

# THE TEACHING EXCHANGE

BROWN UNIVERSITY • VOLUME 10 / NUMBER 2 • JANUARY 2006



---

## *Sheridan Award 2005 Honorees Announced*

The Advisory Board of the Sheridan Center is pleased to announce the winners of the 2005 Harriet W. Sheridan Award for Distinguished Contribution to Teaching and Learning at Brown University. The Sheridan Medal will be awarded to **Prof. Mari Jo Buhle** (*American Civilization/History*), **Prof. Anne Fausto-Sterling** (*Bio-MCB*), and **Prof. Leonard Tennenhouse** (*English/Comparative Literature/MCM*) on Wednesday May 3, 2006 at the annual Awards Ceremony to be held at 5:00 PM in Andrews Hall.

The criteria for the 2005 award were as follows:

- *Evidence of effective mentoring in the development of a reflective teaching practice.* The Sheridan Award defines an effective mentor as one who makes a dedicated effort to support colleagues, both faculty and graduate students, within or beyond their discipline, develop into successful practitioners of reflective teaching. Testimony from faculty and graduate students of such effective mentoring is required.
- *Demonstrated leadership of departmental initiatives to support learning within the discipline.* This may include: organizing departmental seminars or classroom visits to promote the exchange of ideas about pedagogy among both faculty and graduate students; leadership of departmental seminars for graduate students which foster a reflective teaching practice within the discipline; development of departmental criteria for the constructive assessment of teaching and learning; work with colleagues to explore discipline-specific or interdisciplinary pedagogical issues at the national level.

In addition, candidates may have demonstrated *active leadership in University and/or national initiatives which integrate research and teaching.* These may include: innovative

national or University grant-sponsored teaching/research projects (such as NSF, NIH, NEH or UTRA grants); course curricula which foster the integration of research, teaching and learning through collaboration between faculty, graduate/medical and undergraduate students; or leadership in faculty development programs, services and publications which integrate reflective teaching and research.

Colleagues in the departments of American Civilization and History nominated **Prof. Mari Jo Buhle** for the Sheridan Award. She was cited for her effective mentoring of graduate students in both departments in the path-breaking field of women's history, helping them to integrate their teaching and research skills to make their discipline more accessible to non-experts. She was also recognized for guiding the professional development of junior faculty, so that they become active participants in the process of University governance.

As an effective mentor of graduate students, Prof. Buhle is especially notable for meticulous attention to the pedagogical development of her graduate teaching assistants. For example, she helps graduate students develop lesson plans, including writing assignments and discussion questions, which facilitate student learning. She visits her TAs' classes and provides verbal and written feedback to them on their performance. Most important, her graduate students feel that she truly models effective teaching for them in her own pedagogical practice.

Prof. Buhle's sponsorship of a professional development seminar in the American Civilization department has benefited a generation of former graduate students, now successful faculty. She was also cited for her leadership in the recent reforms to the graduate program in the History department, where she holds a joint appointment.

Prof. Buhle's MacArthur Prize, awarded in 1991, in part reflects the impact she has had on graduate students in American Civilization and History who have studied with her during her thirty-plus year career at Brown. Colleagues noted that, at that time, she was said to have trained more Ph.D.s in women's history than all her colleagues combined. She has always given personal attention to the development of her students, helping them to become distinguished faculty who can communicate beyond the discipline. As one of these former students notes, Prof. Buhle trains her students "how to make academic material not only innovative but also, and inherently intertwined with that, "teachable"." Her efforts have produced a generation of faculty who introduce students to the complex historical and interdisciplinary questions raised by the field of women's history.

Prof. Buhle was also commended for her long-term mentorship of a cohort of junior colleagues as they become fully participating members of the University. During her many years as department chair, she has assisted them through the tenure and promotion process and helped them understand the intricacies of University governance. As with graduate students, she models her commitment to teaching, scholarship and service to the University for junior colleagues. One colleague eloquently wrote that Prof. Buhle, like Harriet Sheridan herself, exemplified the role of a mentor in University administration.

Faculty from the department of Molecular, Cell Biology and Biochemistry, as well as colleagues across the University nominated **Prof. Anne Fausto-Sterling** for her skills as a mentor of graduate students and junior faculty across the disciplines, for her leadership in revising departmental standards on teaching, and for her ability to help colleagues rethink traditional ideas about the sciences and implement curricular change. She has been involved in professional development in all aspects of her career.

Her long-term research in biology led her, some thirty years ago, to work to bring more women into the field and to link scientific research to social and political contexts. Reflective teaching was one of the means by which she accomplished these goals; her innovative syllabi and curricula have helped a generation of graduate students and lay people alike to understand the benefits of an interdisciplinary, collaborative, and contextualized approach to understanding and reformulating the questions that scientists choose to ask and study.

To this end, Prof. Fausto-Sterling has run teaching seminars and workshops at Brown and across the country. A legendary Sheridan Center workshop on "Teaching and Gender" in 1993 transformed the way participants understood the impact of assumptions about gender on their teaching. One colleague described how her Wayland Collegium faculty study group on science education brought together faculty from departments across the University. The group continued to meet for many years to transform how science is taught at Brown. Each participant revised old courses and created new ones, and, in some cases, they reoriented their research programs entirely. One result was the creation of a new, interdisciplinary concentration in Science and Society in 2004.

Prof. Fausto-Sterling has also been a leader in mentoring junior faculty in her own department and others, in advocating for diversity within the faculty, and in modeling service to the University. A colleague in her department cited her as "a fabulous mentor with regard to pedagogical issues." A professor from another department wrote "Anne

Fausto-Sterling integrates all the communities of our university with the imaginative construction of opportunities for teaching and learning."

**Prof. Leonard Tennenhouse** was nominated by colleagues in the department of English for his extraordinary efforts to provide substantive professional development for graduate students in this department. He has demonstrated the value of a reflective teaching practice through his own example as a teacher and through his sponsorship of a professional development seminar for graduate students in their fourth year. His work in three departments (English, Comparative Literature, and Modern Culture and Media) also inspires graduate students across the disciplines to consider innovative ways of integrating teaching and research which challenge traditional academic boundaries.

Prof. Tennenhouse's dedication to teaching both graduate and undergraduate students is characterized by attention to the quality of the learning experience. His interdisciplinary work, in particular, has inspired graduate students from department other than English, to seek out his support and assistance as an academic advisor and professional mentor. Former graduate students and teaching assistants, now faculty themselves, attribute to his influence their deep understanding of what it takes to run a course and they stress how much his guidance facilitated their own development as teachers. One cited his patient mentoring as the source for her realization that "a teacher's authority and work in the classroom depends on both the support and the trust of one's colleagues."

Prof. Tennenhouse's work as job placement officer for the English department was cited by graduate students as solid evidence of his successful support for their professional development. He has developed a rigorous seminar to help graduate students prepare for and find academic employment. This seminar encourages them to integrate their research and teaching goals. Graduate students cite this seminar for its successes and for allowing them to see that they are truly an important part of the professional life of the department. This in turn empowers them to present themselves as professional scholars and teachers qualified to join the faculty at other institutions of higher education. Furthermore, Prof. Tennenhouse involves junior faculty in the seminar which in turn facilitates their own development as mentors. As one colleague stated, "he doesn't just oversee and facilitate the practical details involved in our job seekers: he contributes an additional dimension of professional preparation and attunement to their education at a crucial final stage." Clearly, the English department's professional development seminar serves as a model for other departments across the University.

The Awards Ceremony will again include presentation of the annual Faculty Teaching Awards, the Sheridan Award, the Wriston Fellowship Award, the Presidential Graduate Student Teaching Awards and RISD Graduate Teaching Award, as well as all the Sheridan Teaching Certificates (I, II, III). All members of the Brown and RISD communities are invited to come and celebrate the accomplishments of these leaders in collegial professional development.