

Spotlight

academic awards triannual

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For Dr. Gary Lopaschuk, professor in the Departments of Pediatrics and Pharmacology, being awarded the title of 2010 Distinguished University Professor is more than a great honour.

"It's an indication that I'm on the right track," he says. "We're trying to create independent thinkers. As an educator, you have to engage your audience."

The methodology Dr. Lopaschuk uses to engage his students is simple but effective. "It's about questioning them instead of telling them," he explains. "In the classroom and in my laboratory, everyone is aware they're going to be asked to participate and come up with ideas. It's important that students are thinking while they're learning, not just memorizing the material...and they're not going to learn unless they find it interesting."

Dr. Lopaschuk has little trouble with his students finding their work interesting. Word of mouth regarding his large laboratory is so positive that he has had to turn people away. "We have about six or seven students in the lab every summer," he says. "There's a lot of interest in what we're researching."

Dr. Lopaschuk's ground-breaking research has made him a world leader in the area of energy metabolism, and more specifically the control of fatty acid metabolism in the heart. His students have played a great role in his research. "On a routine basis in my research laboratory, I find that as my students move along in the training process, they are coming up with things I never thought of," he says. "No teacher has a lock on good ideas or knowledge. A number of minds working together can come up with a lot more good ideas than just one person can."

To understand Dr. Lopaschuk's work, one needs to know that the heart requires fuel from a balance of fat and carbohydrate sugars in order to maintain normal pump function. In many forms of heart disease, the heart shifts to using fat as its primary energy source, which is harder on the heart.

Through a University of Alberta spinoff company, Dr. Lopaschuk has developed a number of pharmacological agents which either inhibit fatty acid use by the heart or increase

continued overleaf...



On the Right Track

Dr. Gary Lopaschuk

Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Pharmacology
2010 Distinguished University Professor

building a **community** | building a **reputation**



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...“On the Right Track” continued

carbohydrate use. By doing so, he and his students may help to turn your body metabolism back in time to the teenage years when you could eat whatever you wanted but you burned it off so you didn't gain weight. “What we may have now,” he says, “is a way to treat heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.”

The U of A spinoff company Dr. Lopaschuk is involved with has partnered with Eli-Lilly in the U.S. to put the drug through the necessary obesity trials. In the meantime, for Dr. Lopaschuk, it's business as usual, which means research, research, research, and a great deal of teaching...and learning too. “Having one-on-one conversations with

my students, they challenge me,” he says. “In our lab, we have a running metabolic quiz on a board. The winner gets the energy metabolic champion award. It's like a *Survivor* thing. I'm also putting myself on the line with the game.” He laughs. “I'm a participant too!” ■

Upcoming Deadlines for Academic Awards

McCalla Professorship

McCalla Professors are those who value excellence in teaching, acknowledge the importance of students, conduct themselves in an ethical manner, are collaborative, open to change, take pride in history and traditions and are committed to integrating their research and teaching.

Large faculties determine individual submission deadlines; therefore, please check faculty websites for more information. Submissions from small faculties (i.e. Augustana, Extension, Graduate Studies and Research, Law, Native Studies, Nursing, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Education and Recreation, Rehabilitation Medicine, Campus Saint-Jean and School of Public Health) should be sent each year to the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) on the first working day of December (**December 1, 2010**).

Alan Blizzard Award

The Alan Blizzard Award was developed by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) to highlight excellence in collaborative university teaching and learning.

The Alan Blizzard award seeks to foster recognition, visibility and appreciation for effective collaboration in university teaching and learning. The deadline to submit applications to STLHE for the Alan Blizzard Award is **January 14, 2011**.

The application form is available at www.stlhe.ca/en/awards/alan_blizzard/index.php

Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF)

The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) has been created to improve teaching and learning effectiveness.

Applications are invited from all University of Alberta instructors who seek innovative ways of integrating teaching and research. It is anticipated that this fund will support a diverse range of initiatives specifically focused on creating exceptional and life-changing university experiences for students.

There are two levels of funding for the TLEF:

1. Professional development (in the area of teaching and learning): applications for funding for professional development are accepted on a continual basis.
2. Projects or research: the deadline for funding for projects or research is **February 1, 2011**.

A TLEF information session will be held on **November 24, 2010** in Council Chambers (2-1, University Hall) from 8:30 – 10:00 am.

Rutherford Award

The Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching is designed to recognize teaching excellence by full-time continuing academic staff at the University of Alberta.

Any individual who has completed a minimum of five years of teaching at the University of Alberta as a full-time continuing member of the academic teaching staff is eligible to be nominated for the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. The deadline to submit nominations is the last Friday of February (**February 25, 2011**).

Provost's Award for Early Achievement

The Provost's Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching is designed to recognize teaching excellence by full-time continuing academic staff within five years of their first university appointment.

Any individual who has completed no more than five years of University teaching as a full-time continuing member of the academic teaching staff is eligible to be nominated for the Provost's Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. The deadline to submit nominations is the last Friday of February (**February 25, 2011**).

Teaching Unit Award

Excellence in teaching and learning may occur at the group or individual level. The intent of the Teaching Unit Award is to celebrate excellence in teaching when a group of individuals consistently work together to promote outstanding teaching and learning.

The teaching unit may work at the graduate or undergraduate level and may include some or all members of a faculty, school, department or division, or it may be an interdisciplinary team. The deadline to submit nominations is the last Friday of February (**February 25, 2011**).

William Hardy Alexander Award

William Hardy Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching was created to recognize teaching excellence by academic staff.

Temporary academic as well as continuing academic staff (Administrative Professional Officers, Faculty Service Officers, Librarians, part-time continuing academic staff and Trust staff) with at least three years teaching experience (and who have taught at least 18 credits) at the University of Alberta are eligible to be nominated for the William Hardy Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. The deadline to submit nominations is the last Friday of February (**February 25, 2011**).

For more information...

Visit our website, www.ualberta.ca/academicawards, use the search tool or navigate to the award you are interested in. For **discipline specific awards**, select the appropriate field of study and determine which award(s) are applicable to you.

Need help with an academic award nomination? For more information or assistance with a teaching award nomination, please contact Bobbi Schiestel, Faculty Awards Facilitator, at 780.492.2644 or via e-mail at bobbi.schiestel@ualberta.ca. ■



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