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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Paula O'Loughlin is recipient of Horace T. Morse Award

Summary: Paula O'Loughlin, associate professor of political science, is a 2007 recipient of the prestigious Horace T. Morse University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education.

(April 3, 2007)-Paula O'Loughlin, associate professor of political science, is a 2007 recipient of the prestigious Horace T. Morse University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education. The award honors faculty who excel in teaching, research, creative activities, advising, academic program development and educational leadership. O'Loughlin has made her mark in all of these areas.

"My fundamental goal as a teacher is to help undergraduates develop the intellectual self-confidence and critical thinking skills necessary to lead examined lives," said O'Loughlin. She teaches her courses based on this mission and her six maxims: give direction but never get in the way, keep raising the bar, fun is an intrinsic part of the intellectual journey, use our world whenever possible, map the terrain and open doors help each student write his or her own story. Any student who has taken a class with O'Loughlin could attest to these maxims. "My emphasis has always been on challenging students-if you offer people the opportunities they will rise to the occasion."

O'Loughlin earned a doctorate in political science in 1998 at the University of Minnesota. Prior to coming to UMM, she taught part-time on the Twin Cities campus, Carleton and Macalester. She completed her undergraduate degree at Smith College where she majored in government.

O'Loughlin is an accomplished scholar. While a graduate student at the University of Minnesota she wrote three chapters of a book, *Women and Politics Worldwide*, which won the Victoria Schuck Award in 1995 as the best book on women and politics. She also co-authored a book, *Courageous Resistance: The Power of Ordinary People*, which will be printed this year. O'Loughlin has actively participated in the scholarship of teaching and learning with numerous conference papers and presentations. Her research often directly engages undergraduate students. One of the nominators for the award, alum Geoff Sheagley said of O'Loughlin, "Paula provided my college career with direction. During the second week of class she approached me about internships for the upcoming summer and it only began there. She pushed me to enter a political science conference during our spring break. I did and I received second prize. I would never have dreamed I could write a research paper that [well] before I took her class." Former UMM Chancellor Sam Schuman said that O'Loughlin does "remarkable and prodigious work as the faculty mentor for student independent work." In 2001, O'Loughlin was recognized for her exceptional work in advising by receiving the all-University John Tate Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising and the University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association Teaching Award. She was awarded the UMM Outstanding Support of Student Leadership Award in 1998.

O'Loughlin has been extremely active on campus in many committees, her most recent the founding chair of the Retention Task Force, the founding co-chair of the National Scholarship Committee, initiator of the Deciding Project for students with undecided majors, co-chair of the UMM Civic Engagement Task Force and an active member of the First Year Seminar Coordinating Committee.

O'Loughlin learned of earning the great Horace T. Morse Award in early March and said that she is, "totally pumped. It is a tremendous honor and it means a lot to me." After teaching at other small, liberal arts colleges, O'Loughlin found her home at UMM in 1998. "I walked around Morris the night before my interview for my professorship here. I looked at all the boards and posters [on campus] and just got a feeling for what UMM was. It felt right and I knew this was the place for me. I'm good at Morris because I match the skills of the UMM students. I don't know if I would be as good at any other school."

Roland Guyotte, professor of history, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, associate professor of psychology, along with Sheagley '06 nominated O'Loughlin for the award, saying, "Paula O'Loughlin is one of a kind and also the kind of person for whom the Morse Alumni Award was designed."

O'Loughlin will formally receive the Horace T. Morse Award on Monday, April 23, during the all-University Distinguished Teaching Awards Ceremony and Reception on the Twin Cities campus. She will also be honored on April 26 during the annual Faculty and Staff Recognition Dinner on the Morris campus.

Recipients of the Horace T. Morse Award are inducted into the University of Minnesota Academy of Distinguished Teachers and receive the title Distinguished University Teaching Professor. Academy members provide important leadership to the University community serving as mentors, advisers and spokespersons for the University's teaching mission.

"To me, when I grow more mature in my career and move toward retirement and start to reflect who I am in the world-the articles and published work will matter-but this award says that I made a difference in people's life and that's what matters the most," said O'Loughlin.

[Photo by David Nieves '10, El Paso, Texas: Paula O'Loughlin]

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