TWO THOUSAND SEVENTEEN

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AWARDS Banquet

TUESDAY, APRIL FOURTH at 6 O’CLOCK in the evening

Rizzo Conference Center
Magnolia Room
THE 2017 UNIVERSITY TEACHING AWARDS BANQUET

6:15 PM
WELCOME
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Jim Dean

SPECIAL THANKS
Dr. Adam Persky, Committee Chair
Mr. Max Carroll Chapman, Jr.

7:00 PM
REMARKS
Chancellor Carol Folt
Dr. Adam Persky

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS
Chancellor Carol Folt
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Jim Dean

Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award
Chapman Family Awards
Tanner Faculty Teaching Awards
William C. Friday/Class of 1986 Award
Tanner Graduate Teaching Assistants Awards
J. Carlyle Sitterson Freshman Teaching Award
Johnston Teaching Awards
Post-Baccalaureate and Mentor Awards
Mentor Award for Lifetime Achievement

CLOSING
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Jim Dean
Perhaps one of Professor Thrailkill’s greatest achievements is the inclusive classroom environment she creates. Students feel empowered to give voice to their own ideas, emotions, and concerns. A colleague states: “She has the ability to keep in mind the student’s feelings and model for anyone in the room a respect and commitment to learning even when it’s frustrating or difficult.” Students remark that she engages with them as an equal and listens attentively and responds thoughtfully to their diverse contributions. This regard for students follows Professor Thrailkill outside of the classroom where she operates as a mentor and confidant to students struggling with issues that often transcend the academic.

Professor Thrailkill is best captured in a few powerful words from her own students: “brilliant and accessible, demanding and supportive,” “generous,” “pragmatic,” “student-centered,” “effective,” and “innovative.” For all that these words can describe this beloved professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we award Professor Jane Thrailkill the 2017 Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Professor Thrailkill holds a BA in English from Amherst College and an MA and PhD in English and American literature from The Johns Hopkins University.

She laid the foundation for what I hope to be a lifelong pursuit of the medical humanities and the compassionate, humanistic practice of medicine.

CSF (Consulting Skills and Framework) was easily one of the best courses I’ve ever taken. It throws you into the fire pretty early on, so you learn by doing, but it doesn’t punish you grade-wise either. I came into the class with no case or consulting experience at all, and ended up doing very well in the competitions. Having real case competitions as part of the class was kind of nice too, because it forces you to do your best and get into a competition when you might not have considered one before. The content, naturally, pulls from all areas of business — you need to know some marketing, some finance, some operations, etc. to be able to do consulting well.”

The word “real” appears again and again in Dr. Friga’s evaluations. “This was my favorite class that I’ve had at Kenan-Flagler so far! The combination of theory and practical application through real case competition and mini-cases worked very well.” This experiential approach to developing students’ skills by involving them in addressing real-world business problems was evident during a visit to Dr. Friga’s class. The class was divided into teams to work on a marketing strategy for a North Carolina business with a specific marketing goal. Students thoroughly researched the product and potential market for that product. They presented their strategy through the use of professional and creative PowerPoint Points. “Consultants,” experienced business professionals recruited by Dr. Friga, assisted in giving feedback to groups. A student comment summarized their appreciation of this advice. “Making most of the course grading revolve around the cases makes it feel much, much more relevant and useful to the real world. The fact that the judges for our competitions usually consist of real consultants only makes things better. This class gives incredible feedback from very qualified people.”

Paul Friga’s classes are well planned and well executed. His passion for the topic and for providing challenging and realistic opportunities for student learning drives him to be the very best. One student summed it up by saying, “Professor Friga is knowledgeable, demanding, and enthusiastic. He made the class that much better by being such an experienced professional and a great professor.”

Dr. Friga often uses his expertise in service to the university through helping schools and departments with their strategic planning process. He is currently working with the College of Arts and Sciences to develop a strategic planning framework for the entire college and each of its departments. This is just one more way that Paul Friga works to optimize the learning of every student at Carolina. He is truly worthy of the Chapman Family Teaching Award.
Banu Gokariksel is an Associate Professor of Geography and the Co-editor of the Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies. Her work engages feminist geography and geopolitics with a focus on gender bodies and public space. For the past decade, she has used multiple methods to analyze the politics of everyday life such as religion, secularism, and pluralism in Turkey. She is also interested in religious and racial diversity as well as social justice in the United States. She teaches classes on feminist geography, cultural geography, the Middle East and transnational geographies of Muslims and Islam.

Dr. Gokariksel’s class regarding gender in the Middle East. Even though we cover potentially controversial topics, she nevertheless manages to always foster positive and constructive discussions. Although Carolina is filled with many intelligent and experienced instructors like Dr. Gokariksel, one of the many things that sets her apart is the fact that she creates a welcoming yet intellectually challenging environment for every individual, as it is evident that she genuinely cares about the success of every student that walks into her class. Another student commented on her intentional teaching approach noting her “collective classroom as her questions pushed us not to prove our superiority to one another but rather to think through issues together. I now understand and appreciate the intentionality of it — Banu had a purpose for those ten minute introductions and it set the tone for our intellectual space.” Her classroom is full of enthusiasm, collaboration, and a spirit of shared focus. She utilizes and blends multiple teaching techniques into each of her classes and she transitions seamlessly. Her students, in turn, remain engaged learners and focused on their projects.

Dr. Gokariksel is well respected for her teaching and is the recipient of numerous awards including: The Institute of Arts and Humanities Faculty Fellowship, Janice Monk Visiting Distinguished Professor in Feminist Geography from the University of Arizona and the Association of American Geographers, the UNC Faculty Mentoring Award from the Carolina Women’s Leadership Council, and the Robertson Scholars Award. In sum, the Provost’s Teaching Awards Committee agrees with one of Banu’s current students who describes her teaching as, “all that and a bag of chips”. She is truly worthy of the Chapman Teaching award for undergraduate excellence.

Dr. Corey Johnson, a senior lecturer in the biology department, describes his teaching philosophy as centered around student engagement, and it certainly shows in his classes. He had many nominating letters from undergraduate students. Dr. Johnson’s students who were interviewed by the committee consistently identified him as an exceptionally considerate teacher and were impressed with the time that he took to prepare each lecture and check in with his class to make sure that they were following along. Not only was he lauded as an exceptionally engaging lecturer, but students and faculty noted his willingness to take on work outside of the classroom to ensure that his students are learning and benefiting from their time at Carolina.

Dr. Johnson has previously won several awards, including the Tanner Undergraduates Teaching Award in 2013 and the Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence in Biology in 2010. One of his students said of his anatomy class, “This class has been my favorite one that I’ve taken at UNC, and Dr. Johnson is a fantastic professor.” Another student stated “I would never be able to say enough good things about Dr. Johnson.” Consistently, his students describe him as approachable and helpful.

It was clear from our visits to his anatomy class that Dr. Johnson’s students were engaged with the material and not afraid to ask questions. When they were instructed to split into groups to discuss a comprehension question, each group seemed to actively participate in the discussion, while Dr. Johnson checked in when they needed help. Often with large classes, only the students sitting in the front of the room will ask questions, but in Dr. Johnson’s class, questions came from all over the room. As for the actual structure of the class period, Dr. Johnson included visual examples, reviews of previous lessons, and discussion questions in his lecture, keeping his students actively engaged with the material.

Dr. Johnson has also served the university in many ways outside of his classes. He has advocated for aspiring Physician Assistants by designing and implementing courses needed as prerequisite for PA school and other allied health schools. In addition to advising and mentoring pre-professional students, he is a Faculty Advisor for Interdisciplinary Studies Majors, and has served on the Academic Advising Committee.

With a teaching philosophy centered around engagement and interaction, Dr. Johnson clearly cares very much about his students and their education. He purposefully includes activities with his lectures in order to provide tools for students to construct their own solutions in order to give them the opportunity to develop their creative thinking skills, and works hard to show students the joy and excitement of the subjects he teaches. As one student put it, “He loves what he teaches and teaches what he loves and it shows.” For these reasons and many others, this committee has decided to award Dr. Corey Johnson the Chapman Award.
Professor Ken Lohman
Department of Biology

Ken Lohman has consistently demonstrated an incredible enthusiasm towards teaching and commitment to his students. Despite his demanding research schedule, Ken’s dedication for his students is clear. Ken is a supportive mentor who is readily accessible for any student or faculty in need of help. In addition to his commitment and care for his students, Ken’s ability to effectively distill challenging concepts for his students while actively engaging them in the classroom is like no other. Ken is a world-class behavioral biologist and neurophysiologist, and his research insights allows him to integrate relevant examples of challenging concepts into his teaching that students will never forget. He has a way of challenging and holding high expectations for his students while simultaneously inspiring them to be interested in learning. Ken is the exemplar of the best Carolina has to offer—a world class researcher and scholar who also has the skills and passion to be an outstanding educator. He is, without a doubt, highly deserving of the Tanner teaching award.

Professor Mohammad Jarrahi
School of Information and Library Science

Mohammad Jarrahi is described by others as one of Carolina’s priceless gems, making his students feel like they are too. He is viewed as a dynamic, motivating, inspirational, innovative and truly exceptional professor. In his short time at Carolina and at the School of Information and Library Science, Mohammad has become an invaluable and beloved member of the community. He is so beloved, in fact, that he was hoisted onto the shoulders of his students for a celebratory photo prior to the department’s commencement ceremony this past spring. Even after graduation, Mohammad’s students stay in touch with him and volunteer to come back to speak to his classes, to link the subject matter in the class to the lives they are living after graduation. Others have remarked that Mohammad is the “single most important reason for professional success in an ever-growing cohort of superb UNC graduates, people who will be making a superior positive impact on society and on the world of work for decades to come. The seeds that are planted in Dr. Jarrahi’s classes are blooming now and will continue to sink roots that will make both North Carolina and America better.” Congratulations, Mohammad, and thank you for inspiring so many students. We are proud to name you one of the 2017 Tanner teaching award recipients.

Professor Jennifer Gates-Foster
Department of Classics

Jennifer Gates-Foster is a professor in the Classics department. Students in Dr. Gates-Foster’s classes cited her passion for her field and the way she engages her students in her courses. One student recalled Dr. Gates-Foster’s description of an excavation project: “I was struck by how she told us what it felt like to pull those pieces of pottery out of the earth and the tears of joy that streamed down her face. It was those emotions that inspired me to know I needed to be a part of something like that, that I needed to explore and understand my passion for archaeology like she had.” Students remarked on Dr. Gates-Foster’s ability not only to inspire, but to challenge students and convey her care and desire for students to succeed. Students describe her courses as transformational: “The lessons she has taught me have gone far beyond archaeology, and have deepened my understanding and experience of the world. Through the connections, academic and personal, that I have made in her classes, Dr. Gates-Foster’s lessons spill out into the everyday, and like the lessons of the best teachers, will be mine to cherish for life.” Dr. Gates-Foster inspirational teaching and thoughtful and caring mentoring make her most deserving of the Tanner Teaching Award.

Professor Enrique Neblett
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

He has by far been the best professor I have had at UNC, and I am going to be sad to go when I graduate in May.” This is a typical quote from numerous nomination letters for Dr. Enrique Neblett. Undergraduate students highlighted his excellence as a teacher and mentor, and emphasized the all-inclusive learning space Dr. Neblett creates in his classes, while doing a great job of taking each student’s desires into consideration. One of the common themes across the nomination letters was that Dr. Neblett creates a “thought-provoking atmosphere.” Quoting one of his students: “Dr. Neblett has inspired me to look deeper into issues of society, such as racism, understand them on a psychological level, and look within myself and my own beliefs. His class opened my eyes to the reality of racism and made me passionate about educating others on the issues. He has helped me discover other interests outside of my field of study and has even influenced me to think deeper about ideas and influences in our life. Dr. Neblett introduced how applicable psychology is in the world and has motivated me to consider adding a psychology minor.”

Dr. Neblett’s passion and excellence in teaching as well as his personal investment in students are exactly the type of virtues the committee was looking for, and it is our honor to select him as a recipient of the Tanner Teaching Award for 2017.
Professor Lillie Searles
Department of Biology

Lillie Searles is a professor in the Department of Biology. Dr. Searles regularly teaches BIOL 434 Molecular Biology and BIOL 532 Discoveries in Molecular Biology. In these courses, students evaluate Dr. Searles at a constantly high level, noting her ability to foster an environment conducive to reading and interpreting primary literature. Students praise her courses for their ability to greatly prepare students for graduate studies and enhance their critical thinking skills. A student cited Dr. Searles' commitment to students: “She is a fantastic professor both in the classroom and during office hours, with a deep knowledge of the material she teaches and a commitment to ensuring that students thoroughly understand.” She is noted as an outstanding scientist and an outstanding educator exemplifying the qualities that make Carolinas a top place for students. For her exceptional teaching and commitment to student success, we are honored to recognize Dr. Searles with the Tanner award for excellence in undergraduate teaching.

Ms. Priscilla Vaz
Department of Geography

Priscilla Vaz has a long record of excellence in teaching and innovative teaching. Priscilla worked and studied with the Brazilian Freire Institute of Education, one of the leading centers of participatory pedagogy, before coming to UNC. She was also awarded the Cecile Daniel Osmont Graduate Teaching Award in Geography in 2016. One faculty member stated, “She was part of a teaching team that innovated a cutting-edge curriculum about “Unnatural Disasters,” which is a student-centered pedagogy integrating critical ecology, politics, economics, sociology, and geography.” Another faculty member stated, “Her course design encouraged deep intellectual engagement and historical knowledge of the region being studied; at the same time, incorporating a new learning style in which students participated in activities and “games” that fostered sharing ideas and experiences in an open supportive, and creative classroom environment.” Students had the following to say about Priscilla’s teaching and her classes: “Life changing”; “Among the very best classes at UNC”; “Encouraged me to connect with my classmates at a new level”; “Enthusiastic and open-minded.”

Mr. Will Begley
Department of Classics

Will Begley is an outstanding teacher who has received high praise from the faculty in his department and from an exceedingly large number of his students. One faculty member commented, “Will is by far the most talented TA I have ever observed in my entire career.” and “He manages to strike the magic balance between creating a rigorous learning environment and a welcoming community.” The Chair of the Department of Classics stated, “We have long prided ourselves on the excellence of our graduate student instructors. They in turn consistently show themselves to be dedicated and creative instructors, and the general standard of teaching among them is very high. Even in this context Will’s teaching was something special.” Some of the comments put forth by Will’s students read as follows: “He always wanted to help students perform at their highest potential and would make students comfortable in the classroom while maintaining a strong learning environment.” Another student stated, “I thought a medical terminology class would be very boring and full of memorization. Even though it was full of memorization it was not boring at all. I actually enjoyed going to class every day and I actually wanted to go to class every day. I strongly believe that Will truly cares about his students.”

William C. Friday / Class of 1986 Award for Excellence in Teaching

Charlie Wiss
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

“Will was the best TA I have ever had. He always wanted to help students perform at their highest potential and would make students comfortable in the classroom while maintaining a strong learning environment.” Another student stated, “I thought a medical terminology class would be very boring and full of memorization. Even though it was full of memorization it was not boring at all. I actually enjoyed going to class every day and I actually wanted to go to class every day. I strongly believe that I will actually remember what I learned in his course.” Another recalled, “There was not one boring moment in class or a time that I can remember where Will was not fully engaged with us as a class.” Lastly, a sentiment from a student who wrote a recommendation was, “Without exaggeration, Will knew every student’s name (first and last) along with a fun fact about them by the third week of class, maybe even before then. We had about 120 students in the class.”
**Ms. Zeliha Kilic**  
Department of Mathematics

Zeliha has received exemplary comments from faculty and students praising her teaching and mentoring of undergraduate students in mathematics. Here are a few highlights: “She has been incredibly approachable and has done an excellent job of making a subject that many people find challenging very accessible and easy to understand. She answers any question that is raised in class, no matter how trivial the question might seem because she knows the importance of fostering an environment where students feel comfortable asking for help.” Another student stated, “She demonstrated ways to individualize lessons for students with different needs.” Along the same lines another student recalled, “She is especially good at changing her approach on the fly and alternating her approach when there are students that are struggling to understand a concept.” One telling comment regarding the impact Zeliha had on her students was the comment by a student that, “she radiated a genuine, kind spirit. Before the start of lecture for each class day, she answered any questions my classmates and I had with an eager spirit, regardless of redundancy of questions.” Finally, her department chair indicated that they have been so impressed with Zehila’s passion and effectiveness as a teacher that they currently use her to train incoming TAs.

**Ms. Tamara Fakhoury**  
Department of Philosophy

Tamara Fakhoury is from the Department of Philosophy. In his nomination letter, her department chair asserts, “Tamara stands out in a large cohort of superb graduate student teachers. Student course evaluations, supported and confirmed by faculty observation, reveal that her teaching excellence derives from two primary sources. The first is the fact that she sets high standards for her students and inspires them to do their best to meet those standards. Student comments repeatedly indicate how much they have grown intellectually as a result of having taken a course with her. The second pillar of her success is the deep respect that she extends to her students—in every one of her courses, her median score is a perfect 5 on the question of whether the instructor shows respect for her students!” Adding to this praise, her departmental chair commented on how she serves as a role model in a field dominated by men.

**Mr. Samuel Adam Smith**  
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

Samuel Adam Smith is a graduate student in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and is described by his students as dedicated, enthusiastic, and concerned about student learning. “He possesses an enthusiasm [that] made me excited to learn” and is “the best lecturer I have had at Carolina thus far.” Known for his passion and organized and informative lesson plans, Adam has also influenced a number of students that went on to pursue graduate studies. One writes, “Adam Smith not only deserves this award because he is a great teacher, but he has gone above and beyond his duty as an instructor to personally guide me and inspire my interest in the field of psychology.” A faculty member adds, “Mr. Smith is an outstanding and thoughtful instructor who has earned extremely high marks for his work as a teacher. He stands out as one of our Department’s most effective teachers and he is highly deserving of this award.”
First year chemistry has a reputation for being a challenging (some may even say arduous) class. Many first year students who are required to take the class are apprehensive and concerned about their ability to succeed. Dr. Dempsey — an experimentalist by nature — embraced the opportunity to test novel approaches to teaching. She thoroughly researched state-of-the-art methods in pedagogy, consulting with the Center for Faculty Excellence, seeking advice from experienced colleagues, and attending numerous external workshops. Her course redesign incorporates a wide array of student-centered, evidence-based, and active-learning methods and represents a version of CHEM 101 that is novel to Carolina. The results of her efforts are best presented using the words of her students:

“I was very apprehensive taking a college-level chemistry course, as I felt unprepared compared to other students. However, Professor Dempsey made the material very understandable and gave me a solid foundation in chemistry.”

“As a first year, I was concerned about my ability to perform well in this intimidating course. I was able to excel with a surplus of resources and support provided by my professor. Dr. Dempsey’s class not only improved my knowledge of chemistry and study habits, but encouraged me to explore what chemistry has to offer to the world.”

“After having failed CHEM 101 with a different professor, Dr. Dempsey really shined a new light on the subject. She made it so easy to succeed if you put forth the effort and she was always conscious of how her students were receiving and retaining the information.”

“I had never taken a chemistry course before, but now I absolutely adore chemistry! It is so amazing and even though this was an extremely difficult course, I learned more than I have in almost any other course I’ve taken.”

Dr. Dempsey displays all the attributes of an excellent teacher: she recognizes the uniqueness of each student; she is able to connect with students with diverse backgrounds and experiences in chemistry; and she creates a welcoming classroom environment where students recognize that it is ok to not always know the answer. In addition, she is tireless in her commitment to helping students gain a deeper understanding of the material (e.g., problem solving and review sessions lasting three hours or more, often on the weekend, are the norm).

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Professor Lorraine Cramer
Department of Microbiology and Immunology

She lives and breathes microbiology and gets more excited about peptidoglycan than a kid in a candy shop.

One of Dr. Cramer’s many strengths is her ability to explain difficult concepts in a way that is accessible and meaningful to students. Her Introduction to Medical Microbiology course is dense and requires a completely new vocabulary. Unfamiliar abbreviations and microscopic processes that are difficult to conceptualize make microbiology an intimidating course for most students. However, Dr. Cramer uses clever metaphors to relate microbiology concepts to pop culture so that they’re easier to understand and remember. Since large portions of her classes focus on processes she sometimes incorporates physical movement into her lectures, asking students to act out the roles of different immunologic cells or chemokines to demonstrate activation processes. Students are often willing to exchange a little good-natured embarrassment in front of their peers for a memorable way to learn new material.

Dr. Cramer also makes a point of consistently relating microbiology to students’ daily lives. She understands that most everyone in her class needs it as a prerequisite for the medical sciences program, so she finds a way to connect microbiology concepts to clinical situations as providers and consumers of health care.

Microbiology 251 has been characterized as one of the most challenging courses taken for pre-health undergraduates. While Dr. Cramer’s standards are incredibly high—“Don’t get lazy in her class! I’m telling you!”—one student warned—she makes clear that if students give the course their time and attention, she’ll be there to support them. She personally holds weekly review sessions, and holds online review sessions during a snow day! She meets one-on-one with students struggling in her class, but often students continue to visit her and seek her guidance well after the end of the semester. As her nominator commented, “Even in a large class, I knew that she was interested in learning about me and never made me feel like I was bothering her or wasting her time.

For the essential foundation she helps to lay for all of her microbiology students, we are honored to recognize Dr. Lorraine Cramer with the Johnston Teaching Excellence Award.

Professor Marsha Penner
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

Dr. Marsha Penner’s contributions to psychology and neuroscience undergraduate education at UNC are significant and lasting. She constantly earns the high regards of both her colleagues and students. She is not only a long time lecturer, but she also serves as the Director of Undergraduate Research for her department and as a faculty advisor for the Carolina Neuroscience Club and IMPULSE, the undergraduate neuroscience journal.

Her Hands-On Neuroscience course was “one of the most worthwhile academic endeavors I’ve engaged in during my time at Carolina.” Every single class period used evidence-based strategies that incorporated out-of-class preparation with group work and lectures. Evaluations of her courses often mention her upbeat, interesting teaching style. For example, one student in Neuroscience and the Media gushed that the class was “excellent for modeling critical thought.” The student goes on to say that Dr. Penner “is willing to think with us as she goes, and she shows us what it looks like to form an opinion that may or may not agree with the source.”

Another student said they found the course so interesting that at the end of the semester, they recommended the class text to friends and family to continue the discussion. Dr. Penner didn’t keep neuroscience within the confines of Davis Hall, but instead showed students how to incorporate neuroscience into all parts of their lives. As her nominator explained, whether it was designing a human-size radial arm maze in the Student Union, or taking students into other areas of the Triangle to talk to children about opportunities in science, Dr. Penner takes it all on with zeal.

One comment from a student highlighted how Dr. Penner’s extra effort in the course made him want to try to match her in his own commitment meeting course expectations. This mutual inspiration—students responding to a teachers’ effort, and the teacher responding to students’ effort with more energy and creativity—is the ideal for Carolina.
Dr. Rayala is a favorite attending of many residents and they are always excited to work with him. He received the Golden Apple Teaching Award in 2014 and 2016. This award is given to a faculty member chosen by the graduating residents for excellence in teaching.

Dr. Rayala's writing profoundly about his teaching philosophy: “I believe that every moment is a learning moment — the satisfaction of finding the correct diagnosis, the pain of a patient’s death, the guilt of a missed diagnosis, the agony of post-surgical complications, the challenges of interpersonal work conflict, and the struggles of work-life balance. All these experiences are teaching moments. When learners see my humanity, my vulnerabilities, my struggles, my triumphs, joys, and my failures, that is the best teaching I can do.”

Bryan Rayala is Clinical Associate Professor of Family Medicine at the UNC Medical School. Dr. Rayala supervises resident physicians and medical students in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

His students describe him as a “wonderful teacher, humble physician, and terrific role model.” They praise him as calm, patient, thorough, approachable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. His students especially appreciate the way he gives them hands-on experience with medical procedures, offering suggestions but never taking over. As one resident recalls, “With my hands shaking and mind fresh from having watched the procedure online, Dr. Rayala calmly walked me through the whole process from the digital block to the final ace-bandage.”

Dr. Rayala developed “Pause for Procedures,” during which residents can practice techniques instead of just watching someone else do them. He also developed “Photo Rounds” as an opportunity for residents to evaluate their colleagues about interesting findings, etiology, and difficulties in patient care.

Dr. Rayala often discusses the challenges of achieving appropriate work-life balance and is very open with residents about his own experiences as a doctor, allowing us to see a complete picture of life as a family medicine physician. “This transparency is appreciated amongst residents and useful during this formative time in our training.”

One resident writes movingly, “One thing that is really special about Dr. Rayala is his inclusion of the patient in our teaching. He educates the residents in front of the patient without making patients feel like ‘guinea pigs’. Patients keep coming back to his practice and allowing learners to be part of their care. I think this says a lot about Dr. Rayala.”

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One resident writes movingly, “One thing that is really special about Dr. Rayala is his inclusion of the patient in our teaching. He educates the residents in front of the patient without making patients feel like ‘guinea pigs’. Patients keep coming back to his practice and allowing learners to be part of their care. I think this says a lot about Dr. Rayala.”

Dr. Rayala is universally beloved by students, patients, staff, and colleagues. He is richly deserving of the 2017 Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Award.
Marilyn Ghezzi is Clinical Assistant Professor at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, where she has won the Dean’s Award for Teaching Excellence seven times. She teaches courses on mental health disorders, social work practice with groups, and issues for contemporary clinical practice. Her courses are legendary. They are deeply informed by her decades of experience as a clinical social worker. Her students describe her as a “brilliant instructor”, “nurturing”, “passionate”, and “authentic”.

Her students deeply appreciate how the skills and tools that they acquire in her courses will be applicable daily in clinical settings. Her courses feature small-group role-playing that helps students to understand the complex, messy, and multifaceted challenges that they will encounter. Professor Ghezzi provides a supportive environment for students to talk about very difficult issues. She also conveys how to work with vulnerable people without compromising their dignity. She teaches with intellectual discipline, humor, conviction, and compassion.

Her students describe Professor Ghezzi as “fair, honest and real”—a “treasure” for the School of Social Work. We are proud to recognize Professor Ghezzi with the 2017 Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Award.

I wish I could be in her classroom forever.

Jaime Arguello is Assistant Professor at the UNC School of Information and Library Science (SILS), which he joined in fall 2011. He teaches courses on contemporary search engines (such as Google and Bing), information-retrieval algorithms, and text data mining. These are highly technical and complex topics that can be intimidating for many SILS students.

Professor Arguello is masterful at building their confidence and empowering them to succeed. His students trust him never to abandon them to face the formal machinery alone. Professor Arguello attacks the math anxiety that can block student success. He finds a way to highlight the conceptual ideas behind the mathematical apparatus, building up the machinery in step-by-step fashion so that his students never lose sight of the big picture while they are wrestling with the details. As one student admitted, “I have rarely, if ever, enjoyed math this much.”

Professor Arguello is eloquent about the challenges he faces: “I teach in areas that… bring together principles and techniques from computer science, statistics, mathematics, linguistics, and behavioral research. None of us are strong in all these different areas. I ask my students to reject the idea that being good at something comes solely from natural talent. ‘I am not really a math person’ are words I hear often. My response is: ‘Neither was I.’ I remind students that mastering new concepts requires solitary hard work, practice, and patience. I tell students: ‘It’s OK to be confused. If you are not confused, I am not teaching you anything you don’t already know’. I am passionately against the idea that our successes come from being gifted. Success comes from hard work and becoming comfortable with being confused, which is a skill in its own right. It is impossible to feel more powerful without being challenged.” There are important lessons here for all of us.

Word has spread about Professor Arguello’s courses. He attracts students from many educational and professional backgrounds, including political science, journalism, computer science, and health informatics. He won the SILS 2014 Deborah Barreau Award for Teaching Excellence. His students praise him for being accessible and enthusiastic, for maintaining a lively classroom atmosphere, and for being creative and down-to-earth. He is an emerging leader in his field and has brought other leaders to Chapel Hill where his students have had the opportunity to interact with them. As one student wrote, “He is an amazing teacher who makes things not only interesting, but leaves you with a hunger to go out and learn more.” We are delighted to honor Professor Arguello with the 2017 Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Award.

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Gary Pielak
Department of Chemistry

The recipient of the Lifetime Mentor Award is admired and appreciated by scores of former students who gratefully acclaim his caring nature and selflessness. He was recognized as a mentor during their time on campus and remained one after they left the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is praised as a fine teacher and researcher who has served almost thirty years in the Department of Chemistry. Described as vigorous and energetic, his colleagues and department chair, as well as the former students who nominated him for the Lifetime Mentor Award are persuasive in their assertions that Dr. Gary Pielak demonstrates a lifetime of outstanding contributions as a mentor. In a broad range of areas that include personal and professional considerations he is appreciated for caring for others professionally and personally. One former student effusively notes his skill as a communicator and as a teacher who “stays in touch.”

Another former student wrote of the support and accessibility for conversation and advice that he was graciously provided by Gary. Letters from individuals who went on to impressive positions in higher education, business and scientific research were sent to nominate Gary Pielak. Support for his nomination came from faculty members, scholars and current students. Those letters offer numerous examples of how Dr. Pielak exemplifies what it means to be a mentor. He has helped former students find jobs and places to live. He has connected them to other helpful individuals and given candid advice. He helps open doors and, as one colleague wrote, “he is willing to help work through the tough decisions that talented people often have to make to leave some opportunities behind in pursuit of other ones.” Dr. Pielak is called tough and fair, persistent and understanding — totally inspiring as a researcher and scholar who loves teaching and mentoring. As a mentor to students beyond the classroom, as stated convincingly in numerous letters, he helps students maintain personal well-being as he challenges and supports them in every way possible to achieve professional success.

Consistent with the example provided by the late Dean Smith who was the first recipient of this award, Gary Pielak is called “A True Tar Heel” by colleagues and department administrators. They note that he is willing to step up and volunteer his service in the department when it is needed — often when others are hesitant to do so. Professor Pielak is active and engaged with students in his labs while they are undergraduates and graduate students and steadfastly interested in them after they complete their studies. Like the coach who attends with persistence and high expectations for excellence to the development of students, this professor recognizes that his own success is measured by the eventual success of his students. For his steadfast, prolific and widely lauded commitment to mentoring, we are pleased to recognize this year’s recipient of the Lifetime Mentor Award — Professor Gary Pielak.

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