematical Sciences; and Physics & Astronomy. The purpose of this community is to provide the COS with instructional material that is not only innovative, but can be applied to other courses across the COS.

The Center supports the faculty participants who co-facilitate conversations on topics such as critical thinking, student engagement, teaching with technology, promising practices for integrating quantitative approaches into the classroom, and assessment. CTE also provides organizational leadership to this project.

## >> Website Updates



We recently added three new exciting features to our website ([cte.gmu.edu](http://cte.gmu.edu)). All of our resources are continuously updated, and we welcome your comments and suggestions for making them more comprehensive.

- ◆ [The Teaching in the Disciplines](#) resource is a collection of links to major peer-reviewed journals that focus on education in the disciplines and to teaching resources from professional organizations that have been recommended by our faculty and others in the field. You can access this resource by visiting ([http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/teaching\\_discipline.html](http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/teaching_discipline.html)).
- ◆ [The Graduate Teaching Assistantships](#) resource provides guidelines and useful information for Mason GTAs. You can access this resource by visiting ([http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching\\_at\\_Mason/graduate\\_assistantships.html](http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching_at_Mason/graduate_assistantships.html)).
- ◆ [The Department Chair Resources](#) page was developed in collaboration with the Office of the Provost and Human Resources & Payroll. This page is for both new and experienced department chairs and program directors, offering links to key university resources, along with resources for budgeting, hiring, and supporting teaching and research. You can access this resource by visiting ([http://cte.gmu.edu/dept\\_chair/index.html](http://cte.gmu.edu/dept_chair/index.html)).

### CTE Staff

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## >> Teaching Tips: Finishing Your Course on a High Note!

The CTE website offers a great variety of teaching tips and strategies that are easily adaptable to any course and level. As we get closer to the end of the semester, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- ◆ Let students know before the final assessment (e.g., exam, paper, etc.) where they stand and what they need to do to achieve a higher grade.
- ◆ Communicate your appreciation for what students have learned and accomplished. Point out the ways in which the course facilitated that learning.
- ◆ Thank students for the opportunity to work with them; tell students how their feedback will be used to modify your teaching next semester.
- ◆ Keep any thank you cards and emails from students in a file; these will be useful evidence later for your teaching portfolio.
- ◆ Congratulate yourself on your successes in the classroom and reflect on what you have learned from things that did not go quite the way you expected. Use this learning to adjust your approach and inspire you for next semester.
- ◆ Be patient with yourself. It can take a while to explore and cultivate your teaching persona; it is important to find the balance among confidence, authenticity, and creativity.

For tips on ways to make your next semester easier, visit our website at ([http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/next\\_semester.html](http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/next_semester.html))!