Honors & Undergraduate Research News

“From Promise to Achievement”

Honors & Undergraduate Research Presents Faculty Awards

without comments

Honors and Undergraduate Research will recognize several outstanding faculty members at the upcoming Honors Recognition Ceremony, May 12 at the College Station Hilton. The honorees include Honors Teacher/Scholar award recipients Dr. Karen-Beth Scholthof and Dr. David Toback, Director’s Award winner Dr. Paul Parrish, and Betty M. Unterberger Award winner Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux.

The Honors Teacher/Scholar Awards recognize Honors faculty members who demonstrate excellence in both teaching in Honors education and academic scholarship. Recipients of the award receive a grant of $4,000 to be used for any purpose that enhances the Teacher/Scholar’s research or teaching.

Dr. Karen-Beth Scholthof

A Professor of Plant Pathology and Microbiology, Dr. Karen-Beth Scholthof frequently teaches a number of Honors writing-intensive courses such as “Pathogens, the Environment and Society” (BESC 314), an Internship-Field Experience in the Bioenvironmental Sciences Program (BESC 484), and a communication-intensive senior seminar (BESC 481). In addition, she also developed and is the faculty director for the Bioenvironmental Sciences Honors track, the first such honors program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M.

Dr. Scholthof’s research focus is molecular plant virology. Currently, her lab is investigating the biology of Panicum mosaic virus (PMV) and its satellite virus, SPMV. Her secondary area of scholarly interest is the historiography of Tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) in the early 20th century in the United States, which involves archival research on the early TMV workers in an attempt to understand how TMV was developed as a tool while defining the nature of a virus. Her research and writing on the history of plant virology has been incorporated into her graduate and undergraduate courses.
Dr. Scholthof’s teaching expertise has been recognized by the American Phytopathological Society for “Excellence in Teaching Award” (2004), and at Texas A&M by the Center for Teaching Excellence/University Writing Center “W-Course Teaching Award” (2008), and the Association of Former Students “Distinguished Teaching Award-University Level” (2009).

Dr. David Toback

A Professor of Physics and Astronomy, **Dr. David Toback** is the Thaman Professor for Undergraduate Teaching Excellence. He received his B.S. in physics from M.I.T. in 1991, his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1997, and joined the faculty at Texas A&M in 2000. His research has focused on the search for new fundamental particles at the world’s highest energy particle accelerators, the Fermilab Tevatron (outside Chicago, IL) and the Large Hadron Collider (in Geneva, Switzerland). The search for new particles is in part motivated by the tantalizing possibilities offered by the theory of Supersymmetry (SUSY), which helps explain many of the mysteries of particle physics, including the earliest moments in the Universe after the Big Bang, and the existence of the Dark Matter that pervades the Universe today.

Dr. Toback has received numerous awards for his teaching and research, including the Student Led Award for Teaching Excellence: SLATE (Fall 2008 and Spring 2010), the Arthur J. and Wilhelmina D. Thaman Professor for Undergraduate Teaching Excellence (2008), The Association of Former Students Distinguished Teaching Award, University Level (2007), The Association of Former Students Distinguished Teaching Award, College Level (2004), and the Montague Scholarship Award from the Center for Teaching Excellence (2002).

The **Director's Award for Outstanding Service to Honors Education** recognizes faculty members who devote many years of service and make a significant contribution to the growth and development of honors education at Texas A&M University. Director’s Award recipients have made major contributions to the ongoing success of the University Honors Program.
Dr. Paul Parrish

This year’s recipient, Dr. Paul A. Parrish, is Regents Professor of English and has taught at Texas A&M since 1974. His research and teaching interests focus on British literature and culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with particular attention to Shakespeare, John Donne, and John Milton. He is the author, editor, or co-editor of five books and has published some fifty articles in a variety of scholarly venues. In addition to his teaching and research, he has served in several administrative capacities, including Executive Director of the South Central Modern Language Association, Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts, Head of the English Department, and Interim Dean of Faculties. He has taught a number of honors courses and honors tutorials during his 37 years at Texas A&M and has mentored several students as Honors Research Fellows. He received the TAMU Diversity Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in 1995, the first International Service Award in 1997, the Teacher-Scholar Award in 1997, the Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching in 2000, and Faculty Mentor Recognition in 2001. He is retiring after 40 years of university-level teaching in August, 2011.

The Betty M. Unterberger Award for Outstanding Service to Honors Education was created in 2004 and presented to Dr. Unterberger in recognition of her many years of service. The award is presented to faculty who contribute broadly to the advancement of Honors education and undergraduate research at Texas A&M University. Previous recipients include Ms. Cindy Raisor and Dr. Edward A. Funkhouser.

Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux, Professor of English, has been a member of the Texas A&M faculty for more than three decades. She holds four degrees, including one in math, and has focused her entire career on the teaching of writing, particularly technical writing. Tebeaux has for many years worked with students in the Honors section of technical writing who are preparing undergraduate research proposals.

Tebeaux is the recognized expert in technical writing in the English Renaissance, and in the past three years, she has launched research on safety communication with the goal of improving user manuals of agricultural equipment. She also embeds much of her research on procedures into her technical writing classes. This year she has developed a new technical writing course for the Department of Chemical Engineering that includes cases on engineering ethics and development of routine reports that require students to research current and future issues in chemical engineering.

Furthermore, she has been a tireless advocate for Explorations, the Texas A&M Undergraduate Journal so that students learn how to prepare articles that reflect best practices in organization and clarity for a broad audience.
“We want Explorations to be interesting to a wide range of readers,” she comments. “We also want to showcase high-quality student research that will likely have an impact on the people of Texas.”

A division of Undergraduate Studies, Honors and Undergraduate Research provides high-impact educational experiences and challenges motivated students in all academic disciplines to graduate from an enriched, demanding curriculum. Opportunities for Honors study at Texas A&M University were initiated in the mid-1960s in what was then the College of Arts and Sciences. Subsequently, the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Science, and Geosciences co-sponsored an Honors Program, and by 1968 all of the academic colleges had joined in the endeavor.

In recent years, the growth of Honors study opportunities has been dramatic - for the 2010-2011 academic year, over 300 sections of Honors courses are offered, and in the fall 2010 semester alone, approximately 3,000 students engaged in Honors study at Texas A&M.

Students participating in the University Honors Program may also take advantage of optional structured honors courses and study sequences offered in several academic colleges: the Mays Business School Honors Program, the Engineering Scholars Program (ESP) in the Dwight Look College of Engineering, and the Honors Plan in the College of Liberal Arts. Additionally, there are departmental Honors Study Sequences available for majors in Aerospace Engineering, Agricultural Economics, Bioenvironmental Sciences, Communication, English, History, Mathematics, Political Science, and Psychology.

For further information on the Honors faculty awards and the Honors Recognition Ceremony, contact Honors and Undergraduate Research, (979) 845-1957 or honors@tamu.edu

Written by Kyle Mox

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