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Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

2016-2017 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR DR. KIMBERLY DEJ



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Prepared and read by Vincent Hui, Ryerson University

On behalf of the Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee, I am delighted to present Dr. Kimberly Dej with a 2016-2017 award in recognition of her excellence in teaching. Lauded by her students and colleagues as “an enthusiastic mentor, engaging teacher, and a true ambassador for pedagogical innovation,” Kimberly has left an indelible mark at McMaster University since joining in 2004.

Having taught in every required course in McMaster’s Life Sciences Program while maintaining an exceptionally high “Instructor Effectiveness” score (8.48), Dr. Dej’s teaching has ranged from deploying strategic blended learning paradigms to developing student and faculty mentorship programs. Her teaching excellence goes beyond the academic successes of her students and extends into her capacity as an engaging mentor, a research catalyst, an interdisciplinary collaborator, and a career accelerator.

A key theme in Dr. Dej’s teaching is her advocacy for greater student engagement. She makes material accessible to a range of students. Her belief that “every student is engaged in the process of “doing” science” has spurred her pedagogy to generate curiosity that inspires independent learning and student empowerment.

One of the most notable teaching accomplishments Dr. Dej has overseen at McMaster is her constant desire to serve as a research catalyst. According to one of her colleagues: “...she has been the single most influential person to make undergraduate research a priority for Life Sciences students, and has personally provided them with research opportunities and a space for that research.” Rather than “rote “recipe” labs”, she proposes innovative inquiry based lab courses that engage undergrad students in authentic research as evidenced in her extremely successful undergraduate research work including the Nematode Diversity Project, Personal Genome Testing Project, and the Amylase Gene Project.



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Dr. Dej's multidisciplinary approach also validates her ability to teach her material with a focus on students' career aspirations. Her dedication to this approach is highlighted in her role with the experiential learning placement office where she coordinates work opportunities for students. Similarly, her Portfolio Learning initiative also allows students to reflect on their interests, accomplishments, and skills inventory thereby exposing them to a diversity of opportunities and career paths which have included medical illustration, patent development, and biotechnology.

Kimberly Dej's outstanding teaching is best reflected in a quote from one student: "Prior to meeting Dr. Dej, I was a solid "B" student; one who passively engaged with course material, rarely sought help outside of class, and studied with the intent of receiving an adequate grade... It was only after meeting Dr. Dej that I learned the type of person I would like to become: one that promotes kindness and collaboration and collegial support." Please join me in congratulating Dr. Kimberly Dej as one of the recipients of the 2016-17 OCUFA Teaching Award.