

About the Edgar M. Carlson Award

The College's highest accolade for teaching excellence is the Edgar M. Carlson Award for Distinguished Teaching. Nominations typically include examples and details that might illustrate:

- The nominated faculty member's excellence in his/her discipline;
- The faculty member's success in generating enthusiasm, insight, and thought in classrooms, studios, and laboratories;
- Practices that show the faculty member to be creative, stimulating, or responsive;
- Teaching that is especially collaborative, supportive, or innovative;
- Mentoring and advising that inspire academic excellence;
- The nominee's support for student research, scholarship, and creativity; and
- The basis of the nominator's special respect for the nominee's teaching.

Recipients over the past 10 years have been:

2010 – Leila Brammer (communication studies)
2009 – Rick Orpen (music)
2008 – Richard Leitch (political science)
2007 – Claude Brew (English)
2006 – Paul Saulnier (physics)
2005 – Robert Gardner (theatre and dance)
2004 – Lisa Heldke (philosophy)
2003 – Cindy Johnson (biology)
2002 – Max Hailperin (computer science)
2001 – Gretchen Hofmeister (chemistry)

The Mission of the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning

“The John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning supports faculty in achieving their potential as teachers and scholars. Responsive to the professional needs and interests of each faculty member, the Kendall Center includes support for teaching initiatives and faculty research, scholarship, and creativity, and provides on-campus opportunities for focused conversation on pedagogy, assessment of student learning, and collaboration among colleagues. Through its support of such opportunities, the Kendall Center fosters the pursuit of teaching and scholarly excellence throughout all stages of each faculty member's career and for all Gustavus students.”

~ from the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning Strategic Plan (2/13/09)

NOTES FROM THE KENDALL CENTER

‘What the best teachers do’ — Kendall Center stages Faculty Development Day

by Margaret Bloch Qazi

What did your best teachers do? Did they give inspiring lectures? Were they easy graders? Maybe they learned your name and expressed interest in you as an individual when you were in a large lecture class. Perhaps you were invited into scholarly conversations that helped you develop a deeper conceptual understanding of a topic. Did your teachers help awaken in you an interest in a topic that you continued to explore long after you left their classes? While the question “What makes a teacher good?” is simple, the answer is remarkably complex.

Seeking the answer, more than 80 Gustavus faculty members gathered to participate in the John S. Kendall Center-sponsored Faculty Development Day, an annual early-fall event that explores issues related to engaged student learning and best practices for educators.

“What do the best teachers do?” The question of most effective teaching practices is frequently asked by educators and studied by scholars. It formed the central theme of the Faculty Development Day plenary session. The plenary was facilitated by a panel of Gustavus faculty who were recent Edgar M. Carlson Award recipients (see box at left): Professor Leila Brammer (communication studies), Associate Professor Richard Leitch (political science and environmental studies), Professor Rick Orpen (music), and Professor Paul Saulnier (physics).

Acknowledging the high quality of the teachers in the audience, the plenary panel turned the tables by asking their colleagues a pair of provocative questions: When you were in college, what teaching practices do you remember as being particularly effective in helping you learn?” and “What did ineffectual teachers do?” What followed was a lively discussion as faculty participants thought back to their college days and shared what they had experienced to be better and worse teaching practices.

The resulting discussion generated many ideas and examples. However, several common themes of best teaching practices emerged, including showing passion and respect for subject matter and students, engaging students in questions that mattered to the students, and being organized in their approach to student learning yet flexible enough to make use of “teachable moments”—those unplanned times when an opportunity for learning presents itself. Members of the panel then invited reflection by asking the assembled faculty what their students would say about each of them, thereby offering an opportunity to explore areas in need of strengthening. Before the hour was through, the panel shared their opinions on “best” teaching practices. These included engaging students, treating students as individuals, respecting each student's educational journey by modeling what they want their



Recent Edgar M. Carlson Award recipients (from left, Leila Brammer, Paul Saulnier, Richard Leitch, and Rick Orpen) made up a panel at the plenary session of Faculty Development Day, discussing “What some of our best college teachers do.”



Faculty engaged in small-group discussions about effective teaching practices.

students to accomplish, having fun with course material and the learning environment, and continuously exploring and experimenting with different approaches to teaching.

With a strong opening that modeled engaged teaching and learning, additional sessions, led by Gustavus faculty from a variety of departments, explored a number of ways to develop skills and enthusiasm for lifelong learning. Faculty explored how to use campus resources, such as the Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library staff and resources, to help students go beyond locating texts in the stacks in developing research skills. Other sessions explored structuring classes in general and assignments in particular to more clearly identify learning goals, developing assignments and activities to engage students in authentic and intellectually engaging ways, and modeling appropriate scholarly habits to help students learn appropriate ways to incorporate information into their own work.

The sessions themselves were models of scholarly teaching, as they explored questions that matter deeply to faculty, incorporated results from recent studies on student learning, used new technologies (e.g., podcasts, clickers, and the like) and were full of questions and lively discussion. The sessions allowed faculty to share challenges encountered in student learning, discuss implications of the results for their own teaching, and then explore ways to modify and revise their practices to more effectively engage students in the learning experience.

Faculty Development Day is not the only opportunity Gustavus teachers have to explore and evaluate models of effective teaching. With the support of Gustavus alumni and friends, the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning coordinates several programs aimed at supporting faculty scholarship and student learning. During the course of the academic year, faculty members have multiple opportunities to join each other for lunchtime

conversations about such topics as student writing and using technology, as well as the art and science of teaching. Faculty members who are new to Gustavus can participate in a well-developed orientation and mentoring program. Undergraduate involvement in research, scholarship, and creative inquiry is supported through internal grants and special programming and culminates in the campuswide, student-focused Celebration of Creative Inquiry. Faculty and departments are also able to apply for mini-grants to learn about and develop new pedagogical approaches. Gustavus offers many opportunities to help faculty develop into even more effective teachers, and many among the faculty here take advantage of the opportunity. To learn more about John S. Kendall Center activities and offerings, visit gustavus.edu/kendallcenter/.

So, what do the best college teachers do? In a book of the same title, Dr. Ken Bain describes the results of a study on the attitudes and practices of the most effective college and university instructors. Based on study results, Bain concludes, "Great teachers are not simply great speakers or discussion leaders; they are, more fundamentally, special kinds of scholars and thinkers, leading intellectual lives that focus on learning, both theirs and their students'. Their attention to the details of performance stems from a concern for the learners, and their focus is on the nature and processes of learning rather than on the performance of the instructor." (*What the Best College Teachers Do*, p. 134.) What do the best teachers do? At Gustavus, they never stop learning. ■

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Student summer research grows

by Brandy Russell

Students and teachers are engaged in research, scholarship, and creative work year-round on the Gustavus campus. During the academic year, students may conduct projects as part of a class, independent study, or capstone project for their major. In the summer, no classes are held on campus but a number of students and their faculty advisers and mentors stick around for the lively summer research community. Interest in summer research is growing, and this past summer saw the College's largest group yet, with 45 Gustavus students and 24 faculty members participating in student-faculty research on campus in 11 different academic departments, representing the humanities, performing arts, sciences, and social sciences.

Support for these projects comes from alumni gifts as well as a number of significant internal and external grants. Several students and faculty members from chemistry, physics, political science, religion, and theatre/dance received support from Gustavus's Presidential Faculty-Student Collaboration Grants. Recent awards from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Merck Institute for Science Education, the National Science Foundation, and other funding agencies supported a number of science students.

Although the Gustavus campus is much more quiet in the summer, the atmosphere in the summer research community is vibrant and engaging. Students and faculty get together often to share research plans, progress, and results. Science researchers meet every Wednesday for student research presentations. Students and faculty from across campus are starting a new tradition of hosting salons to discuss topics related to their research interests. Weekly socials, pick-up sports games, canoe trips, group lunches, game nights, picnics, and more help to build a sense of community among the group. ■

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