The Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching

About the Award
Since 1989, the UVic Alumni Association has been pleased to honour the outstanding level of teaching offered by the university’s faculty and instructors. We are proud of our role in recognizing UVic teaching of the highest caliber.

The Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching bears the name of a former senior lab instructor in the Geography department who, for 21 years, was a strong supporter of better teaching at the university, an active member of the advisory committee of the Learning and Teaching Centre, and a regular participant in the training of teaching assistants. This award is a tribute to Gilian Sherwin’s commitment to the art of teaching and the influence she had on many students and colleagues.

Recognition
One award is presented each year. The award includes a gift and a $2,000 cash prize. Portraits of award winners are displayed in the McPherson Library.

Eligibility

Who can be nominated?
This category is open to Sessional Lecturers, Lab Instructors, and Senior Lab Instructors. Nominees must:

• Have taught for a minimum of three years within the last five years prior to nomination;
• Have taught
  a) a minimum of 4.5 units in all of the three years (or)
  b) have held a .5 FTE instructional position for 8 months in all of the three years, (or)
  c) be able to substantiate that he/she has had instructional responsibilities equivalent to
     either of the former requirements in all of the three years (a list of courses taught is
     required);
• Be the only nomination from their academic unit (i.e., only one nomination per academic unit
  will be considered).

These criteria reflect the fact that this is the highest award offered by the University of Victoria for Sessional Lecturers, Lab Instructors, and Senior Lab Instructors.

Who can nominate?
The nomination is coordinated by the nominator(s) and the nominee. Nominations are submitted jointly by a former UVic student (i.e., not currently enrolled in a course with the nominee), as well as a fellow faculty member colleague and/or the Department or School Chair. If the Department Chair is not a co-nominator, the Chair must still endorse the nomination.
Award Administration and Process

The Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost administers the award on behalf of the Alumni Association.

Selection Committee:

- Chair, Vice-President Academic and Provost (or designate);
- Director, Learning and Teaching Centre (or designate);
- One Regular Faculty Member, Artist in Residence, or Librarian or a previous recipient;
- UVic Professional Employee Association Chair (or designate);
- UVic Student Ambassador representative;
- University of Victoria Students’ Society Chair (or designate);
- Graduate Students’ Society President (or designate);
- Chair, Grants and Awards Committee, Alumni Association (or designate);
- One alumni member at large

At least one of the two Alumni Association representatives will be a member of the Alumni Board.

Details of the committee’s discussions and deliberations will be held in camera.

Criteria

As the highest honour for excellence in teaching at the University of Victoria for these categories of educators, the Gilian Sherwin Award recognizes both Teaching Excellence and Educational Leadership. Note that the information provided for this Award must focus on the nominee’s experiences at the University of Victoria.

Teaching Excellence (75%)

What has the nominee done to further student learning in his/her courses? What evidence is there of excellent teaching? What contributions has the nominee made beyond the classroom or laboratory? How much and what kind of contact does the nominee have with students? The following are some examples of evidence of teaching excellence:

- Demonstration of excellence in designing courses;
- Demonstration of activities that indicate efforts made to keep abreast of new teaching methods, disciplinary content, curriculum development, and course design;
- Mentoring of students beyond the classroom/lab;
- Innovations in instruction and effective assessment methods.
Educational Leadership (25%)

What has the nominee done to further knowledge of teaching in the discipline, across the university and beyond? The following are examples of evidence of educational leadership:

- Offering workshops for colleagues on some aspect of teaching improvement or inquiry both in one’s own discipline and beyond (for example through the Learning and Teaching Centre);
- Sharing public and peer-reviewed teaching and learning discoveries, for example, through presenting at conferences in the field or in higher education more generally, publishing in academic journals;
- Being actively involved with the Learning and Teaching Centre or related committees;
- Making significant contributions to curriculum development and reviews;
- Being involved with organizations/associations to promote teaching excellence;
- Obtaining grants in support of a teaching improvement or query;
- Being invited as a plenary speaker or being called on to speak as an expert on television or radio on teaching and learning matters;
- Obtaining a grant for professional development in teaching;
- Grants in support of teaching improvement or inquiry.

Nomination Dossier

- The dossier must be submitted as a pdf file not exceeding 40 pages. Note that the Cover page, Table of Contents, and Nomination Form pages are not counted;
- Uses a standard 12-point font with one-inch margins;
- Each page must be legible and numbered;
- Do not include URLs or materials besides those requested. The Selection Committee will not review them;
- Only dossiers that meet these guidelines will be forwarded to the Selection Committee.

Please note: Opinions about a candidate’s excellence are most credible when expressed by others providing clear and specific examples with evidence of outcomes. Clearly identify the authors or preparers of each of the dossier’s following subdivisions: 2.5, 2.6, 3.0, 4.0, all items in 5.0 and 6.0, 7.0.
1.0 Cover Page and Table of Contents with page numbers for each item. This is mandatory. The additional use of section dividers is optional.

2.1 Nomination Form

2.2 Award. Select Gilian Sherwin Award for Excellence in Teaching

2.3 Nominee Contact information. Both the faculty member colleague and the student who are formally nominating this nominee must include their contact information.

2.4 Nominator Contact information. Both the faculty member colleague and the student who are formally nominating this nominee must include their contact information.

2.5 Chair Contact Information. Please provide contact information for the nominee’s department or school Chair.

2.6 Nominee’s Education and Other Relevant Experience. List all educations certificates, diplomas, and degrees acquired and for each one the granting institution. List other experiences that potentially contributed to the nominee’s teaching excellence.

2.7 Employment History. Begin with current position. Include dates for each appointment and name of department, school or division.

2.7 Teaching Awards. If relevant, list any teaching awards the Nominee has received beginning with those awarded at the University of Victoria. Awards from other institutions can also be listed. Include the date that each award was given.

3.0 Statement of Current Teaching Philosophy

The Statement of Teaching Philosophy is prepared by the Nominee and must be current (within the last 2 years). An effective philosophy statement is personal and genuine. It distinguishes the Nominee’s approaches to learning and teaching. It provides a conceptual framework that explains the values, principles, and goals that underpin the Nominee’s teaching decisions and actions. The Nominee does not provide examples or evidence of his/her philosophy in this statement; the opportunity to do so occurs elsewhere in the dossier. This statement is typically about two pages in length.

4.0 Current Statement of Effective Teaching Strategies from the Nominee

The Nominee also writes this section (written within the last two years). It is often presented as a narrative and it illustrates how the Nominee’s philosophy is enacted in the teaching process. The Nominee typically provides the rationale behind the strategies and offers evidence for their effectiveness (e.g., what worked, what did not work). It is advisable to link these teaching strategies to learning outcomes (e.g., Nominee’s personal objectives, learning outcomes adopted by department).
5.1 Teaching Excellence

Identifying Teaching Excellence: What has the nominee done to further student learning in his/her courses? What evidence is there of excellent teaching? What contributions has the nominee made beyond the classroom or laboratory? How much and what kind of contact does the nominee have with students?

5.2 Courses Taught. Provide a table showing all courses taught within the past five years. Column headings are to include course number and title, number of units, Term taught, class enrolment, response rate, summary mean for questions regarding instructor’s teaching, summary mean for questions regarding instructor’s course design. Please also include Department and Faculty means. Include a statement of the normal teaching load for faculty in the Nominee’s department. If there were any breaks in teaching then it is acceptable to include teaching activities beyond this 5-yr history; for example, a 6-month study leave or personal leave means that teaching history should be included for a 5-yr 6-month period. Here is a sample table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number and Title (Units)</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Class Size</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Instructor Teaching Mean* (Nominee)</th>
<th>Instructor Teaching Mean</th>
<th>Course Design Mean* (Nominee)</th>
<th>Course Design Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 146: The Literature of Our Era (1.5)</td>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These are mean ratings for the ‘global questions’ in the CES. Instructor Teaching is the class mean for CES question 8, “Overall, the instructor was effective in this course”; Course Design is the class mean for CES question 15, “Overall, the course offered an effective learning experience.”

5.3 Examples of Course Materials. Here is the ideal opportunity for the Nominee to illustrate the link between teaching philosophy, strategy, and application. The Nominee should choose 2-3 unique examples (e.g., a novel assignment, a series of lab experiments, exceptional fieldwork, innovative lecturing) that support these links. A copy of a course outline or major assignment is, by itself, insufficient. The Nominee must explain explicitly how each example links philosophy and strategy or how it enhances teaching excellence.

5.4 Two Independent peer evaluations of classroom teaching within 2 years. These letters MUST come from peers/colleagues within the Nominee’s department. They MUST be recent (within 2 years of the nomination) and they must be teaching evaluations of two distinct courses (see 5.4, Note1 below) by two separate individuals. Both courses must be in-class teaching of the course material. The colleague might consider using UVic’s Suggested Peer Review Process for Teaching Assessment.

5.5 Two Graphic or Tabular Summaries of Data. Two Graphic or Tabular Summaries of Data extrapolated from student evaluations for 2 distinct courses from student evaluations of 2 distinct courses. Select two courses that are very distinct from each other either in content, teaching context (e.g., hybrid vs in-class teaching) or level of difficulty (e.g., 100- or 200-level vs 300- or 400-level) and provide summary data of student responses to all 15 questions on the CES in a table or graph.

The ratings for all 15 questions on the CES are to be presented in the table below. For each question provide the mean response to that question, the department mean and the faculty mean.
Identify the person(s) who summarized the data and how the summary was prepared. Note any significant aberrations that might have influenced the ratings (e.g., low ratings that result from significant uncontrolled changes to a course, change in how ratings were collected). Do not include any un-interpreted raw data. Faculty CES means can be found on the Learning and Teaching Centre’s [CES reports webpage](#). Department CES means are available through the department chair/director or through the Learning and Teaching Centre [ceshelp@uvic.ca](mailto:ceshelp@uvic.ca).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Size:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. Instructor’s Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class Mean</th>
<th>Department Mean</th>
<th>Faculty Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The instructor was prepared for course sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The instructor’s explanations of concepts were clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The instructor motivated you to learn in this course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The instructor was available to answer your questions or provide extra assistance as required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The instructor ensured that your assignments and tests were returned within a reasonable time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The instructor was helpful in providing feedback to you to improve your learning in this course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The instructor demonstrated respect for students and their ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Overall, the instructor was effective in this course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II. Course Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class Mean</th>
<th>Department Mean</th>
<th>Faculty Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The course structure, goals and requirements were clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The materials provided for learning the course content (e.g. handouts, posted material, lab manuals) were clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The assigned work helped your understanding of the course content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The course provided opportunities for you to become engaged with the course material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The methods of assessment used to evaluate your learning in the course were fair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The course provided relevant skills and information (e.g. to other courses, your future career, or other contexts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Overall, the course offered an effective learning experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1:** Ideally the two courses selected should be very distinct from each other. However, if an instructor only teaches multiple sections of the same course (e.g., a 100- or 200-level course) then select 2 sections that are unique, for example, one 3-hour evening section taught 1x/week vs. one section taught for 1 hour 3x/week.

**Note 2:** Usually, dossiers should not rely entirely on feedback from classes with fewer than ten students because such small samples tend to be less reliable and persuasive than data from larger classes. If small classes are the norm for the Nominee or department, please explain how the numerical data and comments were collected and how they are significant.
**Note 3.** Remember please do not ask for letters from current students. Students are vulnerable by definition even when they express a strong, unprompted desire to play an active role in supporting the nomination.

**5.6 Two letters of support from former students addressing teaching excellence.** Ideally each letter represents a different course; these letters are in addition to the letter of support from the student nominator. The best letters are specific and authentic. Each letter should address Nominee’s teaching, identifying ways in which the Nominee has been effective in bringing about learning. Elements might include commentary on student engagement, support for student learning, professional value of the courses, effective teaching strategies (be specific), curriculum design, campus-wide impact, teaching reinforced by research, peer mentoring.

**5.7 Statement illustrating Course Development/Course Design.** The Nominee must provide evidence for excellence in the design and/or contribution to the development of no more than two courses. The Nominee will must describe the rationale for and process used to develop and refine the course. If the course was successful because of design innovation, explain what was unique and effective. It is useful for the Nominee to link the new design to the statement of teaching philosophy and/or strategies, and/or to departmental learning outcomes.

**5.8 Other evidence of teaching excellence.** Many instructors demonstrate excellence and commitment to learning in unconventional, radical, or novel ways. Examples of profound relationships with students’ learning can hide in this “other evidence.” For example, did the Nominee enhance the learning experience beyond the classroom by facilitating opportunities for community engagement? For example, did the Nominee enhance the learning experience beyond the classroom by facilitating opportunities for community engagement?

**6.1 Statement of and Evidence for Educational Leadership**

The Nominee writes a brief Educational Leadership Statement illustrating how a Nominee’s ideas, knowledge, and passion have been implemented beyond the classroom. Again, as with the Philosophy Statement, this should be current (within the last two years). The statement should include the Nominee’s personal understanding of “leadership” and why it is defined this way. Effective leadership can be evident on multiple levels: within the university, in the community and beyond, at a professional level. At its most persuasive, educational leadership goes beyond the Nominee’s assigned duties, transcending the confines of the home institution and even the discipline. It makes a difference through deep and significant change.

When completing each sub-section below the Nominee should provide factual and explicit examples to support the narrative. The Nominee could highlight specific projects, evidence of recognition, assessments of impact, and other supporting documentation. It is NOT appropriate to include a long list of workshops extrapolated from a curriculum vitae; The Nominee should, instead, provide summarized evidence of how these workshops supported the key points presented in the Leadership Statement.

In providing this evidence, keep in mind the significance of the Nominee’s role. Serving on committees and attending teaching workshops provide only modest support for a case. But creating campus or national initiatives, or inspiring changes internationally is more persuasive. Explain why something is important and how it makes a difference, and what the Nominee did to make that difference. For example, one Gillian Sherwin Award recipient delivered a presentation of his model for a supersonic wind tunnel to the International Space University.
6.2 Within the University of Victoria. Educational leadership may include sitting on university committees but exceptional leadership goes beyond this. The Nominee may have introduced major program initiatives or student awards or been an exceptional mentor to new faculty. Give specifics.

6.3 Community Engagement (and beyond). Perhaps the Nominee engaged the community in unique ways, such as, initiating community forums, being involved in media on social or public issues, or may have facilitated connections with community agencies or other educational institutions on topical issues or in an advocacy role.

6.4 Professionally. Exceptional leaders create and offer development to colleagues through their professional organizations to foster and share fresh ideas and knowledge. They inspire others through their writing and through their advocacy because they are deeply invested in teaching. They create and support change in the way that teaching is undertaken, understood, and respected.

6.5 Other evidence of educational leadership. Many instructors demonstrate excellence in educational leadership through novel ways. This section provides an opportunity to include arguments or evidence that did not quite fit into other sections.

7.0 Summary Letter written by the Nominators (signed and dated)

Typically, good nominations begin with a letter that is a comprehensive summary encapsulating the whole dossier. This letter highlights the most persuasive evidence and guides the reviewers toward what to look for and where to find it.

In contrast, the endorsement letter for the Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching comes at the end of the dossier. The role of the nominators is to be familiar with the entire dossier and, ideally, write this letter together. Their comprehensive summary letter reminds the reader of the excellent accomplishments of the Nominee. This letter of endorsement illustrates the extent to which the institution values the Nominee and clearly communicates how the University of Victoria benefits from the Nominee’s distinctive contributions. The most compelling letter evokes and reinforces a vivid, three-dimensional sense of the Nominee and thus is one of the most important documents in a successful dossier.