2023-2024
OCUFA Teaching Award

Citation for Ayesha Khan

As an associate professor in the Faculty of Science at McMaster University, Dr. Ayesha Khan has repeatedly demonstrated a commitment to fostering connections—between students and the broader community, between classroom theory to real-world applications and transferable skills, and between educators across disciplines—with the goal of improving the learning experience for students. Clearly articulated in her teaching philosophy, Ayesha states: "During the last several years, I have intentionally reduced administrative commitments in exchange for increased contact time with students hoping to learn about their daily experiences so that I can be a more informed educator. ...my teaching philosophy has shifted to focus on meaning-making, social connectedness and being part of a broader community, and showcasing practical and timely applications of knowledge gained in the classroom."

Her commitment to this principle of connectivity has also made her an innovative and effective educator, a leader in community-engaged learning, and an effective mentor. Ayesha was one of the first adopters of community-engaged learning at McMaster University. She established the "MacEngaged" initiative in 2015 with the goal of instilling civic responsibility into the curriculum, and through that program, hundreds of students have contributed to their communities by translating research into publicly accessible formats and inventions. As one student states: "She emphasizes maintaining these connections even well after students complete her courses or graduate entirely, often bringing in examples of previous students from several years ago whom she is still in close contact with today and encouraging her students to uphold that same level of relationship." Her contributions were also recognized with the McMaster Students Union Community Engagement Teaching Award in 2017 and the President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning in 2018.

Many of Ayesha's colleagues have since adopted community-engaged learning in their own courses. She has aided in this community transformation, as her peers report that she is

generous with her expertise on community-engaged, experiential, and authentic learning. Dr. Khan is also committed to the open educational philosophy and shares her classroom and curriculum resources, from study guides for neuropsychology to her Accountability Matrix for student collaboration, an electronic resource that helps students track the participation of the members of their group, increasing accountability within the team.

Many of Ayesha's students have also benefitted from her generosity as a mentor. She has supervised over 80 students, primarily on pedagogical projects, and often encourages them to take leadership roles in research and teaching. Ayesha also collaborated on the creation of McMaster Mentoring Action Program to bring retired faculty and alumni back to campus to provide additional mentoring opportunities for students. As a former student wrote, "Although my time as her student has come to an end, I know I will consistently be learning more from her. Through observation, the continuous mentorship she provides, and as an inspiration I look up to." Through her commitment to community building and civic engagement, Ayesha has built lasting connections between her university and the community. Congratulations to Dr. Ayesha Khan, recipient of the 2023/2024 OCUFA Teaching Award!

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Professors and academic librarians play a vital role in our universities, preparing students for the challenges of tomorrow, while pursuing the new ideas and knowledge that enrich all of our lives and chart a path to a brighter future.