

BOARD OF REGENTS

FACULTY AWARDS

2015–16 ACADEMIC YEAR

NOMINATION ABSTRACTS

CAMPUS-BASED AWARDS

TEACHING AWARDS

(Connecticut State Universities)

Dr. James Diller

**Associate Professor, Psychology
Eastern Connecticut State University**

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards

Dr. Jess Gregory

**Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Southern Connecticut State University**

Dr. Robert Forbus was inspired to change his approach to teaching and working with student groups after attending Dr. Jess Gregory's classroom demonstration during the institution's Teaching Academy. In his nomination of her, he cannot imagine a "better resource for excellence in teaching." Another colleague, who is also a former student, states "Dr. Gregory's most impressive strength is her unwavering commitment to high standards that result in optimal student learning." Other former students and/or advisees attest that she instilled them with confidence, fostered growth-producing reflection, and enthused in depth explorations of the learning process. In discussing her teaching philosophy, Dr. Gregory states "my goal with any class is to create an environment where my students want to come and learn; they want to be challenged and challenge each other." She loves talking about pedagogy with colleagues. Her recent presentations at faculty development activities include differentiating instruction and using cooperative groups.

Dr. Monica Sousa

**Assistant Professor, Nursing
Western Connecticut State University**

According to her nomination by Dr. Catherine Rice, Dr. Monica Sousa has developed and utilizes an interactive instructional delivery – a multimedia approach that integrates case presentations, video animation, interactive discussions, and other technology to enhance student learning. Additionally, she has played a leadership role in helping the department's faculty members become familiar with and incorporate new technology and best practice educational modalities. A former student describes her as a "formidable role model" who possesses a unique ability to connect with students at all levels, exuding confidence and competence with a friendly demeanor that put people at ease and fosters learning. In summarizing her teaching philosophy, Dr. Sousa declares a belief that the measure of a nursing professor's success is how effectively he/she prepares students, not only for subsequent courses, but primarily for their professional nursing career. She played a leadership role in the redesign and renovations of the institution's nursing labs.

TEACHING AWARDS

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

Dr. Megan DeLivron
Assistant Professor, Math/Science
Gateway Community College

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards

Carla Adams
Associate Professor, Information Management Technology
Manchester Community College

Sandra Rimetz nominates Carla Adams for the “curriculum she builds, the pedagogical techniques she implements, and her commitment to student engagement.” The institution’s director of the Academic Support Center, Brian Cleary pronounces “her positive impact on student learning and her excellent collegial collaborations.” He adds that her assistance lends a great deal of credibility to the tutoring services provided by the center. A student and mentee who aspires to return to Manchester as a professor emulating Professor Adams, describes structured lesson plans, well-designed hands-on class assignments, thorough instruction and guidance and personal attention as the attributes of a “extremely cheerful and charismatic” and inspirational teacher. Carla Adams declares her teaching philosophy is based on the concept that a positive, encouraging, and engaging classroom atmosphere can foster student learning. She makes a concerted effort to demonstrate, circulate, and offer individualized instruction and coaching throughout the learning process.

Dr. Kimberly Thomas
Associate Professor, Chemistry
Middlesex Community College

Dr. Steven Minkler, Dean of Academic Affairs, notes in his nomination of Dr. Kimberly Thomas her dedication to our students, constant attention to student success, contribution toward curricular design and thoughtful planning for lab facility and equipment. She exhibits tremendous passion for teaching, utilizes a variety of technologies to facilitate teaching and learning, and is very engaged in numerous academic activities. A colleague calls her a distinguished, innovative educator widely known to be a caring and effective teacher. Another colleague describes her teaching style as energetic, comprehensive and ingenious. A teaching assistant states Dr. Thomas is a dedicated teacher who is adaptable to individual learning styles, compassionate to personal challenges while holding her students accountable for their own success. Dr. Thomas declares, “I am committed to my students, my students are entitled to my very best, in pedagogy, preparation, delivery, resources, assessment, and advising.”

TEACHING AWARDS
(Connecticut Community Colleges)
(continued)

Julia Petitfrere
Assistant Professor, English
Naugatuck Valley Community College

Former departmental chair and division director, Dr. Lisa Shuchter is impressed by Julia Petitfrere's dedication, enthusiasm, professional expertise, talents and genuine concern for students. She adds that Dr. Shuchter's educational effectiveness results from the way she integrates creative instructional techniques using technology and media with a variety of teaching methodologies to engage student learners. Professor Shuchter has played instrumental roles in a number of student development activities on campus in addition to professional development activities for faculty members. Julia Petitfrere reflects that learning is becoming conscious of why one thinks the way one thinks and why other people think the way they do. Teaching is these things also, and it shares awakening with others. She adds that personal interaction between students is central to her teaching.

Michael Emanuel
Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice
Northwestern Connecticut Community College

Two of the institution's division directors nominate Michael Emanuel for his passion for student success, continually striving to create an engaging learning environment, and his development of innovative teaching techniques, hybrid and online courses. In addition to curriculum review and revision, he has expanded students' externship sites and has collaborated with the college community to set up and support mentoring and tutoring programs. The campus director of educational technology reports that Professor Emanuel routinely attends workshops in search of ways to enhance student engagement and to become better prepared to support adjunct faculty members. He has learned to utilize ePortfolio technology to afford students opportunities to record their internship activities and for conscious reflection – a key curricular component. He has integrated online assignments and interactive applications wherein he provides students with timely feedback. Michael Emanuel states that he has learned today's college students want relevance and integrity of information, and an active teaching/learning exchange.

TEACHING AWARDS

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

(continued)

Nancy Fleming
Associate Professor, Math
Norwalk Community College

Department Chair Elizabeth Glatt states Nancy Fleming shows evidence of exceptional teaching skills, effective pedagogy, and innovative instructional delivery that has a high impact upon student learning. A colleague observes her to be a thoughtful and innovative instructor who uses student learning outcomes to improve her instruction in which she employs a number of pedagogical practices. A former student describes the “indefatigable and endlessly compassionate Professor Nancy Fleming” as someone who exudes an “ethic of care” with a “culturally relevant pedagogy.” A current student finds her inspiring for “she is organized, efficient, and has an excellent rapport with students of all levels and backgrounds. Nancy Fleming recognizes that the first step and essential measure of success for students is in their attitudes. “My goal is that students pass my course and pass any subsequent courses, but most importantly that they leave my class liking math – or at the very least– knowing they can do math.”

Dr. Jane Carey
Associate Professor, English
Quinebaug Valley Community College

Department Chair Dr. Scott DeShong says Dr. Jane Carey is a highly motivated teacher who engages her students and works assiduously to build their confidence, skills and knowledge. He adds that she is fully versed in the most current developmental pedagogy. A colleague with whom she has piloted curriculum, observed Professor Carey in the classroom and learned how to structure and plan his own courses more effectively to deliver content in ways that were equally engaging and rigorous. A former student appreciates the way Dr. Carey’s classes were structured and her innovative pedagogy. She also enjoyed Dr. Carey’s conducting open-forum style discussions wherein students respectfully learn and challenge one another’s ideas. Dr. Carey reflects that her teaching philosophy revolves around the notion that language acquisition should be interesting and enjoyable. She adds creating a student-center classroom is the first essential factor in effective teaching.

TEACHING AWARDS

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

(continued)

Celeste Arrieta
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages
Three Rivers Community College

June Decker says Celeste Arrieta clearly understands the need to teach the whole student. “She thinks deeply about how to educate her students – she sees a need and then figures out a way to meet that need as evidenced by her oral exam format and her founding of the language lab.” A colleague says Arrieta consistently provides exemplary work in all facets of her duties and utilizes cutting edge techniques for teaching and learning. Another colleague says Professor Arrieta is a “highly dedicated, innovative, and effective instructor” who exhibits an enthusiasm for her discipline, conducts extremely well-organized and clearly presented classes using a variety of instructional methods. A former student who took four classes with Professor Arrieta, declares her greatest strength is how she effectively integrates technological recourses into the classroom. Celeste Arrieta believes teaching is about inspiring others to discover their purpose and potential. She has grown to understand that excellence in teaching involves constantly assessing curriculum and methodology.

Jennifer Wittke
Assistant Professor, Academic Strategies
Tunxis Community College

A duo of English Department colleagues declare Jennifer Wittke a generous and creative colleague, a central force in classroom innovation and technological advances that encourage student learning. She is said to be a highly effective instructor who creates innovative strategies that lead to student success. Jennifer Wittke has coordinated the institution’s usage of ePortfolio to increase student engagement and as a tool for the assessment of student learning outcomes. She states that she has always created a classroom environment conducive to open interaction. As she continues to learn, she has gotten better in creating the desired environment through collaboration and classroom innovations, particularly through her use of group work and class discussions.

RESEARCH AWARDS

(Connecticut State Universities)

Dr. Lauren Rosenberg
Associate Professor, English
Eastern Connecticut State University

A trio of English Department faculty, including the chair, nominate Dr. Lauren Rosenberg saying she is conspicuous in terms of the stature of her scholarly achievement. They add that her recent research and publications have garnered national attention for her and the institution as well. This contention is supported by colleagues from Temple University and Washington State University. Respectively, they proclaim: “her contributions to the field of composition/rhetoric opened up a new area of research” and she is a “conscientious researcher” whose “meticulous” and “lovely work” merits inclusion in the premier monograph series for rhetoric and writing. Dr. Rosenberg declares “examining and advocating for equity through community engagement and public activism is threaded through my research, teaching, administrative work and service.” She integrates service-learning and community-based projects into courses to help students establish working relationships with people writing in communities outside of the university.

Dr. Christine Unson
Associate Professor, Public Health
Southern Connecticut State University

Interim Dean Dr. Sandra Bulmer states Dr. Christine Unson has become one of the most productive researchers in the institution’s School of Health and Human Services. Dr. Bulmer lists the numbers of scholarly works and presentations recently undertaken by Dr. Unson and declares her work is widely recognized and frequently cited. The institution’s director of assessment characterizes Dr. Unson as having “demonstrated excellence in research, statistical knowledge, diligence, insight, caring for students and ability to think clearly and scientifically.” He adds further that her research on student success and persistence informs the work the institution’s curricular initiatives and enrollment management. She is a strong believer in multidisciplinary collaboration, having conducted research with institutional staff and faculty, and with colleagues across the nation and the world. Dr. Unson states her research is “guided by a belief in social justice for vulnerable populations, particularly older, female, and minority adults.”

Dr. Surekha Davies
Assistant Professor, History & Non-Western Cultures
Western Connecticut State University

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards

SCHOLARLY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

Christopher Tuccio
Assistant Professor, Science
Naugatuck Community College

See nomination abstract under System-Wide Awards

Maria Buchta
Associate Professor, Academic Enrichment and First Year Experience
Norwalk Community College

Division Director Elaine DelVecchio states that Maria Buchta is committed to promoting instructional improvements and has been instrumental in bringing her knowledge and know how to faculty throughout the division. A colleague describes her as an innovator whose research on learning technologies and her knowledge base enable her to develop lessons that promote students' involvement with the learning process. Another colleague states Maria Buchta's body of work, based on good scholarship and creativity, has made substantial contributions to the institution's student success initiatives. The institution's director of the academic support center notes Maria Buchta designed, developed and produced the center's first tutor manual and was instrumental in the center receiving a tutor training certification from a national association. Maria Buchta discloses that professional development activities have empowered her to design a specific kind of intervention for underprepared students that combines advising programs with transitional curriculum.

Michael Stutz
Assistant Professor, Communication
Three Rivers Community College

Michael Stutz's scholarly work includes designing the institution's current communications curriculum, policy and procedural contributions to the general education curriculum, and appearances at regional and national conferences. June Decker notes further that "Mike is an academic – someone that lives the life of the mind – embracing ideas, taking time to learn about and think deeply about issues or events." According to Lillian Rafeldt, as a direct result of Michael Stutz's research and evaluation work, students increased their skills in communication faculty grew in pedagogy and assessment; and academia at large gained knowledge in the science of communication, teaching, learning and general education assessment. A colleague from another CSCU institution observed that his scholarship has been recognized with high rankings and programming at both regional and national disciplinary conventions. Michael Stutz reflects that his research, scholarship and writing has been fulfilling, both personally and professionally.

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SYSTEM-WIDE AWARDS

Board of Regents Adjunct Faculty Teaching Awards

Deborah Pagnotta

Adjunct Instructor, Speech and Communications

Norwalk Community College

Department Chair Susan Seidell nominates Deb Pagnotta for “her excellent teaching, her use of innovative pedagogical approaches, her creative additions to the extracurricular activities of the college, and her collaborative work with faculty and students.” Students “follow” her from course to course and rave about her invigorating, interesting and intellectually challenging classes. Dean Vanessa Smith Morest states her enthusiasm for public speaking is infectious and her scholarly contributions have far-reaching impacts upon the college and its students. A student describes Deb Pagnotta as having a rare combination of exceptional teaching skills and creative instructional delivery that impacts and improves students’ learning experiences. A colleague describes her as a creative and active “student-centered professor” who creates classes based upon the needs of her students. A lawyer, Deb Pagnotta is fascinated with communication and believes her diverse experiences and skills benefit both the institution and its students in building community through communication. The four tenets of her teaching philosophy are: Hold students accountable for their actions, connect the students with each other, help them to adapt communication, and recognize the individuality and perspective of each student.

Nicolas Simon

Adjunct Faculty, Sociology

Eastern Connecticut State University

Nicolas Simon “is among the finest professors at Eastern, a talented and skillful instructor who challenges, encourages and supports his students,” says Dr. Kimberly Dugan. She adds that “his instruction is innovative and fueled by the cutting edge literature and research on first generation college students.” Another colleague and former department chair, Dr. Theresa Severance, has conducted classroom observations and other evaluations of Mr. Simon and concludes he is a “creative, welcoming, and enthusiastic instructor.” A student proclaims “Professor Simon has made a profound impact on me as both a person and a student, his encouragement for students to be actively engaged in their community” is what sets his class apart from others. Another student finds him to be an “inspiring professor,” a stimulating lecturer who possesses an ability to make all of this students feel as if they matter, encouraging every student to believe in themselves and their potential to change the world. As a sociologist and educator, Mr. Simon states “my goal is to help my students using sociological theories and concepts to analyze, understand, and sometimes improve their personal life.” His pedagogical techniques includes the use of research to show students the evolutions and progressions of knowledge.

Board of Regents Scholarly Excellence Award

Christopher Tuccio
Assistant Professor, Science
Naugatuck Valley Community College

In his nomination, Dr. Peter Angelastro cites Christopher Tuccio's publications, external recognitions and curriculum development which places a special focus on meeting students' needs in the areas of skills development and professional preparations. As program coordinator, his duties include program planning, website development, student recruitment, course organization and management of five adjunct instructors. The institution's most senior professor, Dr. Joseph Faryniarz, declares Mr. Tuccio has produced a "positive paradigm shift" in the teaching of landscape design courses; in part through and facilitating the instructional needs of adjunct faculty members and students' application of software. Mr. Tuccio believes his scholarly contributions can be effective not only in classroom instruction, but in advancing the discipline and in strengthening the regional workforce and economy. Mr. Tuccio finds it to be imperative to research new trends and topics in horticulture and his research often offers new perspectives that he brings into the classroom in meaningful ways. Mr. Tuccio has leveraged his skills in landscape design and horticulture and the infrastructure of the college and surrounding area to create a rich learning environment.

Board of Regents Research Award

Dr. Surekha Davies
Assistant Professor, History & Non-Western Cultures
Western Connecticut State University

On behalf of the Department of History and Non-Western Cultures, Dr. Joshua Rosenthal nominates Dr. Surekha Davies for her "innovative and exciting scholarship for which she has received a number of competitive fellowships and grants from prestigious organizations, including the Library of Congress. External colleagues from Brown, Norte Dame and Penn State regard her as "a leading figure in her field internationally." Her soon to be published first book is "exemplary and should have a big impact ...her work in progress promises to be highly illuminating." Her "work is compulsory and compelling reading ... her scholarship is superb; she is prolific and ambitious." "In short, Dr. Davies is a top-notch scholar, an engagingly original mind, a rapidly rising star in her field, and an amiable and considerate colleague." Surekha Davies reflects that one of the inspirations for her research is her teaching, and anticipates that her second book project (in progress) will "shape science and technology studies, environmental history, and the study of European empires and the rise of modern museums." It is said that her teaching is her laboratory for generating new ideas. She credits funds she received from the CSU-AAUP Faculty Research Grant Program with advancing her research leading to the publication of her first book.

Board of Regents Teaching Awards

(Connecticut Community Colleges)

Dr. Megan DeLivron

Assistant Professor, Math/Science

Gateway Community College

On behalf of the department, Chair R.E. Tremblay nominates Dr. Megan DeLivron and declares that in his forty years of teaching, he has never seen a faculty member as skilled in helping students learn or as passionate about student success. He adds that her courses are built upon rigorous yet attainable learning outcomes, which she consistently evaluates. He, she and another colleague co-authored a published lab manual for the introductory biology course. According to a departmental colleague, Dr. DeLivron has been instrumental in the institution's efforts to increase the use of technology in ground, hybrid and online courses. Another colleague observes that Dr. DeLivron's collegial approach and student-centered attitude enable her to build consensus and successful endorsement during her leadership role in the approval of the Biology TAP Pathway. A former student says her warm personality makes her approachable and she clearly strives for nothing less than the success of her students. Dr. DeLivron breaks down "complex concepts to a level of understanding achievable by all students." Notable elements of her teaching include online pre labs, extra assignments, clear and concise lectures, problem solving strategies and online access to classroom activities. Megan DeLivron states her teaching philosophy is neither elaborate nor complex – "Meet students where they are at, and bring them to where they need to be." Feedback from students attest the most helpful aspect of her teaching strategy are the web-enhancement and digital lectures she creates for all her courses.

Board of Regents Teaching Awards

(Connecticut State Universities)

Dr. James Diller

Associate Professor, Psychology

Eastern Connecticut State University

In her nomination, Dr. Kristalyn Salters-Pedneault describes her colleague Dr. James Diller as “quite simply the most gifted and committed teacher I have known” and “an exceptional mentor” who breaks challenging courses into manageable pieces and helps students absorb and practice relevant skills. She notes that her classroom observations of Professor Diller has led to improvements in her own teaching. Eastern’s former provost and vice president of Academic Affairs, Dr. Rhona Free states that “his supremacy as a teacher is most evident in his outstanding mentorship of undergraduate research” in addition to being a brilliant lecturer, skilled facilitator of student discussion and creative designer of active learning exercises. A former student echoes the characterizations of Dr. Diller as a great professor adding that he notably “possesses a genuine interest in his students.” This former student from 2017-10, who considers himself to be a current mentee as a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at a mid-western university, declares Dr. Diller’s teaching style and drive will “result in many undergraduate students pursuing and succeeding in careers that they never believed were possible.” Department Chair Dr. Wendi Everton appends that James Diller has created three new courses with the aim, which came to fruition, of developing a “behavior analysis” concentration which allows students to sit for a national certification. She cites students’ recognitions of Dr. Diller as an outstanding teacher and mentor and declares him to be a “master teacher” in all aspects. Dr. Diller recognizes that his instructional techniques and purposefully fostering a specific classroom environment directly contribute to the outcomes of his students. He engages students and provides them with many opportunities to give and receive feedback. He loves being in the classroom and seeing students master difficult material, however, some of the most satisfying teaching he has done has been in the laboratory supervising research assistants and students’ theses and independent study projects.