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Timna Wyckoff Receives 2013 UMMAA Teaching Award

Summary: Timna Wyckoff, associate professor of biology, received the 2013 University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association Teaching Award.

(April 3, 2013)-Timna Wyckoff, associate professor of biology, received the 2013 University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association Teaching Award. This award honors individual faculty members for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education by calling attention to educational philosophies, objectives, and methods.

Wyckoff was nominated for this award because she is, according to the nominating committee, “an exemplary teacher, advisor, scholar, and community citizen.” Bart Finzel, vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean, expresses a similar sentiment, noting that, “in the twelve years she has been on the faculty at Morris, [Wyckoff] has mentored, guided, and inspired numerous students in their pursuit of science. She is richly deserving of this recognition.”

Wyckoff notes in her teaching statement that she “wants to teach [her] students to be scientists.” Given that she specializes in microbiology and biochemistry, a large part of that task is enabling students to envision things they cannot see. Wyckoff believes that by incorporating primary literature, computer models, stories, drawings, and other images into her daily lectures, she will help her students gain a foundational knowledge of the subject onto which they can “continue to hang details” throughout their studies and later life.

Although her courses cater primarily to upper-division biology students, Wyckoff is happy to have recently had the opportunity to teach the core course in molecular biology. She has enjoyed “reach[ing] out to students who may not think about biology on that level,” and adds that she would “love to teach a nonmajors class.” Expressing her support for increased emphasis on science education, she adds that encouraging all students to study cellular biology—to “join [her] at that level of understanding the world”—would be beneficial practice for all.

Wyckoff is grateful to have been rewarded for her efforts in the classroom. Having been nominated by Professor of Chemistry Jim Togeas, under whom she studied as an undergraduate at Morris, she feels honored by both the nomination and recognition.

“Teaching is such an important part of what we do. To be recognized and to see that the work I’m doing is helping is rewarding. And I’m very pleased to be sharing it with [2013 co-recipient] Nic [McPhee, professor of computer science].”

Wyckoff completed a degree in biology at Morris in 1994. She went on to earn a PhD in biochemistry from Duke University in 1998.

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