Writing Program Faculty Awards Announced

May 8, 2024

The **Writing Program** is pleased to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of student writers and writing faculty at CWRU. Writing is fundamental to the work of the university: our words enable the development and circulation of knowledge, create and sustain our communities, and advocate for social and community action.

Congratulations to the faculty and student writing consultants whose expertise and dedication have supported our writers at all stages of their careers.

The Jessica Melton Perry Award for Distinguished Teaching in Disciplinary & Professional Writing[1] recognizes outstanding instruction in writing in professional fields and/or disciplines other than English. This year's winners are:

Dr. Elina Gertsman, Distinguished University Professor, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities, Professor of Art History. As a graduate instructor, Dr. Gertsman is recognized for her thoughtful approach to her PhD students' writing development. She provides many writing assignments with useful feedback, and she shares her own writing process as a scholar. As one student eloquently described, "Prof. Gertsman teaches us how to critically approach the authors of our field and learn a spectrum of writing qualities in our vibrant class discussions. She lets us voice all the aspects we enjoyed as well as our critiques, and then she gently guides our views and suggests further insights. She also gives us frequent writing assignments during the semester in every class. Her critical feedback on these assignments allows us to improve incrementally and map our own progress." Dr. Gertsman's writing instruction is a model for all faculty who work with graduate students as they endeavor to be scholarly writers.

Dr. Suet Kam Lam, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine. One of Dr. Lam's medical students explained, "I would describe her teaching philosophy as one that allows the student freedom to try on their own with frequent follow up and discussion for improvements." This philosophy clearly informs Dr. Lam's mentoring and support of medical students at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine. Dr. Lam supports her students with instruction on organization and explanation, emphasizing the importance of situating one's work in a larger body of research. She provides future doctors with a firm foundation in scientific writing.

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[1] The Jessica Melton Perry Award was established in 2009 by Edward S. Sadar, M.D. (ADL '64, SOM '68), & Melinda Sadar (FSM '66) in honor of Melinda's mother, who worked in the Center for Documentation and Communication Research at Western Reserve University from the late 1950s into the late 1960s.

The **AIQS Innovative Teaching Award** recognizes transformative teaching methods and approaches that enhance the experience of our first-year students in Academic Inquiry Seminars. This year's winner is **Cara Byrne, Lecturer in English**. Dr. Byrne is notorious for her accolades as a teacher, mentor, and writing consultant throughout the university. She is a passionate advocate for students, children, and innovative teaching. In her AIQS course on children's literature, she enables her students to write academic essays, to think critically, and to consider their own and others' values and perspectives–just as an AIQS should do. But Dr. Byrne goes beyond that, lugging lots of children's picture books across campus for students to see and feel, partnering her class with a local group of second graders in order to experience reading through their eyes, and engaging students in multimodal communications with visuals, materials, and recordings. Students rave about her course and about her. Dr. Byrne, always humble, writes, "All in all, I am passionate about my work as an AIQS instructor. Even though I have taught first year writing for many years, I'm constantly seeking ways to improve and help my students develop as critical thinkers, writers, and ethical decision makers. I'm deeply grateful that I get to do this work." The Writing Program is grateful to have her.

The **WRC Excellence in Consulting Award** recognizes outstanding writing instruction for students of the University and exemplary service to the Writing Resource Center during the academic year. This year, two consultants were recognized for the high quality of their consulting work:

> **Narcisz Fejes, Lecturer in English.** Dr. Fejes received numerous nominations from the students with whom she consults in the Writing Resource Center. She is highly regarded for her supportive and helpful practices as a consultant. As one student explained her experience with Dr, Fejes, "Talking through my thesis and my claims, and answering Professor Fejes' questions helped me to make my points more clear and more concise - increasing the overall quality of my writing. Ever since I booked appointments with Professor Fejes before every major writing assignment I had to turn in, and I'm planning on continuing this habit in the upcoming semesters. I'm really grateful for Professor Fejes' kind and encouraging coaching, and for her highly professional yet clearly understandable advice." Another student captured all of Dr. Fejes's nominations with this short but sincere sentiment: "She's amazing."
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> **Sarah Secrest, Undergraduate Peer Writing Fellow.** As a Peer Writing Fellow, Sarah offers meaningful opportunities for undergraduates to consult with another student about their writing. Described by several nominations as patient and helpful, Sarah provides useful advice in her consultations with the larger and more profound effect of boosting writers' confidence. And Sarah makes her consultations fun, with some of her peers reporting they enjoy talking to her about their writing.