

# THE TEACHING EXCHANGE

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## *Sheridan Award 2006 Honorees Announced*

The Advisory Board of the Sheridan Center is pleased to announce the winners of the 2006 Harriet W. Sheridan Award for Distinguished Contribution to Teaching and Learning at Brown University. The Sheridan Medal will be presented to **Associate Professor Kate Lynn Lapane** (*Bio-Med Community Health*) and **Professor Kathryn T. Spoehr** (*Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences*) on Wednesday May 2, 2007 at the annual Awards Ceremony to be held at 4:30 PM in Sayles Hall. This year and in future, thanks to an endowment from the late Frederick Lippitt, the two recipients of the Sheridan Award will each receive a stipend of \$2000, as well as the Sheridan Award medal. Mr. Lippitt was Senior Fellow of the Brown Board of Fellows and a member of the Sheridan Center's Advisory Board.

**Assoc. Prof. Kate Lynn Lapane** (*Bio-Med Community Health*) was enthusiastically nominated for the Sheridan Award by her colleagues in the department of Bio-Med Community Health. Her colleagues noted that although a gifted teacher, Prof. Lapane's qualifications for this award rested in her contributions to the pedagogical professional development of faculty and graduate students. She was cited especially for her tireless advocacy of "meaningful graduate education" in Community Health and for her leadership in establishing programs to realize this goal. For example, Prof. Lapane has created a Journal Club in which she takes especial care to train the graduate students to solicit and use feedback to improve their teaching and presentation skills. The Faculty Forum she introduced enables graduate students in Community Health to discuss career paths with faculty from diverse professional experiences. These initiatives have helped to establish a culture of exchange about professional development within the department.

Prof. Lapane has also worked on the revision of the graduate curriculum in Community Health. This is crucial in a field which needs to combine both the academic traditions of expertise in biological research and experience in the complex field of health services. Her solution has been to develop an innovative curriculum which mixes existing courses with opportunities to interact with training faculty from hospitals to state agencies. As a result, Prof. Lapane has also designed professional development to help orient training faculty to ensure that the students achieve the goals of the curriculum. This effort has helped to bring both on-campus and adjunct/voluntary faculty together to provide Brown graduate students in Community Health with a new doctoral program in Health Services Research.

Graduate students in the department described the positive impact of Prof. Lapane's Journal Club and Faculty Forum on their education and development as professionals in the field. One noted that these innovations gave graduate students an opportunity to interact with faculty members they might not otherwise even meet. They credited her skills as a mentor with their success in finding "the right match for research and teaching assistantships." Her commitment to the education of graduate students is demonstrated by the time she devotes to mentoring them on both a career and personal level.

Prof. Lapane is known not only for her superb work as a mentor to fledgling members of the field: graduate students, young research faculty, post-doctoral fellows in medicine and visiting scholars, but to her senior colleagues as well. One distinguished teacher in the department noted that Prof. Lapane's generous support of colleagues with assistance and advice "would make Harriet Sheridan proud."

Colleagues from across the University, as well as from the department of Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences, nominated **Professor Kathryn T. Spoehr** (*Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences*) for her skills as a mentor of graduate students and junior faculty on pedagogy and professional development within her discipline, for her initiative in working to bring other related fields together with her department to build a broad-based reflective teaching practice, and for her tireless leadership in fostering pedagogy in the research environment of higher education.

Prof. Spoehr's skill in mentoring junior colleagues was described with enthusiasm. Not only does she support their development as new members of the department and the University, but she does so in a way that encourages them to achieve professional goals without fear. She sets an example for them to serve as an undergraduate and graduate advisor. In addition, she models interdisciplinary teaching at a level which brings together faculty from different disciplines and realizes the educational goals of the department.

Her leadership of the department's professional development workshop for graduate students was noted for her ability to design a program that meets the disparate needs of graduate students in both cognitive and linguistic sciences. Graduate students cited not only her commitment to their education, but her ability to work with them as colleagues. The professional development seminar which she and Prof. Steven Sloman developed provides graduate students the chance to talk openly about challenges in the classroom and the need to seek the assistance of others, within and beyond the department. For example, she has adapted resources of the Sheridan Center to suit the specific needs of students in the department and has provided graduate students with detailed feedback on their presentations and lectures. As a result, she has made "discussion and support of graduate student teaching a priority in the department."

Prof. Spoehr's work to support the professional development of teaching on a University level received commendation from several colleagues. In addition to her leadership in University administration and as a Commissioner for the North East Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) – regional and national level, she was also cited for her crucial support of the transition of the Sheridan Center from a program to assist graduate students to prepare for successful academic careers as teachers and scholars to a resource for the entire University. One noted that in each of her positions at Brown, from faculty member to Provost, she "worked to secure the institutional and infrastructure support for the Sheridan Center, always cognizant that the Sheridan Center was key to Brown's ability to provide ongoing professional development that integrates reflective teaching and research." That included securing the physical space the Sheridan Center now occupies as a fitting locus to support the professional development of her colleagues across the University.

The criteria for the Sheridan Award are listed on the Center's web site at: [http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan\\_Center/award/criteria.html](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/award/criteria.html)