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Laurier professors win prestigious OCUFA teaching awards

WATERLOO – Two Wilfrid Laurier University professors have earned a 2013-2014 Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Teaching Award. Edmund Pries, assistant professor in the Department of Global Studies and Donna Kotsopoulos, associate professor in the Faculty of Education and Department of Mathematics, were among six Ontario professors recognized with the prestigious award for their exceptional contributions to the quality of higher education.

“Dr. Pries and Dr. Kotsopoulos are known for their deep commitment to their students, their Faculties and the university,” said Pat Rogers, associate vice-president: Teaching and Learning. “This recognition speaks to their individual achievements and Laurier’s focus on teaching excellence and dedication to inspiring our students.”

Pries is known for his commitment to students and their learning, and for challenging students and inspiring them to become self confident and critically reflective.

“In a department that takes great pride in its teaching, Edmund is held in the highest esteem by his colleagues for the special magic that he brings to the classroom,” said Timothy Donais, chair and associate professor of Global Studies. “He is well known...as one of the professors with whom one ‘must’ take at least one class.”

In his nomination letter, Michel Desjardins, associate dean, Faculty of Arts, described Pries as his “go-to person” when developing innovative curriculum for the new community engagement and social entrepreneurship options in the Faculty of Arts. He also focused on how Pries “...craves the intensity of interaction with students, and the possibility of making a positive difference to the world by working closely with the individuals who are our future.”

Kotsopoulos is known for skillfully facilitating transformative experiences for her students by reflecting on the relationship between teaching mathematics and learning mathematics.

“When I first started teaching at Laurier, Donna naturally took on a mentorship role to ensure my successful transition,” said Duane Heide, instructor in the Faculty of Education. “She is a caring individual with an astounding ability to encourage best practice amongst her students as well as faculty members.”

In her nomination letter, Kristiina Montero, associate professor, Faculty of Education, explains how Kotsopoulos excels in instruction both in and outside the traditional classroom walls, and how she exudes passion for teaching mathematics to emerging teachers and their future students. Montero focuses on how Kotsopoulos is described by many as a mentor—a role that is most meaningfully ascribed and not prescribed.

Laurier professors Eileen Wood and Stephen MacNeil received an OCUFA award in 2012, and Carol Duncan received the award in 2006.

OCUFA represents 17,000 professors and academic librarians in 28 faculty associations across Ontario.