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APRIL 24, 2017 | 065-17

Laurier to recognize student teachers with award of excellence

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University will recognize two outstanding student teachers with the university's Laurier Student Teaching Award of Excellence.

Kathryn Drysdale (undergraduate category) and Olufunke Oba (graduate category) will be recognized during Laurier's Teaching Award reception on Friday, May 26, and receive their awards at upcoming convocation ceremonies.

Formerly known as the Teaching Assistant Awards of Excellence, the newly named Laurier Student Teaching Award of Excellence was redeveloped this year to better recognize the diverse ways that Laurier students positively impact the learning and development of their peers in the role of teacher.

"With the updates to this program, we had a significant number of nominations for the student teaching award," said Kathryn Carter, associate vice-president: Teaching and Learning. "But within this accomplished group of nominees, Kathryn and Olufunke clearly stood out in terms of the impact they are having in classrooms and beyond. We should be very proud to count them as colleagues."

Kathryn Drysdale

Drysdale has made a positive impact serving as a teaching assistant and grading assistant in the Bachelor of Social Work program on Laurier's Brantford campus. A mature student and lifelong learner, she shares her past experiences as a way to inspire students and help them reach their full potential. Drysdale believes what happens in the classroom should not be separate from what is happening in the wider community. She helped create Moving Us Forward, a student-led initiative that provides knapsacks and duffel bags to children in the foster care system so they can move with dignity.

"As a student, I appreciate the opportunity to have had an exceptional Teaching Assistant like Ms. Drysdale," one of Drysdale's students wrote in her nomination package. "She encouraged us to be the best that we can be. I respect her judgment and have relied on her sound advice."

Drysdale will accept her award during a convocation ceremony in Brantford on June 7 at 10:30 a.m.

"I have always loved to learn and believe that the best teachers are skilled thinkers and strong learners," said Drysdale. "I challenge myself to always be a caring person and to work with integrity. I encourage others to do the same and in this I believe we all become better teachers and learners together. I am proud to be a part of an institution dedicated to creating a range of unique learning opportunities that enable students to flourish."

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Olufunke Oba

As a course instructor and teaching assistant in Laurier's Faculty of Social Work in Kitchener, Oba has gained a reputation as an educator with a willingness to engage beyond the classroom, building trusting relationships among students that foster productive learning environments. She approaches issues of gender, race and diversity with a gentle nature and tenacity, always striving for openness, truth and excellence.

As one student noted in her nomination package: "She guided us to see that it is important to allow oneself to be uncomfortable so that greater learning can occur, while also teaching us how to support one another and disagree in ways that expand us beyond the textbook."

In addition to her classroom work, Oba has helped develop curriculum taught in Laurier's Master of Social Work program. She will accept her award during a fall convocation ceremony.

"I am humbled by the nomination of my amazing students who took risks with me, including creating the Community Academic Reciprocal Engagement (CARE) social innovation laboratory," said Oba. "I believe the academy and community, global and local, are interconnected and that embracing our shared humanity transforms us all. I enjoy getting to know each student and appreciate the privilege of supporting their learning journeys. Thank you also to teaching and learning staff for their invaluable training and support."

Laurier also recently announced the winners of its 2017 teaching excellence awards for faculty. Read about the award winners in the [teaching excellence awards media release](#).