

TEACHING THE MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

3M Fellow Dr. Billy Streaan's holistic approach to teaching focuses on the student experience.

In an era defined by the speedy transmission of information, Dr. Billy Streaan invites students to press the 'pause' button and live in the moment.

That's why you are unlikely to see Streaan lecturing to his undergraduates. "If you want to uncover meaning, and for people to have some depth in their learning, it can no longer be about transmitting information," says Streaan.

A long-time professor in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, Streaan believes in teaching strategies that engage students intellectually, emotionally and physically. He's been known for beginning classes by playing music or with a game of 1890s-style basketball. If he uses slides to make a point, chances are good he'll sneak in plenty of visual puns and humour.

Streaan received a 3M National Teaching Fellowship, the only national award for teaching in Canada. He's the first from his faculty to ever receive the prestigious fellowship, but one of many at the U of A, which has produced more 3M award winners than any other Canadian university.

While he's arguably a popular instructor on campus, Streaan doesn't use unconventional teaching strategies to boost student enrolment in his courses. His approach is informed by the psychology of learning. Having students engage with the material through hands-on exercises and classroom experiences helps them better absorb and apply the information, he says.

"It's a whole body, whole person experience. It's the interaction of thinking, feeling and acting," he explains. "A couple of phrases I use are, 'Book learning tends to stay in the book' and 'Learning is a myth until it's in the body.' That's why I design everything to be experiential. If it's just about information, we're playing a very superficial game."

The interactions between Streaan and his students are also about building a functional learning community. He's a passionate believer in encouraging students to get to know one another in order to create mutual caring and respect. "To have optimal learning, you need a sufficiently safe environment. An organism cannot at the same time be responding to a sense of threat and also be in a moment of growth and development," he notes.

Humour is one of Streaan's favourite teaching tools. Not only does a little levity lighten the mood in a classroom, but it helps an instructor maintain the interest of students. John Cleese [of Monty Python fame] said something really simple: "If I can get you to laugh with me, you like me better, which makes you more open to my ideas."



Dr. Billy Streaan
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
2011 3M Fellow

There's also a great deal of scholarship that supports the efficacy of humour in the teaching of subjects that make students anxious. In a communications class Streaan teaches, public speaking is a focus. To that end, he tries to get a rise out of students to help them relax a little and take risks in front of their peers.

Given Streaan's passion for teaching, it's no small wonder that much of his research also revolves around teaching and the student experience. He recently authored a study that revealed that negative experiences during childhood can deter people from engaging in physical activity later in life. Lately, he's been studying the role of assignments in university education, and whether they're conducive to specific learning goals.

Since Streaan doesn't emphasize assignments and marks, and asks students to reflect on themselves, he knows he's asking a lot of students. For some undergraduates, who are used to a traditional teaching model, it can be tough. "I think, for some of them, it's uncomfortable that I'm not playing that game with them," says Streaan.

But he's committed to helping students grow, which is ultimately far more important than grades. Streaan believes that teaching is about helping students understand concepts – but also themselves. After all, university teachers need to prepare students for their lives beyond convocation. "The more self-aware and congruent you are, the more effective you'll be in communicating," he says.

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 should be sent each year to the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) on the first working day of December (i.e. **December 1, 2011**).

* An information session for the McCalla Professorship will be held on November 3, 2011 in Council Chambers at 2:00 pm.

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 13, 2012**.

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: professional development (in the area of teaching and learning) and projects or research. Applications for funding for professional development are accepted on a continual basis. The deadline for funding for projects or research is **February 1, 2012**.

An information session for the TLEF will be held on November 22, 2011 in Council Chambers from 9:30 – 11:00 AM.

NEW DESIRE2LEARN INNOVATION AWARD

STLHE and Desire2Learn Incorporated invite submissions for the inaugural Desire2Learn Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning. This award recognizes innovative approaches that promote learning in new ways at post-secondary institutions.

Awards are open to all instructors currently teaching at a post-secondary institution, regardless of discipline, level, or term of appointment. The deadline for this award is **February 29, 2012**.

AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE:

The deadline to submit nominations is **February 24, 2012**

RUTHERFORD AWARD

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.

PROVOST'S AWARD FOR EARLY ACHIEVEMENT

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.

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.

WILLIAM HARDY ALEXANDER AWARD

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.

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.



ACADEMIC AWARDS AND CEREMONIES OFFICE

With the support of the campus community, we have added numerous new awards that University of Alberta faculty members have received to our website, www.ualberta.ca/academicawards. If you have received an award and your accomplishment is not celebrated on our website, please contact us so that we may recognize your achievement.

NEED HELP WITH A TEACHING AWARD NOMINATION?

For more information or assistance with an academic award nomination, please contact Bobbi Schiestel, Faculty Awards Facilitator, at 780.492.2644 or via email at bobbi.schiestel@ualberta.ca.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR AND STUDENT AWARDS

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