

ADVENTURES IN TEACHING

3M winner challenges students to 'read' their hometown



DR. HEATHER ZWICKER,
University of Alberta Vice-Dean, Faculty of Arts

Dr. Heather Zwicker wants her students to feel like their ideas are valued – but that doesn't mean she wants her classroom to be 'safe.'

"Learning should make you constantly adjust your world view. That can make you feel like you're not standing on solid ground – like life is shifting, the World is changing before your eyes," says Zwicker, a professor of English and Film Studies, Vice-Dean of the U of A Faculty of Arts, and one of only 10 professors to earn a prestigious 3M National Teaching Fellowship this year. "I think it's that sense of danger, of being unsettled, that good teaching aims to produce."

To wit: Zwicker created an undergraduate English course that challenged students to "read" Edmonton, by researching the city's arts scene and history, and exploring the cityscape physically. "One of the things I was really committed to was getting students out into the city and have them feel city life here, rather than feeling city life while on a summer trip with their parents to Vienna or a weekend in Vancouver," she says.

For generations, Edmonton has been overshadowed by the Canada's three biggest cities: Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Even the city's residents can be remarkably blasé about where they live. "Too often we assume that what's important is what happens elsewhere and the experts are from out of town," says Zwicker, a native Edmontonian. During a teaching stint in Hawaii, she was shocked to discover that she knew more about the history of Honolulu than her own city. "Edmonton is surprisingly under-narrated," she says.

The student course led Zwicker to team up with a couple of other humanities researchers and several students to create Edmonton Pipelines, a multimedia research project that combines maps, narratives and scholarly reflections on different cultural zones within the city (<http://edmontonpipelines.org>). This on-going project is being disseminated in both academic circles and public venues.

Zwicker has taught at the U of A since 1993 and accumulated numerous teaching awards since then, including the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and the Teaching Matters! Students' Union Award for Student Engagement.

Early on, she considered becoming a high school teacher, but wasn't keen on being confined by a set curriculum. A university teaching career offered a better platform for exploring ideas and sharing them with others. "It's a combination of teaching and research that's the intoxicating allure of academia," she says.

Ironically, Zwicker received the coveted 3M prize while on a brief hiatus from teaching. At the moment, she's the vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts and her days are spent juggling administrative work with a busy research program. But with a set term to the position, she'll be back in the classroom in 2015: "Not that I'm counting," she laughs.

UPCOMING DEADLINES FOR ACADEMIC AWARDS

3M National Teaching Fellowship

The 3M National Teaching Fellowship is a national teaching award that recognizes teaching excellence as well as educational leadership. University of Alberta faculty members have won 40 3M Teaching Fellowships, the highest number in Canada, making our university the national 3M leader.

The 3M Teaching Fellowship is open to all individuals currently teaching at a Canadian university, regardless of discipline or level of appointment. Up to ten Fellowships are awarded each year. The deadline to submit a 3M nomination package to the Academic Awards and Ceremonies Office is noon on **August 26, 2013**.

Our office will be hosting a 3M workshop and consultations on July 29 and 30 with 3M specialist, Carole E. Dence, who has worked with recent University of Alberta recipients and compiled winning nomination packages for faculty members at Carleton University. The workshop will provide valuable insights and strategies on construction of a successful nomination package for this prestigious award. The individual consultations are for candidates and their nominator(s) who are planning to submit a nomination package this year and provides an opportunity for an in-depth review of their nomination package. An electronic notice regarding these events has been sent to academics; for more information please contact us.

Copies of previous successful 3M nomination packages are available for review in the Office of the Registrar; please contact us to make arrangements to view them.

Traditional Fulbright Scholar Awards

The Canada-U.S. Fulbright awards offer a unique opportunity to explore a wide range of scholarly issues, including important contemporary issues that are relevant to Canada and the United States, and to the relationship between the two countries. Traditional Fulbright Scholar Awards are intended for candidates who wish to conduct research, teach, or undertake a combination of both activities at a university or research centre of their choice in the United States.

Post-doctoral researchers, emerging and established faculty members, as well as experienced professionals are eligible to apply for a Fulbright award. Candidates must have obtained a Ph.D. or equivalent professional/terminal degree by **December 31, 2012**. As well candidates must be a Canadian citizen at the time of application. The deadline to apply for the Traditional Fulbright Scholar Awards is **November 15, 2013** (for awards tenable in the 2014-15 academic year).

For more information, visit our website, ualberta.ca/academicawards, use the search tool or navigate to the award you are interested in. For discipline specific awards, select the appropriate field of study and determine which award(s) are applicable to you.

ualberta.ca/academicawards

With the support of the campus community, we have added numerous new awards that University of Alberta faculty members have received to our website, ualberta.ca/academicawards. If you have received an award and your outstanding accomplishment is not celebrated on our website, please contact us so that we may recognize your achievement.

NEED HELP WITH AN ACADEMIC AWARD NOMINATION?

The Faculty Awards Facilitator supports academics in their pursuit of teaching awards. This service is offered through the Policy and Governance Unit in the Office of the Registrar. For more information or assistance with a teaching award nomination, please contact Bobbi Schiestel, Faculty Awards Facilitator, at **780.492.1952** or via email at bobbi.schiestel@ualberta.ca.

