

# TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The President and Vice-Presidents' Advanced Career Teaching Award

The Alumnae Early Career Teaching Award

The Alumnae Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award

Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning

Mount Saint Vincent University

*Approved by Senate, April 29, 2016*

## ABOUT THE AWARDS

Mount Saint Vincent University places a strong value on student learning. We are a small university with wonderful resources for creating contexts rich in opportunities to learn. One of our most important assets is the expertise and enthusiasm of our full- and part-time faculty members, librarians and laboratory instructors. Typically, instructors at the Mount approach their teaching thoughtfully, with diligence and enthusiasm. Some instructors, however, stand out for their effectiveness and their passion for fostering student learning.

Most often, teaching expertise is the result of hard work. Outstanding teachers are, themselves, students of the craft. They pay attention to what best supports their students' learning, think carefully about their pedagogical practices, seek opportunities to share teaching ideas with others, and take seriously the place of teaching in their overall scholarship. In sum, the best teachers are those most committed to learning to teach.

Mount Saint Vincent University is committed to recognizing and encouraging the outstanding teaching accomplishments of its best educators. The *President and Vice-Presidents' Advanced Career Teaching Award*, the *Alumnae Early Career Teaching Award*, and the *Alumnae Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award* celebrate the accomplishments of our best faculty members, librarians and laboratory instructors and encourage others to advance their teaching practices so our students can receive a rich and satisfying educational experience in an academically vibrant learning environment. The University wishes to encourage outstanding teaching and these three awards provide a way to acknowledge exceptional pedagogy at the Mount.

## PURPOSE

The three Teaching Awards have been established to celebrate and foster excellence in teaching in all of the Mount's educational contexts, whether in the classroom, online, or through blended approaches.

## ELIGIBILITY

### **The President and Vice-Presidents' Advanced Career Teaching Award**

Sponsored by the President, Vice-President Academic, and the Vice-President Administration, the *President and Vice-Presidents' Advanced Career Teaching Award* is open to all tenured faculty members, permanent librarians and permanent laboratory instructors at the Mount. This award will be given to a faculty member, librarian or laboratory instructor who has demonstrated teaching excellence throughout their career at our university.

### **The Alumnae Early Career Teaching Award**

Sponsored by the Mount Saint Vincent University Alumnae Association, the *Alumnae Early Career Teaching Award* is open to all full-time faculty members, librarians and laboratory instructors in the first five years of their career at the Mount. This award will be given to an early-career full-time faculty member, librarian or laboratory instructor who has demonstrated commitment and promise as a university teacher.

### **The Alumnae Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award**

Sponsored by the Mount Saint Vincent University Alumnae Association, the *Alumnae Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award* is open to all part-time faculty members, librarians and laboratory instructors at the Mount, regardless of length of service. This award will be given to a part-time university teacher who demonstrates commitment, knowledge and skill as a university educator.

Faculty members, librarians and laboratory instructors are eligible to receive one teaching award per year.

### **ELIGIBILITY TO NOMINATE**

Anyone in the Mount community — students, full- or part-time faculty members, staff members, and alumni— can nominate a Mount faculty member, librarian or laboratory instructor for the teaching awards. Nominations can be submitted by individuals or groups. SCOTL encourages nominators to seek out others who can assist in the development of a strong nomination file. For example, a student who wishes to nominate a faculty member should find others (colleagues, administrators, students) who are willing to write letters of support and who can help develop the nomination.

### **Nomination Deadline: February 1**

### **Nomination Submitted To: The Teaching and Learning Centre**

### **NOMINATION STEPS**

1. The nominator will complete the online fillable nomination form and submit it to the Teaching and Learning Centre.
2. The Teaching and Learning Centre will contact the nominee to confirm that she or he is willing to be nominated. If not, the Teaching and Learning Centre will advise the nominator that the process will not be pursued.
3. If the nominee is willing to proceed, the nominator will be advised to:

- Submit a description (maximum 1000 words) of the nominee's teaching expertise that includes evidence that demonstrates how the nominee fulfils the criteria for the award;
- Request three letters of support from members of the Mount community (students, full- and part-time faculty members, staff members, alumni) that demonstrate how the nominee demonstrates teaching excellence.

4. The nominator (or the Teaching and Learning Centre if preferred by the nominator) will contact the nominee and request:

- A short Curriculum Vitae
- A half-page to two-page (maximum 1000 words) statement in which the nominee provides one or two examples of her or his pedagogy that most clearly reflects her or his beliefs about learning and teaching;

### **PREPARING THE NOMINATION**

As they develop the nomination file for their candidate, nominators should attend to the qualities described in the Appendix. They should seek evidence that demonstrates ways in which their nominee possesses or expresses some or all of these qualities. Given that each candidate is unique, and given that the qualities of teaching excellence can be expressed very differently in different teaching contexts, nominators must think carefully about how they wish to present their candidate's most outstanding teaching qualities.

### **THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS**

Following the nomination deadline, the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning (or a subcommittee thereof) will assess the nominations. Committee members will examine each nomination and assess the extent to which the documentation succeeds in presenting the case that the nominee possesses teaching qualities that merit receipt of a teaching award.

Consensus will be sought from the committee on who should receive the award. If consensus is not achieved, the committee will hold a balloted vote.

Decisions by the committee are final.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE AWARDS**

By March 7 each year, SCOTL will recommend award winners to the Mount Senior Executive and the Alumnae Association. SCOTL will inform the award sponsors, who in turn will inform the winners of the award by letter.

Awards will be presented at the spring Convocation ceremonies. Winners will be featured on the the Mount Teaching and Learning Centre webpage. Previous year winners will also be listed on the website.

**PRIZE**

Winners will receive a certificate and \$500 prize to be used to support teaching development. An award winner may, for example, choose to attend or present at a teaching/research conference, to attend training to enhance teaching practices, or to purchase teaching-related equipment or technologies.

## APPENDIX

### TEACHING QUALITIES TO CONSIDER

People often describe teaching as an art more than a science—and for good reason. Amongst other things, good teachers are often creative, intuitive, courteous, honest, open-minded, courageous, and thoughtful. In addition to traits such as these, however, good teachers typically are also scholars of the craft, committed to developing their understanding of, and expertise with, teaching and learning.

Important teaching qualities include:

1. *Course management and organization.* Typically, good university teachers carefully plan their courses. Their course outlines provide a clear sense of the purpose and process of the course, they offer learning activities that are well conceived and executed, they react quickly and flexibly to teachable moments that might arise in their class, and they provide prompt and helpful feedback on work.
2. *Expectations.* Good university teachers often have high expectations both for themselves and for their students. Their courses are engaging and challenging. These teachers challenge students to deepen their understanding of their own learning processes so that they can leave university with enriched capacities for lifelong learning.
3. *Learning Experiences.* Good university teachers have a deep understanding of how learning works. They seek out ways to help students connect new learnings to prior knowledge and experiences. The learning activities they offer engage students at different levels of skill and knowledge. They provide students with meaningful exercises through which to integrate new concepts and practice new skills. Very often, they explore new and innovative teaching technologies and practices, including practices that support students at a distance.
4. *Assessment Methods.* Good university teachers evaluate student performances fairly and honestly to provide them and others with an accurate sense of their developing competence. They provide students with pertinent and timely feedback that identifies misunderstandings and that clarifies ways to deepen knowledge and enhance skills.
5. *Rapport with Students.* Good university teachers offer classes that are supportive, inclusive, open, respectful, interesting, interactive, and challenging.

6. *Reflective Practice.* Good university teachers think hard about their teaching and dedicate themselves to enhancing their practices. They look out for and experiment with new teaching practices. Oftentimes, they seek to improve their teaching through concerted efforts at professional development. They may engage in a scholarship of teaching in which they reflect on their practices and share their teaching expertise with others.
7. *Teaching Leadership.* Good university teachers promote good educational practices throughout the institution. Very often they serve in leadership roles in curriculum and teaching development. They share ideas with people in their departments and, when they gain experience, they actively mentor more novice colleagues. They often are widely recognized as good teachers.