



Joseph Beer, Acting Director
Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence
519-884-0710 ext. 4734 or jbeer@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director
Communications & Public Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

MAY 26, 2016 | 119-16

Laurier to recognize teaching assistants with awards of excellence

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University will recognize two students with **2016 Teaching Assistant Awards of Excellence**. Jonathan Okun (undergraduate category) and Stephanie Grella (graduate category) will receive their awards at Laurier's fall 2016 convocation.

"It is inspiring to see the dedication and influence our students can have as teachers and mentors," said **Kathryn Carter**, acting associate vice president: teaching and learning. "Jonathan and Stephanie have continually gone above and beyond what was expected of them to deliver challenging and engaging learning opportunities for other students."

Jonathan Okun, instructional assistant, Lazaridis School of Business and Economics:

Okun is known for his dedication to his role as an instructional assistant (IA) and head instructional assistant. In his nomination package, Okun was praised for going above and beyond the requirements of the role, improving every aspect of the position. One nominator stated that his work would have a lasting impact on the business department. His fellow IAs commented that Okun is a strong leader to the IA team, providing guidance to other IAs while also creating quality and consistent resources for them. He is committed to teaching his students, who have described him in their evaluations as, "a strong and understanding teacher, who goes out of his way to make sure students succeed."

"I see my role not as a teacher, but a facilitator," said Okun. "I help students apply their knowledge, make connections to the business world and refine their soft skills in a very hands-on way. I am most grateful to my IA team for their support throughout the year, and I look forward to continuing to make an impact on as many students as I can."

Stephanie Grella, graduate teaching assistant, Department of Psychology:

Grella is commended for her mentorship and training of undergraduate researchers, especially in difficult interdisciplinary courses such as neuroscience. Grella has worked meticulously with undergraduate researchers, tailoring her teaching approach to meet the needs of each student to help them be successful. Her students remarked that her passion and determination has inspired them to become better scientists. In her nomination package, she is recognized by her supervisor as "one of the most dedicated and best-prepared teaching assistants I have ever worked with."

...more

Laurier recognizes teaching assistants/Page 2

"It is important for me to create a comfortable learning space where students can ask questions, feel confident in their ability to contribute to constructive scientific dialogue and adopt a passionate mindset for learning," said Grella. "I have so much more to learn about teaching, but this experience has been very rewarding and I am excited to test out new approaches in the future."

For a list of previous Teaching Assistant Awards of Excellence winners, please visit, http://legacy.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=12499&p=20965&.

- 30 -