



BOARD OF REGENTS

FACULTY AWARDS

2017–18 ACADEMIC YEAR

NOMINATION ABSTRACTS

BOARD OF REGENTS

FACULTY AWARDS

Nomination Abstracts

A complete nomination package for a BOR Faculty Award consist of:

- 1) Cover Sheet
- 2) Letter of Nomination by nominator(s) of no more than two typed pages advocating the basis for the nomination – relating nominee’s teaching, research or creative activities to the criteria for the specific award
- 3) Nominee’s Reflective Statement discussing teaching, research or creative work, providing supporting evidence for Letter of Nomination of no more than five typed pages
- 4) Letters of Support from one to three internal or external colleagues or students to complement the Letter of Nomination, one to two typed pages each
- 5) Nominee’s curriculum vitae – abbreviated and concise, no more than five pages

Abstracts contained in this booklet are summations of the Letter of Nomination, Letters of Support and the Nominee’s Reflective Statement, for the expressed purpose of introducing award recipients. The editor preferably extracts quotations and paraphrases for brevity and continuity.

CSCU System Office
Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

CAMPUS-BASED AWARDS

TEACHING AWARDS Connecticut State Universities

Dr. Mark Cistulli

**Associate Professor, Literacy, Management Information Systems
Central Connecticut State University**

Dr. Mark Cistulli was nominated by his faculty mentor, Dr. Jason Snyder who has “observed his growth as a teaching professional and his tireless efforts to continually improve his teaching methods.” The department chair adds that he is impressed with Dr. Cistulli’s positive impact upon student learning, his drive toward student excellence and his creation of new courses. A former student declares Dr. Cistulli to be his favorite professor for he pushes his students to do their best and is always available to help academically and with their personal growth. Another student cites Dr. Cistulli’s extracurricular activities that afford students opportunities for personal and professional development. Professor Cistulli employs a multi-dimensional “real-world” approach in his teaching, wherein he facilitates students’ active engagement with learning – an experience that is both realistic and academic in nature. He purposefully challenges students and requires that they interact interpersonally. His assignments are scaffolded to build students’ competencies to construct a “solid, finished product based on a semester’s worth of work.”

Dr. Richard Zipoli

**Associate Professor, Communication Disorders
Southern Connecticut State University**

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards, page 14

TEACHING AWARDS

Connecticut Community Colleges

Robin Avant

**Assistant Professor, Biology & Molecular Biology
Housatonic Community College**

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards, page 13

Deborah Bradford

**Associate Professor, Academic Strategies
Tunxis Community College**

Deborah Bradford was nominated by her colleague, Jennifer Wittke who highlights a number of Professor Bradford's activities as examples of her end goal: to provide a student-centered approach to her work on campus with dedication and focus. Another colleague states there is no kinder, more compassionate faculty member in our system; and notes Professor Bradford is equally effective as a facilitator of a variety of in-service instructor training workshops, helping faculty improve their learning and teaching. A fellow facilitator of instructional skills workshops observes: "Debbie is one of those truly special and unique teachers who has the ability to not only impart knowledge, but also to inspire her students ... she has done the same for me as a colleague." Professor Bradford believes strongly in student reflection. "Understanding their own habits, patterns, and processes helps them move forward and grow." She reaches out to every student as a role model who relates to her students in many ways as she strives to teach them to love learning and to assist them in their journeys to better their lives.

Ira Hessmer

**Assistant Professor, Business & Technology
Capital Community College**

Department Chair Dr. Miah LaPierre-Dreger nominated Ira Hessmer who "has consistently demonstrated excellence in teaching by providing clear, well-paced, and organized instruction that is closely tied to real-world case studies." A supporter declares Professor Hessmer is an excellent teacher and colleague who is extraordinarily committed to mentoring her advisees to best prepare them to succeed. The director of the institution's place-based education initiative is deeply impressed with the way Ira Hessmer has embraced and implemented place-based pedagogy with creative and impactful assignments. A registered architect, Professor Hessmer believes experiential learning such as the tours of building through which she guides students makes the subject "real" and interesting. She also arranges internships in architectural offices to provide students with real-life experiences. "I believe through sharing new experiences with my students using the city of Hartford as our classroom they can learn in a more tactile way to be open to new ideas and gain a lifelong curiosity for learning."

TEACHING AWARDS

Connecticut Community Colleges

continued

Dr. Andrea Levy
Associate Professor, Psychology
Middlesex Community College

In nominating Dr. Andrea Levy, Dean of Academic Affairs Dr. Steven Minkler finds her “to be an intelligent, warm, and supportive teacher and colleague;” thorough and professional; focused, first and foremost on ensuring that our students receive a high quality educational experience. A colleague notes Dr. Levy’s “interdisciplinary, pedagogical approach focused on life-skill development,” and in “every class she is sure to incorporate skill building in critical thinking and written communication.” A former student declares Dr. Levy to be an exemplary scholar and highly recommends her Introduction to Psychology class to anyone desiring to learn more about general psychology concepts and theory. Another colleague declares Professor Levy has been a “rigorous and compassionate teacher who supports her students while challenging them to do the best work they can do.” To hone students’ critical thinking skills, which she deems critically important, Dr. Levy encourages active participation, analysis, and even rebuttal about course material. She also emphasizes importance and applicability to daily life of students’ development of writing skills.

Dr. Eric Meyers
Associate Professor, Biology
Gateway Community College

Department Chair R.E. Tremblay nominated Dr. Eric Meyers who displays effective pedagogy across the breadth of courses he teaches. As a healthcare professional, Dr. Meyers’ “expertise in human anatomy and the medical field is an invaluable resource for our students” as he skillfully incorporates clinical cases into his classes. A colleague declares Dr. Meyers to be innovative, noting his usage of Blackboard technology, Camtasia lectures, study exercises and video lessons to enhance his courses; resources which he shares with other faculty. The science coordinator has observed Dr. Meyer’s enthusiasm in teaching challenging topics through hands-on activities and by relating curriculum to students in manners that help them to learn and retain the subject matter. Another colleague and a student both noted Dr. Meyers’ generosity in sharing his time, energy, classes, course materials and even modalities and procedures from his private medical practice. In addition to being thoroughly knowledgeable about the material they teach, Dr. Meyers believes teachers “must connect with students on a personal level, caring about them as individuals, inspiring them, and instilling in them a passion for learning.”

TEACHING AWARDS

Connecticut Community Colleges

continued

Andrea Pizone-Novia
Associate Professor, Mathematics
Norwalk Community College

Andrea Pizone-Novia was nominated by her department chair, Elizabeth Glatt, who stated she has shown evidence of exceptional teaching skills, effective pedagogy, and innovative instructional delivery that has had a high impact upon student learning. A departmental colleague notes their common students rave about Professor Pizone-Novia who has instilled in them a confidence to grasp new mathematical content. Another departmental colleague acknowledged that students refer other students to Andrea Pizone-Novia's courses, for she cares about them and their learning. In reflecting upon teaching, Professor Pizone-Novia deems teaching math to be a science and remarks she is often in the laboratory. "I study math constantly in order to make it more accessible to my students." She reads journals and periodicals, watches webinars and instructional videos, and constantly revises lesson plans in her effort to improve her teaching and achieve her primary goal of increasing student achievement. She also reports: "it is always important to present to students a professional calm, a secure and confident mastery of subject matter."

Jakob Spjut
Associate Professor, Engineering
Quinebaug Valley Community College

Alfred Williams, Dean of Academic and Student Services, nominated Jakob Spjut for his contributions to the institution's culture of working closely with students, within and outside the classroom. The director of the academic division reports Professor Spjut has implemented a number of innovative instructional techniques in the classroom, and that he regularly and actively participates in activities to promote student engagement and retention. A colleague has watched Jakob Spjut "motivate, educate and inspire students" in and out of class. A former student applauds Professor Spjut's guidance that helped him overcome academic and personal obstacles along his extended journey to graduation. Jakob Spjut devotes significant amounts of time off contract and during the summer to stay current in his field and to improve his courses and his teaching. He has won fellowships and grants for graduate studies and work projects – the means for curricular and instructional enhancements. Professor Spjut's passion for teaching led him to become involved with the institution's Center for Teaching through which he helped to organize lunchtime seminars to spur faculty to continue growing as instructors.

TEACHING AWARDS
Connecticut Community Colleges
continued

Mariangeli Zerbi
Associate Professor, Mathematics
Naugatuck Valley Community College

Department Chair Jane Wampler nominated Mariangeli Zerbi for her effectiveness in teaching and her pedagogical innovations in creation of a new approach to teach an introductory math course. The academic division director describes Professor Zerbi as “dynamic and engaging” while encouraging students to tackle difficult problems and hard-to-understand concepts. A departmental colleague states that Professor Zerbi’s teaching is grounded on her students and their needs, she educates her students holistically, challenging the boundaries of the classroom, and consistently dedicates herself to support her colleagues’ teaching needs and their efforts to support their students’ success. Mariangeli Zerbi has established a project-based approach to teaching a contemporary mathematics course. She employs a variety of projects that help students understand concepts by applying them to real life situations. The projects are meaningful and challenging tasks where students work in groups which promotes engagement and persistence as they learn by doing and come to understanding. Since implementing this approach Professor Zerbi has seen improvements in classroom attendance and course pass rates.

RESEARCH AWARDS

Connecticut State Universities

Dr. Reza Ghodsi
Associate Professor, Engineering
Central Connecticut State University

Program Coordinator Dr. Nidal Al-Masoud nominated Dr. Reza Ghodsi by citing his insightful and influential research which includes papers, grants, inventions and technological advancements. The supervisor of his doctoral studies noted the “international impact of his research, academic and industrial activities.” A colleague and co-teacher declares Professor Ghodsi is a superior classroom instructor, with high standards and expectations of his students. An industrial manager who oversaw collaborations with university professors remarked that Dr. Ghodsi’s work instructing company employees was “greatly admired” for he had “a major impact upon the company’s approach to problem solving.” Dr. Ghodsi has published 33 journal papers and 34 conference papers to date, and has worked and taught in a number of countries. His education, research and work experiences have equipped him with the ability to teach 12 different courses. Colleagues and students alike are appreciative of the unique perspectives of Dr. Ghodsi’s industrial experiences, within and outside of the classroom.

Dr. Chelsea Harry
Associate Professor, Philosophy
Southern Connecticut State University

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards, page 12

Dr. Rachel Prunier
Associate Professor, Biological and Environmental Sciences
Western Connecticut State University

A colleague, Dr. C. Thomas Philbrick, nominated Dr. Rachel Prunier noting her many juried publications, their citations by prominent scholars and her presentations to international audiences as testaments to the relevance and impact of her research. The major advisor for her doctoral studies declares Dr. Prunier’s “work has already had a substantial impact within her field of plant evolutionary and her future contributions are likely to be even more important.” A collaborator described their experiments and drafts of a manuscript for a prestigious journal and remarked upon the considerable statistical expertise, the practical skills in data analysis, and the excellent communication skills that Dr. Prunier possesses. In her reflective statement, Professor Prunier describes how evolutionary biologists strive to understand the connections between a species’ past, present and future. She concludes by stating she has designed her research program in mind with the active engagement of students. She involves a wide range of students with different interests in laboratory research in various biological studies. She wants students to see biology as a living, growing field.

SCHOLARLY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Connecticut Community Colleges

Dr. Todd Barry

**Assistant Professor, English
Three Rivers Community College**

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards, page 11

Megan Boyd

**Assistant Professor, Dance
Naugatuck Valley Community College**

Dr. Lisa Schuchter nominated Megan Boyd, describing her as an engaging, knowledgeable, caring, and experienced professional, committed to scholarly excellence and student success. The interim dean of academic affairs reports Professor Boyd's "original works of choreography have garnered external peer recognition and are 'published' via performances at a wide range of venues, including juried shows." Megan Boyd's teaching philosophy is "based on physical and intellectual experimentation; via exploration student discover how to identify principles for themselves within their own bodies and minds for which they can cultivate a solid artistic foundation." Her achievements have ranged from Renaissance court dances for Shakespeare plays to musical dance numbers for Hairspray and Cabaret. Her professional choreography has been presented on campus, in local stages and regional theaters. Her students learn to make dances, "students learn firsthand with immediacy, and rehearsals become a meta-lesson for students in self-observation, organization skills and risk-taking."

Heather DeDominicis

**Associate Professor, Academic Enrichment & First-Year Experience
Norwalk Community College**

Department Chair Dr. Forrest Helvie nominated Heather DeDominicis who helped create the institution's Transitional Strategies program and a pathway to move developmental students directly into college-level English courses, utilizing research of best pedagogical practices. A departmental colleague declares Heather DeDominicis as "a thoughtful and purposeful scholar" who researches new teaching methods and current trends during various professional development opportunities. Another departmental colleague states Professor DeDominicis is "highly invested in learning" and "constantly evaluating the needs of students, and changing and innovating in the classroom to meet those needs." This spring, Professor DeDominicis undertakes revision of the textbook used in the Transitional Strategies program. She has generated materials and ideas to facilitate attractive readings and prompts for writing essays. In her classrooms, she strives to create and maintain an environment that stimulates student engagement in thoughtful discussions, reflections and open dialogue.

System-Wide Adjunct Faculty Teaching Awards

Marilyn Kain

**Adjunct Professor, Justice and Law Administration
Western Connecticut State University**

Dean of the School of Business Dr. David Martin nominated Marilyn Kain who has been an adjunct professor in the Justice and Law Administration (JLA) division for 20 consecutive years. He states she brings “a wealth of education and experience” to the division as a graduate of both JLA and the institution’s Masters in Counseling program, and as a licensed professional counselor. Dr. Martin remarks that Professor Kain has “exceptional teaching skills and pedagogy” which she updates and sharpens through ongoing training and conferences. A colleague observes Professor Kain’s work ethic and commitment to the university sets her apart from other adjuncts. Also noticeable is her participation in a national criminal justice conference where recently she has presented her strategy and pedagogy in advancing classroom teaching techniques. In her reflective statement, Professor Kain credits the care and concern shown to her as a WCSU student as engendering her teaching and personal philosophies. As a therapist and educator, she has learned the importance of making connections and strives to afford her students opportunities to make similar connections in their own lives in order to successfully move forward. She requires students to keep a personal journal for reflection and critical thinking which she deems to be crucial elements that help them to be successful in their academic, personal and professional lives.

Arthur Simoes

**Adjunct Faculty, Visual Art and Design
Tunxis Community College**

Department Chair Carianne Garside nominated Arthur Simoes as an outstanding teacher with a track record of 15 years wherein he has increased student learning and promoted instructional improvements in institutional programs. A former student credits Arthur Simoes with helping her find her “voice” through his time, effort, care and extreme patience. She notes all of his students are captivated by his enthusiasm and energy. A current student who is a retired educator, owes her growth and passion for photography to Arthur Simoes whom she regards as a valued teacher, mentor, and hopefully as a friend. Another non-traditional student has observed Arthur Simoes’ fine character and uniqueness with which he forms an inspirational, indelible connection to his students. Arthur Simoes reflects that he has found teaching embodies both his passion for the art and craft of photography, and his goal as an educator is to share that passion with others. In the classroom, he has an avenue to expose eager minds to larger concepts, challenging them to expand their skills and interests. In addition to instructing classes, Arthur Simoes is the coordinator of the campus gallery which give students access to exhibitions of inspirational artworks as well as a venue for exhibiting their own work. Simoes declares: “the sense of accomplishment that a student gets from this experience is profound and I’m thrilled to be part of that process.”

System-Wide Scholarly Excellence Award

Dr. Todd Barry
Assistant Professor, English
Three Rivers Community College

Dr. Todd Barry was nominated by his colleague June Decker who has worked with him on a variety of initiatives and projects and admires his wisdom and thoughtfulness, his ability to inspire in his students the love of learning, and his kindness to all. Dr. Barry began teaching at Three Rivers while still enrolled in his doctoral program and he has completed and defended his dissertation during his tenure. Professors from his doctoral studies in English wrote letters supporting his nomination. One cited his “incisive analysis of texts and issues and his elegant writing” and his “ability to express the most complex issues in terms that are crystal clear.” Another noted his experiences as an actor and his law degree in stating: “Dr. Barry’s expertise in the field of law and in issues of staging and acting meant that other students listened with great interest and respect to his observations. Plays leapt off the page when Dr. Barry discussed potential aspects of the use of theatrical space that did not so readily occur to anyone else in class.” According to June Decker, in his dissertation, he “analyzes the changing attitudes of and by sexual minorities in society from various perspectives including literary, theatrical, legal and anthropologic points of view.” In his dissertation, Professor Barry questions how have theatre and law worked together to shape constructions and regulations of sexual minorities? He states: “On an abstract level, law and theatre perform essential rituals that are collective acts of judgement within a community: punishing criminality; demanding atonement; granting absolution; allowing forgiveness.”

System-Wide Research Award

Dr. Chelsea Harry
Associate Professor, Philosophy
Southern Connecticut State University

Chair of the History Department Dr. Troy Paddock nominated his colleague from the philosophy department, Dr. Chelsea Harry who in a relatively short time “has been a remarkably productive scholar in disparate fields, showing an intellectual rigor and ingenuity that merits recognition.” He cites evidence of her scholarship gaining a strong reputation and of her being acknowledged as a leading international expert. Her department chair echoes her exceptionally high level of scholarship and the impact of her work in her areas of research, Ancient Greek natural philosophy and 19th century German philosophy. He also reports that Professor Harry is an in-demand speaker at renowned conferences and has garnered several grants. A departmental colleague adds Dr. Harry is always supportive of her colleagues’ research in the philosophy department and across the institution. She contributes immeasurably to the intellectual culture at Southern by organizing colloquia that are attended by students and faculty alike. Since arriving at Southern, Dr. Harry has completed her dissertation; published a monograph, seven peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, an abstract and an article in congress proceedings; given eleven invited or keynote lectures; organized three scholarly panels at professional conferences; and presented sixteen papers at national or international conferences. She has another article under revision for publication, two books under advanced contract, and a monograph in progress. Dr. Harry’s most recent research focus is animal cognition – the thesis that non-human animals have the potential to flourish vis-à-vis their psychic or perceptual/cognitive powers, when abetted by motion and *phantasia* (which is translated to mean imagination or something more akin to re-perception).

System-Wide Teaching Award

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

Robin Avant

Assistant Professor, Biology & Molecular Biology

Housatonic Community College

In her nomination, Robin Avant states her dedication, passion and efforts are in student growth, student wellness and encouragement. She strives for excellence for her students, for the college and for the community. Her department chair notes Professor Avant endeavors to enhance student engagement, to spark appreciation as well as knowledge of biology and to promote scientific thinking. The institution's grants development specialist applauds Robin Avant for her leadership in advancing STEM education, to which the institution has added Art. She has increased opportunities for students in STEAM fields of study through research presentations, career fairs, and employer engagement panels; and has established partnerships with area schools and community-based organizations. Both supporters reported her creation of a new course in forensic science at the request of the Criminal Justice program director. Her participation in professional development activities prepared her for this task; specifically a five-day course led by the prominent forensic scientist, Dr. Henry Lee. Professor Avant considers it to be imperative to being an effective teacher that one maintains personal and professional growth – to be continuously stimulated and rejuvenated in a discipline of study. Her other faculty development activities include a five-month ACUE Effective Teacher training on strategies to incorporate scientific teaching in the classroom. In reflecting on teaching, Robin Avant believes it is important to form a connecting thread between classes, discipline of study and with real-life applications. She states: "Allowing students to develop such connections between the various components promotes retention, completion and overall success." Professor Avant is a strong advocate of active learning, creative instruction, and the usage of technology, reflection and empowerment to increase student engagement and enhanced class participation.

System-Wide Teaching Award

(Connecticut State Universities)

Dr. Richard Zipoli

Associate Professor, Communication Disorders

Southern Connecticut State University

Dean of the School of Health and Human Services Dr. Sandra Bulmer nominated Dr. Richard Zipoli, declaring him to be a tremendous asset as both a teacher and scholar. “He reminds me of a talented music conductor in the way he interprets content, delivers that information to this students and inspires them to perform in exceptional ways.” In his orchestration of teaching, Dr. Zipoli uses technology in creative and effective ways, blends lecture with discussion, and employs other best practices for student learning and engagement. The department chair states Professor Zipoli stands out as exemplary within a department of excellent and talented teachers. He observes that Dr. Zipoli’s classes are “meticulously prepared, interesting, dynamic and exemplify the type of learning environment that we strive to provide for our students.” A recent graduate student notes Dr. Zipoli’s “top priority is supporting student achievement and providing opportunities for students to grow in their educational, clinical, and creative roles.” He observes further that Professor Zipoli’s “knowledge of the principles of learning guides his teaching style, and enables him to present material in a way that optimizes students’ understanding and success.” A current graduate student describes his lectures as “laden with clinical vignettes and real-world problem solving scenarios that encourage students to critically analyze course content.” Dr. Zipoli states the overarching theme informing his application of effective teaching is an emphasis upon the design and implementation of strategies that make curricular content accessible to all students, by accommodating varied learning styles. A central principle to his teaching philosophy is attempting to creatively enhance student motivation. To that end, he speaks enthusiastically from the perspective of an experienced clinician who continues to enjoy working with persons with communication disorders. He believes that students will connect with an instructor’s sense of passion, when a faculty member authentically shares it.