For almost three decades, the 3M National Teaching Fellowships have celebrated outstanding university teachers at Canadian institutions. This year, four professors at the U of A joined the ranks, bringing the university's total to 38 – the highest number at any Canadian institution.

In fact, the U of A is also the only institution to have had four faculty members receive the prestigious award in a single year. In 2012, for the second time, the U of A claims four of the 10 award recipients as its own.

Here's a snapshot of this year's winners.

**DR. SARAH FORGIE, PEDIATRICS**

Last summer, Dr. Sarah Forgie decided to take up the ukulele – not as a hobby, but a teaching tool.

After months of practicing, she found the chords for the Talking Heads' “Psycho Killer,” matched them to lyrics she'd written about infectious diseases, and performed it in class. It was a hit.

This wasn't a new tack for Forgie. The pediatrics professor has been known to bring a jazz band to class and wear zany outfits to match different microorganisms.

Forgie wants to create 'memory hangers' – sensory cues that help students synthesize and apply information. “After all of my own med school experiences, I found that what stuck with me was taught by teachers who did something a little different.”

Research shows that creative teaching helps students remember - but it also helps them engage. As Forgie learned from other UAlberta teachers, “Just being passionate inspires passion in students.”

**DR. CHUCK LUCY, CHEMISTRY**

Even in a class of 400, Dr. Chuck Lucy tries to remember his students' names.

It's ambitious, but the long-time chemistry professor thinks it's critical to connect with students so they, in turn, connect with the course material. “It makes the class environment safer for students. They're not afraid to answer a question out loud. It also makes the class more engaging in that they want to be there,” he says.

Lucy avoids the class university lecture, preferring to have students solve problems in class or encouraging class discussion. He's also a fan of in-class demonstrations to show chemistry at work in the world. Recently, he dropped Mentos candies into Coke, as many of us did on the playground as kids. Students were surprised to learn that the resulting eruption demonstrates “heterogenous catalysis,” says Lucy: “I like to take things students are familiar with and have them look at it again through the eyes of a chemist.”
DR. TONI SAMEK, LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

Dr. Toni Samek considers herself an educator, above all else. “I love being in the classroom. Some people come out of a class and feel tired, but I’m the opposite. I might go in tired, but I come out wired.”

She figures that earning the 3M Fellowship is, to a large degree, the result of fortunate circumstances. “I think I’ve benefited from Cadillac teaching conditions at the U of A and I think that enables me to be a good teacher,” says Samek.

Privilege is a major theme in Samek’s teaching, research and service work. In the classroom, Samek reminds students that a university education – and intellectual freedom generally – is a gift. Many people on earth don’t have the same opportunity.

For Samek, teaching and learning is fundamentally connected with service to the community, and she hopes to inspire her students to use their education to make a difference.

“In addition to quality graduate teaching, I’m committed to providing a broader education that engages students as citizens,” she says.

DR. CONNIE VARNHAGEN, PSYCHOLOGY

For Dr. Connie Varnhagen, teaching is a fundamental part of being human. “Teaching is just what we do. It’s how you share your life experiences with other people. It’s how other people come to know you,” she says.

As a university teacher, Varnhagen is passionate about helping her students truly engage with the material. She encourages students to be active participants in their own learning.

In both large and small classes, she asks students to solve problems together and engage in class discussions. In one psychology class, she challenges students to graph the emotions of the Seven Dwarfs and present their findings. Students passionately debate their solutions: "It gets loud and boisterous."

Varnhagen sees her teaching skills as a work in progress and is driven to find new and better ways to engage students. “I love helping other people learn how to learn, and become life-long learners.”
ROBERT FOSTER CHERRY AWARD FOR GREAT TEACHING

The Cherry Award program is designed to honour great teachers, to stimulate discussion in the academy about the value of teaching, and to encourage departments and institutions to value their own great teachers.

Outstanding professors in the English-speaking world who are distinguished for their ability to communicate as classroom teachers are eligible for the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching. Individuals nominated for the award should have a proven record as an extraordinary teacher with a positive, inspiring, and long-lasting effect on students, along with a record of distinguished scholarship. The nomination deadline is November 1, 2012.

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.

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TRADITIONAL FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR AWARDS

The Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program offers a unique opportunity to explore important contemporary issues relevant to Canada and the United States and the relationship between the two countries. Traditional Fulbright Scholar Awards are intended for candidates who wish to conduct research, to teach or to undertake a combination of both activities at an academic institution of their choice in the United States.

Post-doctoral researchers, emerging and established faculty members, as well as experienced professionals are eligible to apply for a Fulbright award. Candidates must have obtained a Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree by December 31, 2012 or have equivalent professional experience. As well candidates must be a Canadian citizen at the time of application. The deadline to apply for the Traditional Fulbright Scholar Awards is November 15, 2012 (for awards tenable in September 2013 or January 2014).

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ACADEMIC AWARDS AND CEREMONIES OFFICE

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

Need help with an academic award nomination? For more information or assistance with a teaching award nomination, please contact Laura Connell, Acting Faculty Awards Facilitator, at 780.492.2644 or via email at laura.connell@ualberta.ca.