

Sharon Anne Cook

The OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee is delighted to announce the selection of Dr. Sharon Cook as a recipient of the 2006 OCUFA Teaching Award.

Dr. Cook is an outstanding university professor who is held in high esteem by her students and colleagues at the University of Ottawa. Her remarkable instructional abilities and supportive demeanor have earned her widespread and enduring respect. She has a history of achievement within the Faculty of Education and the Department of History, and has influenced thousands of teachers and researchers through her impassioned pedagogy and scholarship. As a dedicated mentor and tireless supervisor she has contributed to the preparation of numerous future teachers and enthusiastic graduate students. They all speak of the “warm rapport” she has with her classes, and how she manages to create a “comfortable, non-intimidating environment” in which students are free to “question, take risks, examine misconceptions”, and entertain a myriad of possibilities. Many cite the strong and lasting connections she has built with her students and how they inevitably develop into respectful and valued relationships, which continue long after the completion of courses, and graduation from programs. As one student stated *“I have been greatly inspired not only by Dr. Cook’s teaching performance and scholarship, but also by the integrity, compassion, and kindness that she brings to her relationship with her students.”*

Dr. Cook’s style of teaching has been described as “challenging”, “thought provoking”, and always “stimulating”. That she deliberately facilitates critical thinking through “lively debate and discussion”. Students are encouraged to think outside the traditional confines of accepted scholarship and examine topics that are normally excluded or ignored by the public and relegated to the marginalized fringe. Her dedication to developing a “social justice mandate for education” has been highlighted by both faculty and students. She is acknowledged for her “courageous advocacy and community involvement”; her effective “implementation of the Access Program”; her willingness to “acknowledge and respect a variety of perspectives” and voices; and her persistent practice of analyzing and “reflecting upon significant world issues”. As one colleague stated *“Sharon’s deep humanity, drive and leadership are translated to wide-scale community involvement in teacher education and the fervent promotion of new approaches to global education.”*

For Dr. Cook teaching and research are inextricably linked, and consequently she organizes and designs her classes to ensure that students benefit from this nexus. As a strong researcher with numerous publications and grants, she has translated her academic knowledge and experience into “creative and challenging courses”. Several examples of innovative approaches to teaching and course development were profiled within her teaching dossier. Many faculty mentioned her “special gift for engaging in academic dialogue” with her students and referred to her as *“a consummate role model, the kind of professor that students would someday like to become.”*

Dr. Cook has been the winner of a number of education and teaching awards over the course of her thirty-five-year career in education. She was the first winner of the Carleton Board of Education’s Teacher of the Year Award in 1985 while still a secondary school teacher and department head. She has been twice recognized at the University of Ottawa with teaching awards at both the faculty and university level. In 2004 she received the Faculty of Education Award for Excellence in Teaching and in 2005-06 the University of Ottawa Prize for Excellence in Education.

As one colleague so aptly put it *“Professor Cook is a recognized international scholar who embodies all the characteristics of the best of teachers; knowledge, experience, an intense passion for learning, enjoyment of people, professional ethics and energy.”* Dr. Cook is an exemplary educator with a remarkable teaching career, and we are proud to honour her with this year’s OCUFA Teaching Award.

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