

Dr. Carolyn Kay

The OCUFA Teaching & Academic Librarianship Awards Committee congratulates Professor Carolyn Kay on achieving the 2007 Teaching Award for her exceptional work as Professor in the Department of History at Trent University.

In her nomination brief for this award, students and colleagues alike write passionately about how Dr. Kay has inspired them to be better students, better teachers, and has set a shining example of “how to live your life intellectually.”

Comments from student evaluations ring with unbridled enthusiasm. “Without a doubt the best course I have taken in my four years at Trent” is the sentiment repeated over and over. Students rave about the selection of reading material, the opportunity to hear the views of their peers, and the passion, intelligence, and engagement demonstrated by Dr. Kay. Several of her former students contributed to this brief indicating that she was the primary inspiration and “guiding force” in their decisions to pursue graduate education. Writes one student, “Carolyn Kay had the single largest impact on me of all my professors. She helped and nurtured my interest in history. She showed that professors need not be some aloof authority figure that students should fear, and instead demonstrated every day that she was a normal person.”

A normal person, but a superhuman teacher. She brings out the best in her students, nurturing their sense of confidence in academic pursuits and encouraging and inspiring her colleagues through mentoring, rigorous course and curriculum development, participating in programming at Trent’s Instructional Development Centre, and engaging in educational planning as a member of Trent’s Academic Planning Committee.

In 2006, Dr. Kay became the first faculty at Trent University to be promoted to Full Professor based on a new category of teaching excellence. Her success in the classroom, it is pointed out, is not based solely on her natural born talent as a teacher, nor her instinctive empathy and commitment to students, but on her meticulous preparation, her rigorous scholarship, and her continuous efforts to improve her teaching.

Indeed, her teaching practice hits on all the essential principles of good teaching practice as famously articulated by educational theorists Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson in their 1987 American Association of Higher Education publication. To wit, Dr. Kay promotes active dialogue with and among her students, provides thorough and encouraging feedback on writing and critical thinking, communicates high expectations, and enriches the student experience by respecting students’ different talents and ways of learning.

We warmly congratulate Carol Kay for her outstanding contributions and dedication to student learning at Trent University. We are proud to honour her with this year’s OCUFA Teaching Award. Congratulations!