Outstanding Faculty Awards 2008

The Outstanding Faculty Awards (OFA) are the Commonwealth’s highest honor for educators at Virginia’s public and private colleges and universities. Now celebrating its 22nd year, the award recognizes the superior accomplishments of Virginia’s higher education faculty through teaching, research, knowledge integration, and public service. The OFA program is administered by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and sponsored by Dominion.

This year, 12 faculty members were selected from a highly competitive pool of 96 qualified candidates who were nominated by their peers at public and private colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. Awardees were recognized in each of three categories based on institutional type. One early-career ‘Rising Star’ and one outstanding ‘Teaching with Technology’ designee were also selected.

The General Assembly and Governor created the OFA program in 1986. Since the first awards in 1987, a total of 256 Virginia faculty members - including the 2008 recipients - have received this high honor. Dominion has financially supported the annual recognition of the outstanding faculty in Virginia since 2005. In 2007, Dominion renewed their commitment to the OFAs, extending their sponsorship through 2010.
A Message from the Executive Director

This first volume of SCHEV Update for 2008 is a timely and appropriate venue for building on the previous issue, which featured the elections of Whitt Clement and Eva Hardy as chair and vice chair of the State Council, with a highlighting of recent changes in the Council’s approach to its work.

Even before the Council elections, members expressed interest in dealing more fully and more directly with the national policy issues currently or likely-to-be faced by Virginia higher education. Of course, discussion of significant issues has always occurred at Council meetings, and such became even more prominent in committee-of-the-whole sessions during 2007.

Nonetheless, this month’s two-hour panel review and discussion of the issues of affordability and total cost represented the opening of a new chapter in the policy-development history of the State Council of Higher Education.

Toward the goal of becoming a more policy-issue-oriented coordinating body, the State Council has redesigned its meetings to focus more of its time and attention on major policy issues. Beginning with its January 7-8 meeting, the Council is devoting the Monday afternoon portion of each two-day meeting to discussion of an important or emerging higher education issue. Multiple national and state experts on a selected policy issue will be invited to share their perspectives with the Council and to assist in SCHEV’s considerations of possible strategies for addressing that issue.

The Council selected affordability and total cost as its first panel discussion topics from a list of major policy issues presented by SCHEV staff at the Council’s fall retreat. Developing an informed comprehension of the complexities of, and potential state-level responses to, these issues — and working toward “a clearly understandable measure of affordability” as required by the Appropriation Act — served as the focal points of the Council’s January panel discussion.

From the Council’s weighing of staff suggestions, the other issues that rose to the forefront as likely topics for this year include accountability and productivity, demographic diversity, and K-12 teacher retention.

In redesigning its meetings the Council also implemented procedural and organizational changes. Namely, the use of a consent-agenda format for some routine action items has been phased in to allow members to focus more on non-routine items and substantive issues. Also, the committee structure has been phased out to allow all members to deliberate all items and issues before the Council. These changes were evident in the October meeting and are reflected in the recent revisions to the Council’s bylaws.

Bolstered by our recent issue-centered statewide strategic plan for higher education in the Commonwealth, the Council and its staff believe that SCHEV will be better positioned to play a proactive role in leading the effort to meet the system’s current and future challenges as a result of these changes, especially the new, in-depth policy-issue discussions. As always, your involvement in these efforts is welcomed and encouraged.

- Daniel LaVista
  Executive Director

SCHEV Shares

Time, Talent, and Resources

2007 was a banner year at SCHEV. The strategic plan for higher education was released, SCHEV staff worked with colleges and universities to select peer institutions, and the agency served as a sounding board for many legislative initiatives. Yet in the midst of all these important projects, SCHEV staff did not forget those in need across the Commonwealth. In fact, SCHEV employees participated in multiple charity efforts to lend a helping hand to Virginians.

• With a full-time staff of just over 40, SCHEV raised more than $7,300 to benefit the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign, a statewide program that facilitates charitable giving by state employees. As part of the fundraising effort, staff members submitted over 75 mouth-watering recipes for inclusion in a cookbook entitled “SCHEV Chefs.” More than 40 cookbooks were sold with 100% of the proceeds benefiting the CVC campaign.

• SCHEV staff created much-needed toiletry gift bags for residents of St. Joseph’s nursing home. Several staff members delivered the bags in person, spreading holiday cheer by caroling throughout the building.

• For the third year in a row, SCHEV adopted a needy local family for the holiday, providing them with gifts, food, decorations, and other items to make their Christmas merry and bright.

• The agency also participated in the Coats for Kids drive, collecting a number of winter coats for children and teens in need.
On Campus: VMI Horse Gets a Makeover

VMI has Smithsonian conservators restore Little Sorrel, Gen. Stonewall Jackson’s trusty steed during much of the Civil War.

Think your age is showing and you could use a makeover? Imagine your appearance if you died in 1886.

This fall, administrators at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) Museum decided that Little Sorrel, Gen. Stonewall Jackson’s Civil War mount and a popular fixture at the newly renovated museum, was looking a bit worse for wear.

His hide, which is stretched over a Plaster of Paris model, was cracking and the beautiful sorrel-colored coat for which he was named had turned dull and dry. So museum administrators decided that it was time to give Little Sorrel—the oldest mounted horse in America—a much-needed makeover.

“A Touchstone Artifact”

Little Sorrel is a rather small horse, only 15 hands or approximately 5 feet at the highest point on his back. But his calm demeanor on the battlefield convinced Gen. Stonewall Jackson that he ought to keep the gelding himself, rather than give it to his wife as he originally planned. Jackson rode the horse throughout his celebrated 1862 Valley Campaign, and the General was astride Little Sorrel when Jackson was mortally wounded at the 1863 Battle of Chancellorsville.

Though Jackson passed away eight days later, Little Sorrel lived on for another 20 years, some of it spent grazing on the VMI Parade Ground where the Cadet Corps took an active role in his care. When Little Sorrel died in 1886 at the Old Soldier’s Home in Richmond, his hide was surgically removed. The leading taxidermist of the day, Fredrick Webster, was asked to mount the preserved hide for an exhibit at the Old Soldier’s Home. Little Sorrel remained there until the Home’s closure in 1948, at which time the horse was returned to VMI.

Nearly 50 years later, Little Sorrel’s bones, which had been on display in a VMI biology classroom, were buried on the parade ground at the base of Stonewall Jackson’s statue. The hide covering Webster’s Plaster of Paris model was housed in the VMI Museum.

“Little Sorrel is a touchstone artifact,” says Col. Keith Gibson, executive director of museum programs at VMI. “He is a visual connection that resonates with school children, our Cadet Corps, and the general public. He appeals, too, to lovers of history and lovers of horses… which just about covers everyone.”

A $16,000 Makeover

As the years passed, Little Sorrel was repaired twice—once in 1969 and again in 1979—but his age began to show. In 2007, as the VMI Museum underwent substantial renovations, the decision was made to recondition Little Sorrel as well.

With the help of the Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which raised $16,000 to pay for the renova-
tion project, VMI invited a team of conservators from the Smithsonian Institute to oversee the repair process. The four technicians, who specialize in restoring 19th-century mounted animal hides, traveled to Lexington to provide Little Sorrel with a shampoo and color treatment, as well as hair replacement and skin care.

Gibson admits he had difficulty accepting the conservators’ plan to give the small horse his first shampoo in 140 years. “They used Pert shampoo,” he says. “I envisioned globs of hair running down the gutter into the drain, but I was assured it was a regular procedure, and it worked fine.”

“[Little Sorrel is] such a wonderful piece of history,” Smithsonian taxidermist Paul Rhymer told The Roanoke Times after working on the gelding in October 2007. “We just basically want to try to bring it back to what it looked like in 1886.”

Gibson and other members of the VMI team are very pleased with the results. After the restoration Gibson was particularly excited to discover that the horse’s fine muzzle fur was still in good condition under several layers of bee’s wax that may have been used in an attempt to further preserve that delicate area.

“The team from the Smithsonian really worked wonders,” Col. Gibson says. In addition to cleaning the horse and restoring its original sorrel coloring, “they returned Little Sorrel’s gentle, endearing face that so many people recalled from his life.”

A History of Horses

Though the museum’s renovations are complete, a permanent exhibit for Little Sorrel is still being built. Visitors to the Virginia Military Institute Museum can view the famous gelding in a temporary exhibit along with the uniform Gen. Jackson was wearing when he was wounded. If a visit to the Museum piques your interest in Civil War horses, you won’t have to go too far to pay homage to another famous equine.

It seems VMI is not the only Virginia higher education institution with a history of housing the horses of famous Civil War generals on its grounds. Immediately next door to VMI is the campus of Washington and Lee University, a private institution named for George Washington and Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Gen. Lee rode Traveller, a grey stallion, during much of the Civil War. The horse would later bear Gen. Lee the 100 miles from Richmond to Lexington, where Lee served as president of the institution that was then called Washington College. Like Little Sorrel, Traveller outlived his master. After Traveller’s death, his bones were eventually buried next to Lee Chapel, where General Lee is entombed on the campus of Washington and Lee University.

-Kathleen Kincheloe
Assistant Director of Communications

About the VMI Museum

With the acceptance of a Revolutionary War musket in 1856, Superintendent Francis H. Smith created the VMI Museum, the first public museum in the Commonwealth.

Today the museum collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits the heritage of VMI as recorded in the 15,000 artifact collection.

The VMI Museum is located in Jackson Memorial Hall on the VMI Campus. For more information, visit www.vmi.edu and click on Heritage and History.
Learning By Design Update

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) hosted the Learning by Design conference on November 9, 2007 to share information about course redesign with higher education faculty and administrators throughout Virginia. More than 175 representatives from 30 private and public Commonwealth institutions and the Virginia Community College System attended the conference. 

“Our we pleased that so many Virginia educators were interested in learning techniques to increase efficiency, reduce cost, and improve student learning through the use of technology,” says Vernon Harper, SCHEV’s Associate for Academic Affairs and Planning. “As attendees return to their home institutions across Virginia, we hope they’ll share their course redesign ideas with others on their campuses.”

To encourage this effort, the Electronic Campus of Virginia (ECVA) is sponsoring 20 course redesign planning grants open to higher education institutions in the Commonwealth. Applications for the $500 planning grants are due in early February and the 20 grants will be awarded in March. For more information about the grants or to review the application, please visit www.schev.edu/lbd/grants.asp or allacademic.com/one/ecva/learningbydesign08.

Staff Spotlight
Dr. Maricel Quintana-Baker

As SCHEV's Associate Director for Academic Affairs, Maricel Quintana-Baker routinely responds to constituent inquiries, but none are as edifying as the concerns she hears from the faculty volunteers reviewing the Outstanding Faculty Award (OFA) nominations.

“You should read some of their notes about the difficulties in ranking their peers,” she says of the past OFA recipients who serve as peer reviewers. “Many say they are humbled and awed; some speak of the challenge in deciding who’s the most outstanding, brilliant, impressive, and spectacular!”

Though working with the OFA reviewers and recipients is one of the most rewarding parts of Dr. Quintana-Baker’s job, it is a new responsibility for her. She came to work for SCHEV in February 2005 as a Senior Associate in the agency’s Academic Affairs section. As the lead staff member addressing nursing programs, Dr. Quintana-Baker helped the Council emerge as a strong catalyst in the development of several successful efforts to address the nursing shortage across Virginia.

But it was not until 2007 when Dr. Quintana-Baker was named the Associate Director for Academic Affairs that she took over the responsibility of coordinating the academic portion of the prestigious OFA program, now in its 22nd year.

“I’ll continue to coordinate the Virginia Doctoral Nursing Student Assistance Repayment Program,” she says, referring to a loan repayment program funded by the General Assembly and specifically designed to produce doctorally prepared nursing faculty for the Commonwealth. “However, with my new position came new duties, and coordinating the Outstanding Faculty Awards has to be one of the highlights.”

The OFA program, which has been sponsored by Dominion since 2005, showcases the best of Virginia’s higher education faculty. Dr. Quintana-Baker now oversees the new nomination guidelines each spring and organizes the two-part nomination review process in the fall.

Candidates from public and private institutions across the Commonwealth are nominated in one of five categories: Research/Doctoral, Masters/Comprehensive/Baccalaureate, Two-Year, Rising Star, and Teaching with Technology. Then their nomination packets are reviewed by past OFA recipients. The most exceptional nomination packets from each category are then forwarded to a final selection committee composed of education, business, and civic leaders who select the final 12 recipients.

“Coordinating this process from beginning to end is filled with lots of details and sensitive work,” says Dr. Quintana-Baker. “Such tasks are easier done when approached with a sense of teamwork. The SCHEV team members do a great job of collaborating with each other and with Dominion to make the OFAs such a meaningful event.”

Did You Know?
About 54,000 degrees are awarded annually by Virginia’s public institutions.
ABOUT SCHEV

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the Commonwealth’s coordinating body for higher education. SCHEV was established by the Governor and General Assembly in 1956. Then as now, our mission, which is outlined in the Code of Virginia, is “to promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education” in Virginia.

To fulfill our mission, SCHEV makes higher education public policy recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly in such areas as capital and operating budget planning, enrollment projections, institutional technology needs, and student financial aid. SCHEV administers a variety of educational programs that benefit students, faculty, parents, and taxpayers. SCHEV serves as a catalyst to promote greater access, quality, affordability, and accountability throughout the system. SCHEV also helps policymakers, college administrators, and other concerned leaders work cooperatively and constructively to advance educational excellence.

SCHEV
James Monroe Building
101 North Fourteenth Street. 9th Fl., Richmond, VA 23219
Ph: (804) 225-2600
Fax: (804) 225-2604
Web: www.schev.edu
Email: communications@schev.edu

Agency Leadership

Daniel LaVista  Executive Director
Thomas Daley   Deputy Director
James Alessio  Higher Education Restructuring Director
Joseph DeFilippo  Academic Affairs and Planning Director
Alan Edwards   Policy Studies Director
Dan Hix       Finance Policy Director
Tod Massa  Policy Research and Data Warehousing Director
Kirsten Nelson Communications and Government Relations Director