Awards Recognize Faculty and Staff Achievement

Fifteen faculty and staff members were recognized for their exceptional contributions during Wednesday’s 2011-12 Faculty/Staff Kickoff.

Awards were presented for innovative teaching, exceptional work by adjunct faculty, and outstanding staff.

Following are descriptions of the award winners.

Winners of the Awards for Innovation in Teaching and Learning Christian Carloni, Michelle Vigeant, Mark Cistulli, Bill Thomson, and John Feierabend; President Walter Harrison; award winners Dennis Nolan and Katharine Owens; and Maria Esposito Frank, the Harry Jack Gray Distinguished Teaching Humanist for 2010-2012.

Saeid Moslehpour, chair of the Faculty Senate; winners of the Gordon Clark Ramsey Awards for Creative Excellence Helen Raisz, David Jacobs, and Edward Gutiérrez; and President Walter Harrison.

Outstanding Staff Member Award winners Barbara Schwartz, Cheryl MacMath, and Sam Cook; President Walter Harrison; award winner Nuchette Burke; Staff Association President Evelyne Haldimann; and award winner Timothy Lawless.

Awards for Innovations in Teaching and Learning

– Christian Carloni, assistant professor of architecture, College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture

In order to teach architecture students about the design of structures – one of the most challenging aspects of architectural education – Carloni introduced a competition that requires teams of students to design and build models that demonstrate the theory of tension and compression. Over the past three
years, Carloni’s students have produced beautiful and impressive models, and have mastered complex engineering theories through hands-on learning.

– **Mark Cistulli, assistant professor of communication, College of Arts and Sciences**

Cistulli teaches a full-year “Advertising Competition” course designed to give undergraduate students experience in building a communication campaign for an actual client. He created a virtual advertising agency – called “AdHawk” – which mimics the structure and processes of an actual small ad agency. Students develop and implement a communication campaign for a national client as they learn about collaborative work in a context where professionalism, high quality, and deadlines matter.

– **John Feierabend, professor of music education, The Hartt School**

– **Dennis Nolan and Bill Thomson, associate professors of illustration, Hartford Art School**

Feierabend, Nolan, and Thomson have been collaborating since 2007 to give senior illustration majors the opportunity to develop a professional picture book for publication. The project gives students the chance to experience a true client/illustrator relationship, from solving conceptual problems to meeting deadlines. In this case, Feierabend is the book author and client. Students in Nolan’s “Book Illustration” class spend a semester creating book dummies, and they complete the books in Thomson’s Senior Project class.

– **Katharine Owens, assistant professor of politics and government, College of Arts and Sciences**

Owens takes a “real world” approach to teaching by utilizing service-learning assignments to engage her students. In her American Public Policy course, students work with non-profits and government organizations—including the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford and the town of Windsor Health Department—to see how people actually engage in public policy-making. Owens provides her students with the tools to ensure their success—when she realized that students were having trouble writing the reflective journals required for the course, she redesigned the assignment to include workshops to improve their writing.

– **Michelle Vigeant, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture**

Vigeant, an expert in acoustics, also has made service-learning an integral part of her teaching. Students in Vigeant’s undergraduate acoustics courses have participated in a variety of service-learning projects, including addressing acoustical problems in the 40-year-old classrooms of a Massachusetts school; improving the acoustics in the auditorium of a Simsbury church; and addressing the sound quality in The Hartt School’s practice rooms. These projects provide significant benefits to both students and the community.

**Gordon Clark Ramsey Awards for Creative Excellence**

These awards recognize outstanding work by adjunct and part-time faculty.
– Edward Gutiérrez, adjunct faculty in history, Hillyer College
Gutiérrez—an alumnus of Hillyer College and the College of Arts and Sciences—teaches several history courses at Hillyer, including “World at War: A Global and Cultural History of Warfare.” He created that course to encourage students to confront their own concepts of war, violence, justice, and the value of human life. Gutiérrez is the recipient of several recent fellowships, including the 2011 West Point Summer Seminar in Military History Fellowship.

– David Jacobs, adjunct faculty in civil engineering, College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture
Jacobs has more than four decades of experience as a structural engineer in the railroad industry, and his unique background has been a tremendous asset to the University’s civil engineering program. Jacobs has developed two specialized graduate courses for civil engineering students: one in railroad and transit engineering and one in long-span and movable bridges. These courses provide students with an unusual opportunity to focus on specialized subjects that are not typically available to civil engineering students in the area.

– Helen Raisz, adjunct faculty in the All-University Curriculum
Raisz has been teaching in the All-University Curriculum for more than 15 years. She teaches a wide variety of interdisciplinary courses, including “The Adult Journey”; “Gender, Identity and Society”; and “Literature and Films of Other Cultures.” This fall, Raisz and several colleagues will be offering a version of that course that focuses on war and peace. Raisz has traveled the world and has a strong interest in world affairs, and she also is involved in local activism.

Outstanding Staff Member Awards

– Nuchette Burke, program administrator for Educational Main Street, College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions
Burke provides weekly programming for more than 100 students in grades 5 through 9 as the program administrator for the University’s After-School Network in Bloomfield and Hartford. She also oversees the student staff in the Educational Main Street office and coordinates the tutoring program. Burke graduated in May with a master’s degree in educational technology. Despite the demands of her job and her academic studies, Burke always makes time to support the University and to volunteer in the community.

– Sam Cook, public services librarian, Allen Memorial Library
The Allen Library houses a wide range of materials in the fields of music, dance, and theater. As public services librarian, Cook helps students, faculty, and other visitors navigate the library’s extensive collection of books, journals, musical scores, audio and video recordings, and online resources. In addition, Cook’s strong technological skills have contributed significantly to the library’s website. He also used those skills to overhaul the online course “Information Literacy in the Performing Arts,” which is
required for all first-year Hartt students.

– **Timothy Lawless, media arts and photography technician, Hartford Art School**

Lawless oversees the technology used by the Media Arts Department and the Photography Department in the Hartford Art School. Among his many roles, he oversees the computer labs, video studio, equipment and darkroom maintenance, software, and management of student monitors. In addition, Lawless is an adjunct instructor in media arts. In that role, he has developed and implemented a studio project for the “Introduction to Media Arts” course that puts computer-programming skills within an art context.

– **Cheryl MacMath, administrative assistant, Provost's Office**

MacMath provides invaluable administrative support to Peter Diffley, dean of graduate studies, and Fred Sweitzer, assistant provost and dean of faculty development. Among her many duties are assembling the Graduate Council and Graduate Advisory Board, organizing the annual graduate student reception in the fall, and coordinating the Graduate Research and Creativity Symposium in the spring. MacMath also provides critical administrative support in the selection process for the Jackie McLean Fellows.

– **Barbara Schwartz, secretary to the dean, College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA)**

Schwartz has been a steady presence in CETA for more than 20 years. In addition to handling complex budgetary and administrative tasks with efficiency and enthusiasm, Schwartz has an excellent rapport with students. She is actively involved with CETA’s Formula Society of Automotive Engineers team as well as the “Concrete Canoe” competition, and she is an avid supporter of the student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Over the years, Schwartz has given her time to the University United Way campaign and the Staff Association.