Kara Rogers Thomas Regents’ Award Winner

Kara Rogers Thomas of the Department of Sociology will be honored at the spring meeting of the University System of Maryland Board of Regents with the Regents’ Faculty Award for Service. The USM Regents’ Faculty Award is the highest honor that the Board bestows to recognize exemplary faculty achievement.

In her role as a folklorist in the Department of Sociology, Kara has created important partnerships with funding agencies and arts councils at the state and local levels, as well as connecting with community members to document and preserve the culture of the region. As part of her efforts to celebrate the region’s uniqueness, Kara established the FSU Appalachian Festival, a highly successful annual event that has grown dramatically with over 50 exhibitors and 4000 attendees in 2012.

Kara played a key role in garnering approval for the City of Frostburg’s Arts and Entertainment District. As a product of this initiative, she established Mountain City Traditional Arts on Frostburg’s Main Street, an operation dedicated to the education, sales, documentation and perpetuation of traditional arts in the region.

An active member of the local arts community, Kara serves as editor of the Appalachian Culture section of the Appalachian Independent and is a board member at the Spruce Forest Artisan Village.

“Kara has proven herself to be a dedicated community servant committed to preserving the traditions of culture and folklore in Western Maryland,” said Dean Joe Hoffman. “On behalf of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, I congratulate her on this prestigious award.”

Micheal McAlexander Wins BEA Best of Festival

Micheal McAlexander, faculty member in the Department of Mass Communication, has won the Broadcast Education Association’s Festival of Media Arts best of festival award for his screenplay “Space Race.”

“Winning this award means that my peers, other broadcast professionals and writers have reviewed my work and have said it’s really good,” McAlexander said. This is the highest award received at the festival.

In addition to his faculty role, McAlexander is a feature film director and screenwriter. His screenplay “Space Race” is about a young, down-on-his luck flying instructor who teams up with a group of adrenaline-pumped Cal Tech graduate students racing against a billionaire to launch the first commercial astronaut into space. He calls it a mix of “Fast and Furious”
Three CLAS faculty were recently selected to receive Faculty Achievement Awards at the May Honors Convocation.

Andy Duncan, an assistant professor of English, was selected for the Academic Accomplishment award. Duncan has published three books since joining the Frostburg State faculty in 2008, the most recent being his second fiction collection, *The Pottawatomie Giant and Other Stories* (PS Publishing, 2012). It includes a new novelette, “Close Encounters,” which was reprinted as the cover story of the September/October 2012 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, selected for three year’s-best volumes, and nominated for a Nebula Award by the members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. Also in 2012, Duncan published a second new story, “On 20468 Petercook,” at Tor.com; published a critical article on Shirley Jackson; presented a Faculty Lecture Series talk at Frostburg State; taught the second week of the Science Fiction Writers Workshop at the University of Kansas; was a Special Guest at the John W. Campbell Conference at the University of Kansas; and did nine fiction readings in eight states, at venues including Longwood University in Virginia, North Carolina State University, Peru State College in Nebraska, and the University of Alabama.

Mike Murtagh, Associate Professor of Psychology, is a co-recipient of the University and Community Service award. In addition to his work as Coordinator of the M.S. program in counseling psychology, Dr. Murtagh has provided significant service to FSU through his extensive committee work. A few examples of this work includes his serving as Chair of the Faculty Promotion and Tenure/Permanent Status Subcommittee these past two years, Chair of Graduate Council this past year, and Chair of the Institutional Review Board these past 5 years. He is also Chair-elect of Faculty Senate. His greatest passion, however, can be seen in his service in the area of awareness, prevention, and treatment of sexual abuse. He has served on the President’s Advisory Council against Gender Based Violence since its inception, provided many trainings each year to FSU students on sexual assault awareness, and provided a “Train the Trainer” workshop each year for faculty and staff interested in providing the sexual assault awareness program to students. He also serves as a Board member on two community Board of Directors, including Family Crisis Resource Center, whose mission is dedicated to the elimination of physical and sexual abuse.

Along with Dr. Murtagh, Elesha Ruminski, Chair and Associate Professor of Communication Studies, also received the award for University and Community Service. Since 2011, Dr. Ruminski has served as a Council of University System Faculty (CUSF) representative, serving on FSU Faculty Senate and the Faculty Concerns Committee in that role. She has an impressive history of other committee work, including serving on the Leadership Studies Advisory Committee, Women’s Studies Steering Committee, and the President’s Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Dr. Ruminski has done extensive work in leading, conducting outreach, and mediating with the Mountainside Community Mediation Center. She is currently serving as project manager for the Sustaining Campus and Community Dialogue Series. Since 2009, Dr. Ruminski has served on the executive board of the Maryland Communication Association.
As a member of the Presidential Task Force on Leadership Steering Committee, Dr. Ruminski has contributed to the development of a leadership competency model for the University.

**Leadership Task Force Develops Competency Model, Examines Potential For Center**

In the spring of 2012, President Gibralter commissioned a taskforce to build on the tremendous work that has been done in leadership development and education at Frostburg for more than a decade by increasing the intentional focus of the university on leadership education. As part of this charge, faculty, staff, and student leaders were brought together and asked to develop a Leadership Competency Model. To assist in the work, the University contracted with Dr. Ron Riggio to serve as an external consultant on the project.

Throughout the fall semester, a series of retreats, meetings, feedback and dialogue sessions were conducted by the task force to identify competencies, sort and categories them, and develop them into a model. As a result countless faculty, staff, and students contributed to this process and provided exceptional feedback. The work of developing the model was finalized this spring at a retreat directed by Dr. Riggio.

At this time, the steering committee of the taskforce is reorganizing the work to further comply with the original requests outlined in the charge. These include promoting a leadership culture at Frostburg State University and increasing collaboration and exploring new opportunities in relation to leadership development. To this end, the committee is examining the potential for establishing a Leadership Center that will guide this effort and coordinate and support the work of leadership education and development among faculty, staff, and students. The center would also promote effective leadership assessment efforts and coordinate student leadership programming. Additional information will be forth coming as we further develop a plan for moving forward.
Two avenues of academic transformation are taking place in CLAS. First, four new teams have applied for the last round of funding from USM/Carnegie for Course Redesign: Biology (for BIOL 109), Chemistry (for CHEM 201), Mass Communication (for MCOM 102) and Nursing for IDIS 150: Health in America). Each team has innovative ideas to help solve course/staff/other demands/issues. Meanwhile, ENGL 101 and MATH 102 are completing their first semester of fully implementing their redesign. Results will be forthcoming after the semester. Finally, CMST 102 heads into sustainability mode, joining DVMT 100 and PSYC 150. These last redesigns have been able to maintain or improve results while still having the option of tweaking their courses to meet new demands.

The second avenue is a brand new opportunity from USM dealing with MOOCs. MOOCs, or massive open online courses, are the latest development in online education. They are free, non-credit-bearing, online academic courses, offered by private companies like Coursera, EdX, and Udacity, featuring video lectures by well-known professors from the nation’s top universities. They are gaining a lot of attention because each course has many tens of thousands of people signed up for it at a time. Although it’s difficult to predict what the impact of this model will be on higher education, it seems to have the potential to be a game changer. Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research firm, has teamed up with USM to conduct classroom studies of how instructors might take advantage of existing MOOC content in ways that might supplement or enhance their credit-bearing courses, and FSU has put together a MOOC exploratory team to develop and assess applications of MOOC content at FSU.

Shoshana Brassfield, in the Philosophy Department, has submitted a proposal for a case study for Summer 2013, to make use of the University of Edinburgh’s Introduction to Philosophy lectures offered through Coursera, in her online PHIL 101 Introduction Philosophy class at FSU. Traditional face-to-face classroom lectures and discussions allow the philosophy instructor to explain challenging classic texts that present subtle and abstract concepts to students in ordinary language. The absence of a face-to-face lecture component can make online philosophy courses especially challenging for students. In an asynchronous online course it becomes necessary to assign secondary texts or written handouts as a substitute for the instructor’s lecture, but this requires students to already have very strong reading comprehension skills in order to be successful in an online course. Therefore, Shoshana has proposed to test whether an online Introduction to Philosophy course might benefit from integrating a well-produced video lecture series like that available from the University of Edinburgh through Coursera. The University of Edinburgh lectures would be integrated into an FSU online course consisting only of FSU students, and students would continue to receive personalized assessment and feedback from Shoshana through online discussion boards and essay writing assignments.

John McMullen and Bob Moore are applying for funding to test the learning outcomes of a MOOC (Massive Online Open Classroom) format compared to a traditional face-to-face classroom. They will each facilitate two sections of Introduction to Sociology using MOOC technology. The results will be
compared to four other sections of Introduction to Sociology simultaneously offered this fall. The students in the MOOC sections will use a Coursera platform. Coursera is an educational technology company. The FSU MOOC sections will be modeled after a MOOC Introduction to Sociology course currently run at Princeton University.

John O’Rorke, Professor of Political Science, and Megan E. Bradley, Professor of Psychology, also applied to participate in Ithaka’s program and have received initial approval to move forward in the application process. O’Rorke hopes to incorporate a MOOC on “Generating the Wealth of Nations” into his Introduction to Comparative Politics course. The MOOC course is a 6 week program that helps students understand how and why some nations became wealthy and others have not. Since Intro to Comparative Politics is a comparative study of countries and governments around the world, the inclusion of this MOOC should provide students with a fuller understanding of the current state of world affairs. Bradley hopes to incorporate a nutrition course from Vanderbilt into her Train Your Brain Learning Community. The information will be one part of several areas that are known barriers to student success in college. Inclusion of the MOOC material should help educate students on the importance of nutrition and exercise as an important part of their daily life.

Computer Science and Information Technologies Incorporating SAP Products into Courses

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has SAP products available for incorporation into classes. This is available through FSU’s membership in the SAP University Alliances program, a global endeavor that provides university faculty members with the tools and resources to teach how technology can enable integrated business processes and strategic thinking.

The Department of Computer Science and Information Technologies plans on incorporating SAP into one course in the fall and one course in the spring semester. The department is also working on a course for all students that will provide an introduction to SAP, as well as a course that has a particular focus on the Netweaver software.

According to Brad Rinard, point person for the program on campus, IBM partners with FSU as part of the alliance, and the company is looking for students who have SAP skills.

To learn more about SAP, please email brinard@frostburg.edu.

Second Annual CLAS Undergraduate Research Symposium Planned for May 3

Preparations are underway for the CLAS Undergraduate Research Symposium, scheduled for May 3, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. in the Lane Center. Over 80 different research and experiential learning projects will be presented by students and their faculty mentors as posters, oral presentations, and physical displays. Fourteen departments within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will be represented in the event.
Participants will have the opportunity to present their own work to their peers and observe experiential learning opportunities available in other disciplines.

A workshop for faculty mentors and students interested in information regarding the preparation of poster presentations was offered on March 29th at 10:00 a.m. and on April 2nd at 4:00 p.m. in the Discovery Center of the Compton Science Center. Both workshops were well attended. In addition, Dr. Steve Simpson has agreed to give opening remarks for the symposium.

For questions or more information, please contact Karen Keller in the Biology Department, kkeller@frostburg.edu, x4174.

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**Twelve CLAS Faculty Granted Tenure**

CLAS is pleased to announce that 12 faculty were recently approved for tenure: Tom Lambert, David Puthoff and Sunshine Brosi (Biology), Xinliang Zheng and Mike Flinn (Computer Science and Information Technologies), Andy Duncan (English), Nicole Houser (Foreign Languages and Literature), Greg Wood (History), Micheal McAlexander (Mass Communication), Jennifer Flinn and Paul Bernhardt (Psychology), and Darrell Rushton (Theatre and Dance). Congratulations!

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**STEM Fest for Elementary Students at FSU on May 4**

Frostburg State University, Appalachian Laboratory, and the Allegany County Board of Education are collaborating to host a STEM Fest for regional elementary school students. The event will be held on Saturday, May 4, 10AM-12PM in the Cordts PE Center Main Arena. The event is free and open to all area K-5 students and their families. Students will have the opportunity to participate in hands-on science investigations including stream tables, fractal cubes, a topographic moon globe, germ warfare, and electric circuit experiments.

If you are interested in participating as a demonstrator or if you would like more information on attending, please contact Linda Steele (lsteele@frostburg.edu), x4137.