Michael Robinson, assistant professor of history in Hillyer College, has received the inaugural Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize. The prize, which includes an award of $10,000, was presented to Robinson at Commencement on May 17.

Robinson’s critically acclaimed book, The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2006. It received the 2008 Book Prize from the Forum for the History of Science in America. In it, Robinson examines the wave of “Arctic Fever” that struck America in the late 1800s, when dozens of expeditions headed north to reach the North Pole.

Robinson, an exceptional teacher, also has helped revitalize the history curriculum at Hillyer and has brought new technologies into the classroom.

“Professor Robinson is an outstanding teacher and researcher who uses his scholarship to create an engaging learning environment,” Provost Lynn Pasquerella said in announcing the award. “He represents excellence in every aspect of University life—teaching, research, and service.”

The Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize, together with an endowed chair for junior faculty, were established this year through a generous gift from Belle K. Ribicoff, a longtime supporter and life regent of the University.

The prize will be awarded annually to a junior faculty member who has not yet received tenure. Every three years, beginning in 2011–12, one of the prize recipients from the previous three years will be chosen to hold the Belle K. Ribicoff Professorship for a period of three years.

Assistant Professor Michael Robinson

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Joyce MacKenzie graduated from the Hartt School of Music in 1955. She went on to teach music to junior high school students in Connecticut, and after a brief stint selling real estate in Arizona, she retired in Franklin, N.C. She planned to leave her retirement plan and her house as a legacy to her favorite nonprofits, including the University of Hartford.

She once said, “When I think back on my years at Hartt, I remember how supportive we were of each other—like a family. And that attitude didn’t end with the students and the staff, because the faculty were not only good teachers, they were good friends as well. I still carry on friendships that started there. It was a wonderful environment that I don’t believe can be found at a larger school. I want to give back in support of Hartt and the University, and my bequest will allow me to do just that.”

In the summer of 2008 I called Joyce. We had a friendly conversation and agreed to meet soon to discuss her gift plan. Unfortunately, Joyce passed away before we could meet. Still, the University received a check from her estate. I sat down at my computer to create the Joyce R. MacKenzie Memorial Fund for Music Education with a heavy heart because of memories of our conversation. I decided to open up my e-mail first and, unbelievably, I found the following message:

Dear Mr. Congleton:

This morning I heard a performance of the piece on public radio and wanted to thank Ms. MacKenzie for encouraging us to strive for excellence in such a demanding composition, even though we were only eleven or twelve years old at the time. Would you have any way of putting me in touch with this remarkably dedicated teacher? My thanks are 45 years late in coming, but they are sincere and heartfelt and I would love to tell her so. I hope it is not too late.

Joyce’s gift of teaching obviously touched people’s lives. The memorial fund in her name will continue her legacy here.

For more information about how you can plan a gift, please visit our website: www.hartford.edu/plannedgiving, or you may contact Peter H. Congleton at 860.768.2415 or congleton@hartford.edu.

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Ribicoff Scholar Announced

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With Your SUPPORT

Education—A Gift That Touches Many Lives
BY PETER H. CONGLETON, DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING

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The eighth annual Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon on April 13 gave student scholarship recipients an opportunity to thank scholarship donors face to face. In the photo are Catherine Preston ’09 (left) and Celia R. Duke Lofink ’79. Preston is the recipient of the Herbert J. Duke Endowed Scholarship established in 1979 to honor Herbert Duke, Lofink’s father. Preston received a Bachelor of Science from the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions this spring and begins studies in the University’s graduate physical therapy program this summer.

Duke Lofink was the donor speaker at this year’s scholarship luncheon. She earned a degree in early childhood and special education from the University, then continued her education at Boston College and the University of Connecticut. She serves on the University’s alumni association board, is a partner and learning and development leader at IBM Business Consulting Services, and holds a patent as the inventor of an information-filtering system.

Preston, from Shelton, Conn., is very grateful for the financial support provided by the Duke scholarship. Each year, named endowed scholarships and annual scholarship awards provide valuable financial assistance to students by allowing them to pursue their dreams.

Catherine Preston ’09 (left) and Celia R. Duke Lofink ’79 (right) took the request to meet face to face quite literally at the eighth annual Scholarship Appreciation luncheon. Preston is the recipient of the scholarship established to honor Duke Lofink’s father. Duke Lofink was a speaker at the luncheon.

Let’s Do Lunch
Donors and student recipients meet face to face

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Trane High-Performance Buildings Scholars

Trane, a world leader in air-conditioning systems, created a scholarship fund in 2006 for students in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA). Recipients must major within CETA and maintain a grade point average of 3.5. Susan Ozcelik ’10 and Amy Scherma ’09 each received a $1,000 scholarship for 2008–09.

CETA Dean Lou Manzione (center), with (left to right) Dan Wendl, vice president for the Northeast for Trane; Susan Ozcelik ’10; Amy Scherma ’09; and Bill Harris, district manager for Trane.
On Feb. 10, 2009, the Hartford Art School (HAS) held its first-ever phone-a-thon in the Campus Call Center in Hillyer Hall. Members of the art school’s board of trustees and corporators and faculty members joined student callers to telephone alumni, parents, and friends in response to a generous challenge gift made by an anonymous HAS trustee to match funds raised.

Mentored by Jennifer Keyo, annual fund director, and Kristin Sadowski, assistant director, as well as Grant Smith, senior development officer, participants included HAS development chair Ellen Blumberg; HAS Dean Power Boothe; HAS board president Cecilia Calhoun; Ellen Carey, HAS professor of photography; and Janet Bruner, Marge Morrissey, Renée Samuels, Susan Shechtman, and John Wheat, all board members.

The group raised more than $5,000 that evening to benefit the Hartford Art School’s dean’s discretionary fund and its scholarship funds and programs, bringing the grand total of the trustee’s challenge to more than $10,000.