

**2013-2014 OCUFA TEACHING AND  
ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS  
CITATION FOR WINNER PROFESSOR TAMARA KELLY**

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## **CITATION FOR PROFESSOR TAMARA KELLY**

**Prepared and read by Andrea Buchholz, University of Guelph**

Of the many adjectives used to describe Dr. Tamara Kelly, Associate Lecturer of Biology at York University, collaborative and supportive are perhaps the ones which appear most frequently throughout her award nomination package. Dr. Kelly's collaborative and supportive teaching initiatives extend equally to undergraduate and graduate students, and to junior and senior faculty colleagues in the Department of Biology, the Faculty of Science at York, and at universities across Ontario.

I begin with an excerpt from a letter, and which illustrates Dr. Kelly's support of students. I preface the excerpt by pointing out that the Awards committee reads, quite literally, hundreds of letters during the nomination review process. I have never before read such impactful words as those that follow: "As a student with [a] disability I have experienced firsthand the inclusiveness of Dr. Kelly's teaching policy; she goes above and beyond to provide proper help. If a student is unable to afford even used textbooks/lab manuals (I was one such student), she has asked publishers for a small number of [donated] textbooks. Overall, she is a master in providing individualized attention to every student, even in a large class size. I arrived in Canada a refugee with no other family. While taking BIOL 1010, I was diagnosed with cancer. Dr. Kelly afforded me both personal and academic support, allowing for altered deadlines for course work so that I didn't have to choose between my health and my education. When I was unable to attend lectures, Dr. Kelly dedicated many hours via email or in person to review course material."



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Indeed, Dr. Kelly's statement of teaching philosophy begins with, simply, "Office hours are my favourite part of my week...I'm happiest when my office is filled with students all working through a problem, using a ready supply of 2'x3' whiteboards to explain their solutions to each other. I always come away from office hours thoroughly invigorated, full of ideas to improve my classes." Dr. Kelly is clearly skilled in, and motivated by, creating communities of learners. She even does collaborative testing in her BIOL 2040 course, using testing as yet another opportunity for learning.

Outside of the classroom and office hours, Dr. Kelly is extensively engaged in course and curriculum redesign. This includes perhaps most notably her creation of a second year "mega-lab" course, and which uncoupled lab sections from lecture courses. This was an enormous undertaking, initially met with resistance by her colleagues. However, her leadership and persistence paid off. The new course is a success with all stakeholders - undergraduate students, graduate teaching assistants, faculty and the department.

Dr. Kelly is a teaching leader. She initiated a departmental science education journal club, and played a key role in creating a science education speaker series which draws faculty from several disciplines including chemistry, physics, computer science, engineering and mathematics. She has collaborated on teaching-related grants and research, both at and beyond York. Most recently, she and a colleague were awarded a York University Teaching and Learning Development Grant, to develop an instructor peer review and coaching program. Dr. Kelly's leadership in teaching extends to organizing provincial activities including Ontario Biology Day - a conference showcasing undergraduate student biology research - and the oCube - Ontario Consortium of Undergraduate Biology Educators - a community of practice promoting innovation and effectiveness in university biology education, and which she co-founded.



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In sum, Dr. Tamara Kelly is a true leader in university science education. Not surprisingly, many describe her as a “go to” person; the trusted colleague from whom fellow faculty members and sessional instructors seek advice on teaching-related matters. She is as respected and lauded for her teaching excellence by her students as she is by colleagues at York and all over Ontario. Please join me now in congratulating Dr. Tamara Kelly, a 2013-2014 OCUFA Teaching Award recipient.