

Profile: Hayley Wan, 2013 Chemistry Outstanding Teaching Support Award Winner

Q: What was the first thing that went through your head when you won the Outstanding Teaching Support Award?

When Jill came down to my office to tell me, my response before she said anything was, 'Uh-oh . . . what did I do now?' (Just joking around.) I actually thought she was there to tell me that the person I nominated for the Booster award had won. I was pretty surprised when she informed me that I had won the Teaching Support Award.

Q: Did you do something to celebrate your win?

I celebrated with a snowshoeing and skiing weekend in Jasper.

Q: How did you get your job as Lab Coordinator?

After graduating with my PhD in 2003, I came to the UofA for a postdoctoral fellowship in Professor Fred West's group. I spent 2 years in the Chemistry Department before accepting a Technical Officer position at the National Research Council (NINT) for 1.5 years. This was followed by a move back to the UofA and academia as a Research Associate to work as part of an interdisciplinary research team within AFNS. These last two positions provided me with management and leadership skills that have become extremely useful in my current position. After a short period with WISEST as Assistant Coordinator, I applied for the organic laboratory director position.

Q: What is the biggest challenge in your job?

Trying to teach students organic chemistry and at the same time make it an enjoyable and fun learning experience. I think collaboration on the TLEF project between Dennis, Nada, Chunyan and I to develop the Virtu-O-Chem tutorials have helped quite a lot.

Q: What is the coolest part of your job?

I like that every day in this job is different – it can be so varied from day-to-day with respect to situations that arise, my daily duties and the people that I encounter. I have the opportunity to meet and interact with so many interesting people on a daily basis. I am also very lucky to be able to work with and manage a great team of people like Nada and the teaching assistants. On occasion, I do have to deal with some difficult people and situations . . . but that is part of the job and can result in some interesting stories! This job has a number of different roles, in addition to teaching and ensuring that labs run smoothly. For example, there is the management, mentoring, and professional development of teaching assistants, as well as opportunities to collaborate with TAs and faculty on curriculum development and chemical education research projects. I find myself always busy, which means my job is never boring!

Q: Is there one thing you'd like to tell those in your lab classes?

If so, what would that be? Don't take chemistry personally – you have good days and you have bad days. Try not to stress too much, take a deep breath and move on. Tomorrow is another day!

Q: What have the past few years taught you?

The last few years have taught me that no matter how stressful the job, it is important to enjoy what you are doing and the people around you, as well as take time for yourself once in a while. It also helps to have a great team of people to work with and an excellent support network.

Q: One thing about you that most people don't know about?

I actually wanted to be an artist when I was younger!

Q: Five things you can't live without?

1) Family and Friends, 2) The Mountains, 3) My hiking boots, 4) Rice, 5) Laughter

Q: Is there anything you would like to add?

I would like to thank the chemistry department and my nominators, as well as family and friends for their constant support and keeping me sane-(ish).