



News Release

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WESTERN FACULTY MEMBERS HONORED

St. Joseph, Mo. —April 30, 2008—Six Missouri Western State University faculty members were honored for their teaching excellence at an awards ceremony April 29.

Dr. Kaye Adkins, associate professor of English; Dr. Stacia Bensyl, associate professor of English; Dr. Robert Bergland, associate professor of journalism, and Dr. Deborah Bogle, associate professor of education; received the Jesse Lee Myers Excellence in Teaching Award. Criteria for that award include extraordinary teaching ability and outstanding contribution in either scholarly and professional activities or institutional and community service.

The Faculty Excellence in Teaching of Critical Thinking Award is a new award this year. It will be given annually to the faculty member who has shown outstanding innovation and excellence in the teaching of critical thinking. The award's first recipient is Dr. Phil Wann, professor of psychology.

The Dr. James V. Mehl Outstanding Faculty Scholarship Award recipient is Dr. Todd Eckdahl, professor of biology. This award recognizes unusually significant and meritorious achievement in professional scholarship. Only the highest achieving faculty receive this award. The award was established in 1999 in memory of the late James Mehl, former humanities professor at Western.

Dr. Adkins integrated electronic research in ENG108 and more and better research models at all levels of coursework, and she encouraged and supervised research by students. Her involvement on the Critical Thinking Task Force has resulted in the development of critical thinking in the curriculum across campus. Her nomination noted, "Kaye is a consummate professional for whom teaching is the highest priority. She

received great student numerical evaluations, but also garnered a great deal of written praise.

In the past year, Dr. Bensyl has taken on new preparations, including online teaching of two classes and developing COL 151, a course on critical thinking. Her nomination noted, “It doesn’t seem to matter the course; Stacia’s students rate her between ‘above average’ and ‘excellent’ every time.”

On her 2007 evaluations, students noted Dr Bensyl’s enthusiasm, even-handedness, positive attitude, availability, fairness, passion, and her interest and ability in answering questions.

Dr. Bergland has participated in several research projects with students. Last year, he gave two presentations with students at conferences, gave four presentations at scholarly conferences and an additional four teaching-centered presentations at college media conventions to student audiences.

This past spring, his journalism students won 21 awards presented by the Missouri College Media Association. This number is a tie for the highest number of awards ever for Western and was 10 more than last year.

Dr. Bogle’s greatest strengths are in teaching and in applied research of teaching and learning. She has consistently shown that she is willing to spend many hours to prepare her students for the current and future challenges of teaching in K-12 classrooms. Dr. Bogle combines theory with practical exercises and strategies that work in the K-12 classroom. The chair of the department stated that Dr. Bogle is one of the most effective supervisors of teacher candidates in field and clinical experiences.

In the area of scholarship, Dr Bogle published two papers in peer-reviewed journals and presented papers at two professional conferences during 2007.

Dr . Wann has developed and incorporated numerous critical thinking exercises into his courses, collected data to document the learning outcomes that have resulted and presented 10 peer-reviewed conference papers on the teaching of critical thinking. One presentation earned Outstanding Poster Presentation at a regional conference and an invitation to present it at a national conference.

In his Psychology Research Methods course, Dr. Wann developed a set of guidelines for student use in determining the quality of web-based information sources,

and 80 percent of the students in his History of Psychology course agreed that his critical thinking exercise had improved their understanding of key course concepts.

One of Dr. Eckdahl's colleagues called Dr. Eckdahl a model of what it means to be a teacher-scholar. Dr. Eckdahl has actively pursued scholarly work in biological research, the development of undergraduate research opportunities, and faculty professional training. In 2007, Dr. Eckdahl had three papers accepted in peer-reviewed professional journals.

Dr. Eckdahl has been co-principal investigator on five National Science Foundation grants totaling \$600,000, and he and a Western colleague were recently awarded a \$170,000 three-year grant.

During his 15 years at Western, Dr. Eckdahl has mentored 46 research students who have given 78 presentations at state, regional, and national meetings, won 26 awards for their presentations, and coauthored six papers in peer-reviewed journals. In 2007, eight undergraduates were co-authors on two peer-reviewed publications.

Dr. Eckdahl is also a charter member and one of a core of leaders of the Genome Consortium for Active Teaching, whose purpose is to bring the technology of microarrays into the undergraduate classroom and laboratory. To date, the group has made microarray experiments accessible to over 5,000 undergraduates at 120 schools, and presented hands-on workshops for more than 140 faculty.

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Missouri Western State University is a comprehensive regional university providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.