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Conference on Reflective Teaching in Higher Education The 1997 Recipients of The Harriet W. Sheridan Award

ON OCTOBER 25, 1997, Dean of the Faculty Kathryn T. Spoehr announced the recipients of the newly inaugurated Harriet W. Sheridan Award for Distinguished Contribution to Teaching and Learning at Brown University. The Award recognizes those members of the Brown teaching community who have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to reflective teaching as an integral part of the enterprise of higher education. Such demonstration includes ongoing attention to the improvement of individual undergraduate and/or graduate instruction, support of departmental initiatives to develop and implement programs which actively encourage teaching within their discipline by both faculty, graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants, and support for University-wide initiatives which seek to integrate teaching and research.

The five faculty recipients: Kirk, Stowers, Smulyan, Thomas, and Wyatt, were the prime movers at a critical moment in the history of the development of the Sheridan Center. They served as leaders in their departments in the Association of American Colleges (AAC) project which ultimately transformed the Center from what had been a small agency producing a series of five lectures on pedagogy per year into a center which provides a wide variety of services, programs and publications for the benefit of the entire Brown teaching community, not to mention the students themselves.

In 1989, Harriet Sheridan, Director of the Center, committed the University, through the Center, to participate in an innovative project sponsored by the AAC and supported by a grant from FIPSE. This ambitious three year project was intended to prepare graduate students in five humanities and social science departments to teach in undergraduate colleges as well as the research universities in which they received their training. Each of

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three universities, Brown, Duke and Chicago, were paired with a small nearby liberal arts college, Connecticut, Guilford and Knox respectively.

The key to this project were the faculty who shepherded the adoption and implementation of the program by their departments, encouraged and mentored those graduate students selected for the program, and agreed to work with their colleagues at Connecticut College. There were logistics to be worked out, politics to be negotiated, departmental seminars to be created and pedagogical issues to be debated. What distinguished each of these recipients was their commitment to the value of pedagogical exchange, to the practice of reflective teaching in higher education which is measured by demonstrated student learning.

Not only did each of the five recipients work with their faculty colleagues, both at Brown and Connecticut, but they also supported the efforts of the Graduate Fellows of the Center, Randall Bass, Gregory Pingree, and John Richards to organize and orchestrate the program across the five departments. At the concluding conference in May, 1992, Elizabeth Kirk and John Thomas gracefully stepped in to represent the ailing Harriet Sheridan. Their welcome presence at the sessions and their cogent, sensitive and honest assessments of the value of the project convinced those present that pedagogical exchange was of inestimable value for institutions of higher education committed to student learning.

Furthermore, it was all the visible commitment of these five faculty which sustained the Center staff in the years following Dean Sheridan's death in September, 1992. Prof. Kirk volunteered as speaker for a variety of Center programs and served, with Prof. Peter Haywood of Biology, as one of the first Faculty Teaching Fellows (1995-97). Prof. Smulyan has actively promoted a teaching seminar within the Department of American Civilization. Under the aegis of Prof. Stowers and his successor, Prof. Sumner Twiss, the Department of Religious Studies produced a superb volume entitled *Counterpoints: Issues in Teaching Religious Studies* edited by Mark Hadley and Mark Uno in 1995. The departmental teaching seminar created by Prof. Thomas and John Richards has become an integral part of the pedagogical conduct of the Department of History. Prof. Thomas has also served as a member of the Advisory Board of the Center since 1992. Prof. Wyatt and his colleagues in the Department of Classics also produced a volume of papers on pedagogy presented in their departmental seminars.

The Harriet W. Sheridan Award for Distinguished Contribution to Teaching and Learning at Brown University will be awarded annually to recognize the achievements of members of the Brown teaching community and to inspire others to emulate the commitment and dedication of their colleagues. The Sheridan Center honors each of the [1997 recipients](#) for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the students of this University.