

Notes of Excellence

from the Center for Teaching Excellence

Spring 2012



» Preparing for Careers in the Academy

Following last fall's implementation of the seminar portion of the Preparing for Careers in the Academy graduate student development program, participants are now involved with the spring events that make up the second half of the program. In January, each participant met with Josh, the facilitator, for individualized feedback on the academic job portfolio they created as a part of the seminar. Over the course of this semester, Josh observed classes of those students who are GTAs or instructors and met with all students for mentoring regarding their teaching and academic career goals.

The program was capped with a celebration at The Mason Inn on March 28. The student participants, their faculty advisors, department chairs, Provost Stearns, and President Merten attended. Attendees enjoyed a luncheon; remarks by several speakers, including Dr. Merten, who recalled his own time in graduate school and how it helped to shape him as an academic, as well as program participant Brittany Hott; and a presentation of certificates of completion.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this program, especially the Office of the Provost, Dr. Michelle Marks, Ashleen Gayda, and Hermione Pickett. To all the participants: we wish you the best of luck in the future!

» CTE Participation in International Activities

Supported by the Office of Global Strategies, the Center was afforded the opportunity to work with a number of international visitors to campus this year, including:

- A delegation of higher education professionals and administrators from Kurdistan, Iraq. We provided training in quality assurance practices in higher education, specifically around issues of faculty roles, developing faculty as effective mentors and teachers, and faculty evaluation. Participants were selected by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan.
- A delegation of higher education professionals and administrators from Tsinghua University in China. We discussed quality assurance in teaching, provided an overview of faculty development and roles for teaching and learning centers nationally and at Mason, and shared innovative practices that featured the *Students as Scholars* initiative.
- Participants with the Global Problem-Solving Consortium. We featured how we hope to influence teaching and learning through the opportunities that have been created by the *Students as Scholars* initiative.

» Conversations with Chairs

Our tradition of hosting the "Conversations with Chairs" series, in collaboration with HR & Payroll, continued this semester. The panel discussion, "Best Practices in Managing Adjunct Faculty," addressed a number of critical issues, including recruitment, adjunct hiring and orientation, support and mentoring, evaluation, and non-renewal. Facilitated by Linda Harber, Associate Vice President for HR & Payroll, panelists included Pat Donini, Corey Jackson, and Kim Eby.

Save the Date!



Our annual **Innovations in Teaching & Learning conference** will be held on Friday, September 21, 2012, from 9:00am-6:00pm in the Johnson Center.

Our keynote speaker will be **Dr. Stephen D. Brookfield** (University of St. Thomas). Dr. Brookfield is a renowned scholar on adult education, and he has published several books on teaching and learning, including *Teaching for Critical Thinking* (2011), *Radicalizing Learning* (2010), and *The Skillful Teacher* (2006).

We look forward to seeing you there!

2012 Mason Teaching Excellence Award Winners

The Office of the Provost and the CTE are proud to announce the 2012 Teaching Excellence Award winners, who were selected through a competitive process and were honored with a celebration on April 9 at the Center for the Arts. Recipients for this year's awards are:



From left to right [pictured with Provost Stearns, center]: **Tamara Maddox** (CS), **Danielle Rudes** (CLS), **Robert Sachs** (MATH/David J. King Teaching Award), **Yoonsun Chung** (GSE/Special Recognition in Teaching with Technology), **Lisa Lister** (ENGH/Special Recognition in General Education), **Margaret Daniels** (SRHT), **Julie Owen** (NCC), and **Paul Cooper** (CHEM).

Seven faculty were also recognized as *Teachers of Distinction* to commend their dedication and commitment to providing students with meaningful, significant learning experiences at Mason: Shannon Davis (SOC/ANTH), Rajesh Ganesan (SEOR), Hugh Gusterson (SOC/ANTH), Jaime Lester (Higher Ed), Erin Peters Burton (GSE), Shannon Portillo (CLS), and Jennifer Suh (GSE).

Also at the ceremony, Janet Oleszek, a former At-Large member of the Fairfax County School Board, presented Mason's two State Council of Higher Education for Virginia Outstanding Faculty Award winners, Giorgio Ascoli (NEUR) and Robert Hazen (Robinson Professors), with Joint Commending Resolutions by the Virginia General Assembly.

>> Spring Book Group

In the evaluations that were handed out at last fall's Innovations in Teaching and Learning conference, many attendees noted that they were interested in the possibility of participating in a book group where we would read and discuss a common text. Based on this feedback, the CTE decided to host a group this spring in which members would read Stephen D. Brookfield's *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions*.

Over 50 faculty, staff, and graduate students signed up for the group, and the CTE purchased books for each participant. John O'Connor (Higher Ed) and Josh Eyer are leading the discussions, which have illuminated the important role played by critical thinking across all of our disciplines and provided suggestions for assignments and activities we all can implement in our classes.

We look forward to hosting a book group each spring and eagerly anticipate your suggestions for texts.

>> OSCAR Update

It is with great enthusiasm that we report that the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) opened this past January in 246 Johnson Center. The establishment of OSCAR is another step in implementing the *Students as Scholars* initiative. Bethany Usher, Associate Director of the CTE, will also serve as Director of the *Students as Scholars* initiative, while she and Kim continue to co-chair the Students as Scholars QEP Leadership Council, which has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the QEP.

CTE and OSCAR are collaborating on the curricular initiatives of *Students as Scholars*, supporting Curriculum Development Grants, workshops, and faculty learning communities, all designed to help faculty incorporate scholarly inquiry into their classes. We have supported at least 16 different departments working on course and curriculum development already this year, and we look forward to working with many more.

OSCAR is also pleased to welcome two new team members: our new Assistant Director, Dr. Rebecca Jones, who is working on individual student research and creative activities, and our new Office Coordinator, Sabrina Lunin.

To learn more about OSCAR and how you can get involved, please visit oscar.gmu.edu, "like" us on Facebook (*Students as Scholars* at Mason), and follow us on Twitter ([@Mason_OSCAR](https://twitter.com/Mason_OSCAR)).

What happened to the QEP?

OSCAR is home to the *Students as Scholars* initiative—what used to be known as "the QEP" (Quality Enhancement Plan). Mason's QEP, required as a component for re-accreditation, outlined the new *Students as Scholars* initiative for undergraduate research and creative activities. As of December, our SACS accreditation has been reaffirmed.

>> CTE News Bits!

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Shannon will be graduating with a Master of Arts in Sociology this May and will begin pursuing her Ph.D. this fall at the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice. Her book review, "The Differential Representation of Women and Men in Crime, Victimization, and the Criminal Justice System," was published in *Sex Roles* in February, and her co-authored paper (with Shannon Davis and Julia Anderson—both in SOCI/ANTH), "From the Great Recession to Greater Gender Equality? Family Mobility and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender," is forthcoming in *Marriage and Family Review*.

Josh presented "Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself? How the Brain's Amygdala Can Impede the Learning Process" at the 2012 Lilly South Conference this past February, and he will hold another presentation rooted in brain-based learning theories at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in May. Additionally, Josh's essay, "The Rhetoric of the CV," which is based on his work with the Preparing for Careers in the Academy Program (see reverse) was published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on April 4.

Ashleen was accepted into Mason's Master of Arts in Arts Management program and started life as a graduate student this semester. She is concurrently pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Special Events in Arts Management.

Bethany and Padmanabhan Seshaiyer (MATH) presented an invited session, "Transforming a Campus Culture by Creating a Faculty-Supportive Environment for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities," at the Conference of Research Experiences for Undergraduate Student Scholarship, sponsored by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and the National Science Foundation in October. She also attended the CUR Dialogues meeting in February. She just returned from presenting her co-authored (with Jaimin Weets) poster, "Dental Evidence on the Origins of the Irish," at the American Association of Physical Anthropologists national meeting in April.

Kim co-presented (with Virginia S. Lee) a session titled, "Collaboration and Values in Center Leadership of Campus-wide Initiatives" at the fall Professional and Organizational Development (POD) conference. The conference theme was *Create, Collaborate, & Engage* and was co-sponsored with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Faculty Development Network.

@MasonCTE was highlighted as one of James Lang's favorite teaching and learning center Twitter accounts in his *The Chronicle of Higher Education* "On Course" column! Are you on Twitter? Follow us to stay connected!