

Student Focus

UL Lafayette Foundation's award criteria emphasize superior teaching

SOME TEACHERS LEAVE AN INDELIBLE mark by challenging and inspiring their students. The UL Lafayette Foundation honored four such influential educators this spring.

Dr. Suzanne Fredericq, professor of biology, and Brian Kelly, professor of print-making, received its Distinguished Professor Award. Geoff Gjertson, associate professor of architecture, and Dr. Lisa Graley, a lecturer in the English Department, were presented with its Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

"These awards shine a spotlight on faculty members who are exemplary in their

work, who inspire their students and their colleagues," said Julie Bolton Falgout, executive director of the UL Lafayette Foundation. The awards are presented each April at a banquet and awards ceremony.

This is the first year the Foundation honored two professors and two teachers. Previously, three Distinguished Professor Awards and one Excellence in Teaching Award were typically given.

Falgout said the change reflects the value and importance of teaching. "UL Lafayette faculty members have earned the reputation of being committed to student success. Both of these awards honor that commitment."

The Distinguished Professor Award was established in 1965. The Excellence in Teaching Award, which began in 1992, was renamed in 2008 in honor of former UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray P. Authement.

Honorees receive a stipend and their names are inscribed on plaques that are permanently displayed in Edith Garland Dupré Library.

INSPIRED BY NATURE AND THE ARTS

Dr. Suzanne Fredericq

Dr. Suzanne Fredericq has been fascinated with nature since she was growing up in Belgium, her native country.

"As a child, I loved to play with animals, and then as an adolescent, I had a passion for bird-watching, for hunting fossils and for looking up the names of every plant and animal I came in contact with," the UL Lafayette biology professor said during a recent interview.

This early interest led her to the State University of Ghent in Belgium, where she pursued an undergraduate degree in zoology with a specialty in marine invertebrates. She began studying marine worms,



Dr. Suzanne Fredericq examines algae taken from Cypress Lake on campus.

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which led her to marine algae, or seaweeds.

"I wanted to learn more about the algae to better understand the worms. The more I became fascinated with those algae, the more I realized that they were the organisms I wanted to keep on studying for the rest of my life. They pushed the worms out of my life."

Fredericq received the UL Lafayette Foundation's 2010 Distinguished Professor Award.

She joined UL Lafayette's faculty in 1996 after completing post-doctoral work at the Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. She was attracted to the Biology Department's research and the university's close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico.

"Some people get a runner's high from running a marathon. I get a rewarding feeling every time I look at a red algae and every time I understand something new about it," she said.

Fredericq is an international expert in her field. She's been invited to give lectures from Japan to Mexico and has published more than 80 papers in her career.

She has directed the dissertations of nine doctoral students. All of them remain collaborators with her. Recently, a former student from Brazil returned to Lafayette for a short visit to work with Fredericq on completing two manuscripts. In August, she'll join another former student, now a faculty member at a Rhode Island university, on an algal collecting trip in Panama.

"It gives me so much pleasure that all nine were able to stay in the field of phy-cology, the study of algae, and that they all have become highly regarded as experts in their field," she said.

Fredericq's work is not limited to the laboratory. She also teaches a freshman biology course.

"Suzanne has taught hundreds of students in our freshman-level series of classes aimed at non-majors where she has been highly successful," said Dr. Glen Watson, head of the Biology Department. "In addition, her course in Marine Botany aimed at senior biology majors and graduate students is well-attended and well-received by her students."

In her life outside academia, Freder-



Professor Brian Kelly, left, works with student Matt Bell in UL Lafayette's printmaking studio.

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icq is a fan of the arts. Her late husband, Eugene J. Martin, was a prolific and well-known painter.

"I am drawn to the visual in biology and also in the arts," she said. "I love looking at great art hanging in museums and art galleries, no matter the style or period."

So, it's no wonder that she is smitten with the intricate shapes and hue of red algae.

PROFESSOR FOSTERS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Brian Kelly

Professor and printmaker Brian Kelly doesn't mind getting his hands dirty.

"I've always been a hands-on person. I'm a hands-on teacher. Sometimes that requires you to be in the muck with the student. I'm not going to walk away from a student who's having trouble," he said in recent interview.

A visitor to the printmaking studio is likely to find Kelly working alongside his students. "One of the things that drives me is the fact that this university is student-centered," he said.

Kelly received the UL Lafayette Foundation's Distinguished Professor Award this year.

Professor Chryl Savoy, head of UL's Visual Arts Department, said he has helped

create "a superior learning atmosphere" for students and faculty.

"He is 100 percent enthusiastically interested in his students and is totally driven by their abilities to learn, to develop, to grow. His constant willingness to work alongside his students in the learning process is inspiring to them as well as to his colleagues," she said.

Kelly's role within the department has come full circle. He joined the faculty in 1999 to teach printmaking and was named department head in 2003. Kelly returned to the printmaking studio in the fall of 2009.

He was just 34 years old when he became department head. Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts, said Kelly was ready for the challenge. "This was an unusual appointment for a newly tenured faculty member, but he brought the same qualities in his administrative work as he brought to his teaching and creative activity," Brooks said.

As department head, Kelly oversaw successful re-accreditation of visual art and design programs through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. He also obtained more than \$300,000 in grants.

Kelly helped expand Marais Press, the department's printmaking press established in 1991. Since 1999, he has invited professional artists to collaborate with UL Lafayette students, creating limited

editions of the artists' work. Proceeds from the sale of prints are reinvested in the press, used to pay expenses related to visiting artists and to fund student art scholarships.

Each year, five to 12 artists spend one week working in the studio. Kelly said UL Lafayette is one of only a handful of universities in the United States that conducts a professional collaborative program.

"It's an opportunity to expand students' knowledge and experience," he said. Students learn about the visiting artist's approach and method, interact with the artist and carry out the printing process.

"We'll have a whole class come in and they'll watch as we're making this print. The students see the results of collaboration. It reinforces the decision they've made to pursue a career as an artist. They see someone who's taken that path, someone who's successful."

Since 1999, the program has produced collaborations with more than 80 artists. "When we bring artists into the studio, we make the environment flexible and adaptable to their needs. But we also try to expose them to as much new information, technology and methodology as we can," Kelly said.

MASTER BUILDER

Geoff Gjertson

Two days a week, Geoff Gjertson welcomes visitors to UL Lafayette's BeauSoleil Home, next to Fletcher Hall. The sustainable solar house, designed and built by students, earned two awards in Washington, D.C., in the 2009 Solar Decathlon: the Market Viability Award and The People's Choice Award. UL Lafayette competed against 19 universities from around the world in the contest sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Gjertson, an associate professor of architecture, was faculty advisor for the two-year project. He received the UL Lafayette Foundation's 2010 Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

"My involvement with the BeauSoleil home really taught me when it is appropriate to stand back and let the students take the risks. The projects that students learn the most from are those in which they have true ownership."

Gjertson described the BeauSoleil home as a laboratory. "We are still learning from it," he said.

"We put it here on campus so

that students can experience it over the next several years and learn from it." Engineering students, for example, are monitoring the home's solar electrical system and automated systems, including lighting, heating and cooling.

Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts, said Gjertson has "a long history of excellence in teaching students how to learn through project-based and service-based learning.

"One of our greatest challenges as educators is preparing students not only how to survive, but how to thrive and how to serve. Geoff is a master teacher who knows how to develop service-based projects that not only teach architecture, but challenge students to be good citizens."

Gjertson, who joined the faculty in 2000, maintains a private architectural practice. "It's important for me to stay engaged in the profession. Carrying out my own work helps me grow as a teacher," he said.

His philosophy of teaching is based on his belief that an architect should be able to swing a hammer. "In making something, you to learn how to design something. That concept goes all the way back to the beginning of the profession. The term 'architect'



Architecture Professor Geoff Gjertson, center, meets with students Jason Lantier, left, and Carson Donham inside the BeauSoleil Home.

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means ‘master builder.’ ”

Gjertson helped establish the UL Lafayette Building Institute, a design/build studio in which students participate in real-world projects. Through the institute, students have helped restore an historic Acadian home and improved facilities of the Acadiana Outreach Center and the Boys and Girls Club. “We wanted to make the institute a more central part of the curriculum, so now it is no longer an elective. It is part of our undergraduate and graduate programs,” Gjertson said.

Students gain hands-on experience, not only in construction, but in aspects of architectural practice such as team collaboration, conflict resolution, financial management and client communication.

The BeauSoleil Home is also a project of the Building Institute.

“The culmination of everything we have been doing is service learning. We provide community outreach, teaching people about sustainable design techniques and strategies, so that people can use them in their own homes.”

Gjertson said he thrives on teaching because “every day is different. I learn from my colleagues when we are working with a group of students”

HUMANITIES ‘AMBASSADOR’

Dr. Lisa Graley

After Dr. Lisa Graley earned a degree in journalism from Marshall University, she got a job as a newspaper reporter in her home state of West Virginia. Over the next four years, she served as a reporter, page designer, photographer and managing editor. But journalism wasn’t a career she wanted for a lifetime.

“There was something in my heart that kept pulling me back to literature. That was my first passion,” she said in a recent interview.

So, in 1992, Graley left West Virginia and journalism and moved to Louisiana, where she earned two master’s degrees at McNeese State University in Lake Charles



Dr. Lisa Graley is coordinator of UL Lafayette’s Interdisciplinary Humanities Program.

and a doctorate at UL Lafayette.

Since 2002, she has been a lecturer in UL Lafayette’s English Department and its Interdisciplinary Humanities Program. She has also served as coordinator of the humanities program since 2002, overseeing scheduling and course creation, and recruiting faculty.

She has taught a variety of courses, including honors classes, survey courses, creative writing workshops and lower- and upper-level interdisciplinary courses. Many have intriguing titles, such as “The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth Century,” “Plagues and Poxes,” and “Jacob’s Ladder: Angel Encounters in the 20th Century.”

“I’d love to take any of these courses,” stated Dr. James McDonald, head of UL Lafayette’s English Department, in a letter recommending Graley for the Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award this year. “She brings to these courses significant knowledge of, curiosity about, and zeal to do research on literature, art, film, history, music and culture (and often other fields such as psychology and religion) over several centuries and across numerous national borders.

“Dig into her syllabi and other materials for each class, and you’ll see rich and carefully thought-out sets of questions for class discussions and provocative writing assignments ... ”

McDonald said he is impressed by

the breadth of the courses Graley teaches. “Many teachers are strong teachers in one or two general areas but it is rare for faculty to excel while teaching so many different kinds of subjects.”

He noted that Graley is popular among students. He described her as “an encouraging, student-centered teacher.

“I see this especially in her comments on student papers. Her comments are always encouraging, always positive, and always very specific about what is working in an essay or short story and what is not working,” he wrote.

Graley said there is something thrilling about seeing students catch on to the material she is teaching. She views her role as an ambassador who shows students the relevance of humanities in their lives. She sometimes fosters creativity by asking students to complete art or music projects, as well as writing assignments.

Graley credits Dr. Darrell Bourque, UL Lafayette professor emeritus of English and Louisiana’s poet laureate, as the mentor who helped shape her involvement with literature and the humanities.

From 2003 until 2008, Graley was editor of *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, a journal that specializes in essays by teachers, for teachers.

She recently received a grant to complete work on a book of short stories set in West Virginia. ■

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