

Keeping it Real

This year's Alumni Teaching Fellows inspire their students to learn by doing—in and out of the classroom. *By STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER '05 MFA Lib*



CREATED BY AN ENDOWED GIFT from the Alumni Association, the Alumni Teaching Fellow Award provides a cash grant and a stipend to enhance undergraduate instruction in the recipient's academic department. Here are this year's winners:

LAURA ROTUNNO

Laura Rotunno, associate professor of English at Penn State Altoona, has one main goal: to inspire students to actively engage with what they read and write.

Students in Rotunno's honors freshman composition course got a dramatic lesson in this when they joined her in a partnership with the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County. Students wrote abstracts for some of the hun-

dreds of interviews with victims' families, first responders, and others involved in the tragedy, conducted as part of the Flight 93 National Memorial project. These abstracts, which bear the students' names, will clarify to researchers the type of information each interview contains.

For students, the project illuminated many of the principles Rotunno discusses in class, including the necessity of revision. "They

recognized writing as this great responsibility," she says. "They wanted to get it right."

LYNETTE KVASNY

Technology is ubiquitous in the lives of college students, says Lynette Kvasny, associate professor of information sciences and technology at University Park. But it's not enough for her students to just consume technology—she wants them to create it.

Kvasny's own research explores technology's effects on developing countries, minority-owned businesses, and other underrepresented groups; her research seeps into nearly all of her courses.

In a recent course, students designed databases for a program that recycles and redistributes computers in Philadelphia. Her students managed inventory and tracked repairs. "They're still learning," Kvasny says, "but they're building systems that are useful to a real-world organization."

JENNIFER WOOD

Jennifer Wood, associate professor of communication arts and sciences at Penn State New Kensington, helps students find their voices, both on paper and aloud.

In her conflict resolution course, students are even encouraged to help shape what is typically a no-man's-land for students: the course syllabus. On the first day of class, students collaborate to create the attendance policy. "It's the practices of conflict resolution put into play," Wood says.

Wood also teaches her students how to listen to others and offer useful feedback. She strives to create a comfortable classroom environment—crucial in speech classes, where many students are already nervous. It's a feeling Wood understands all too well, as she also suffers from stage fright. "I know how terrifying and unnerving it can be," she says. "But I also know that the only way to deal with it is to just keep doing it."

Generosity By Association

In April, the For the Future fundraising campaign surpassed the \$2 billion mark and made university history—thanks, in part, to the Alumni Association and its members. Alumni Association members gave a total of **\$799.7 million**, which accounts for 90 percent of all alumni campaign gifts. The Alumni Association itself provided another \$2.7 million, mostly in Trustee Matching Scholarships; alumni chapters and other affiliate groups donated more than \$3.2 million for endowed scholarships. —MM