

2008 DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dr. George R. Goethals II, Professor of Leadership Studies and The E. Claiborne Robins

Distinguished Professor in Leadership Studies: A fellow faculty member describes Dr. George (Al) Goethals this way: “Although he has been teaching for close to 40 years, he approaches every class and every student he teaches with zeal and vigor as if he were the assistant professor stepping foot on campus for the first time.” A Jepson student writes, “No [student] ever wanted to miss class, and if you did you regretted it because it is so engaging, thought provoking and helpful....” Beyond the traditional classroom, Professor Goethals brings the courses he teaches to life by conducting field trips to Monticello and Ash Lawn for his Presidential Leadership class and to battlefields for his Civil War Leadership course. He demonstrates his connection with students through his commitment to teaching new courses and mentoring students in their independent studies, so much so that his students started the “Al Goethals for President” *Facebook* page. Dr. Goethals holds the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professorship in Leadership Studies; and is author or co-author of approximately 100 articles and chapters, as well as several books and edited collections, including the highly influential *Encyclopedia of Leadership* and *The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership*. Long recognized as an international authority in social psychology, Professor Goethals continues to publish groundbreaking work – particularly on the presidency – at an astounding pace. Additionally, he has ably served the School of Leadership Studies and the University on numerous committees. The University is pleased to recognize Dr. Al Goethals, a model teacher-scholar and University citizen, as a Distinguished Educator.

Dr. April L. Hill, Associate Professor of Biology and The Coston Family Fellow in Molecular

Biology: Integrating teaching methods and combining them with her passion for the material, Dr. April Hill engages, excites and stimulates student interest in the sciences. Students describe her as “demanding” and “challenging” while simultaneously stating that she is “awesome” and “amazing”. Professor Hill is recognized as a superb mentor for undergraduate research students, treating them as research peers and scholars as they participate in her research. Her student researchers have co-authored manuscripts which have been submitted to and published in high-impact, peer-reviewed journals. Believing that collaboration is crucial for making meaningful contributions to science, Dr. Hill has developed outstanding collaborations with international, national, and University of Richmond colleagues thereby providing her students with opportunities to experience integrations of scientific disciplines. Highly productive and successful in seeking grant funding for her research, Dr. Hill received funds from the Jeffress Memorial Trust, the Merck/AAAS Undergraduate Science Research Program, and the National Science Foundation in the last year alone. Her interest in interdisciplinary science education led Dr. Hill to become heavily involved in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute initiative for an integrated introductory science course for majors along with upper level cross-disciplinary courses. Professor Hill’s experience, perspective, and wisdom are frequently sought by others. She has ably served on various science and University committees; and as an academic advisor to undeclared majors, as well as Biology, and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology majors. In summary, Dr. April Hill is a valued colleague and teacher-scholar who represents her department and the University in an exemplary fashion.

Mr. John Paul Jones, Professor of Law: A pillar of the Law School for over 25 years, Professor John Paul Jones has had a profound impact on the success of the Law School and its students. As one of the law students’ most beloved professors, he has worked tirelessly with students in preparing for, and successfully competing in, the National Admiralty Moot Court Competition, which resulted in another National Championship Trophy this year. Professor Jones has been instrumental in building Richmond Law’s clerkship program, exhibiting an uncanny knack for getting coveted judicial clerkships for our

students. He created the Essay Contest Catalog which has opened doors for Richmond Law students to compete and excel in national writing competitions. His work in creating and maintaining the “Constitution Finder” -- the Internet’s most extensive and up-to-date collection of constitutions from around the world—has brought the Richmond School of Law national and international recognition. Additionally, Professor Jones has served as a constitutional advisor to emerging democracies including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Ukraine. He served as editor of the nationally prominent *Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce* from 2001 to 2005, and currently serves as its associate editor. Professor Jones does all this while teaching and lecturing at various national venues, submitting amicus briefs to the United States Supreme Court, and writing articles. Professor Jones’s commitment to the Law School makes his receipt of the University Distinguished Educator Award for the second time both hard-earned and well-deserved.

Dr. Michael C. Leopold, Associate Professor of Chemistry: Dr. Michael Leopold is known among students for his approachability, availability, friendliness, and willingness to spend time helping them understand and master difficult subject content, even late into the night. One student noted, “Dr. Leopold’s class was challenging, but his approach to teaching prevented inherently difficult course material from becoming overwhelming; this approach kept students involved, engaged and highly motivated to learn.” Students hold him in such high regard that Dr. Leopold was recognized by Omicron Delta Kappa as “Professor of the Year” in 2007. Students benefit from Dr. Leopold’s research program in bioanalytical chemistry involving nanomaterials. External researchers recognize him as an “advancing ... national leader in the electrochemical community” and that “the educational impact of [his] research is simply world class.” Of the 23 Richmond undergraduates who have worked in his research lab, 16 have been co-authors on papers, presentations, or posters. Dr. Leopold has distinguished himself as a valuable colleague through his service on departmental committees, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant steering group, and the University’s General Education Committee. He has been particularly effective as a member of the Richmond Scholars Committee, recruiting exceptional science students through his ability to connect with prospective students. Dr. Leopold serves as an advisor for undeclared students, but also makes himself available to an equally large group of “informal advisees” who are drawn to his caring commitment to students. Dr. Leopold has proven himself to be an exceptional teacher, a motivating mentor of undergraduates in research, a productive scholar, and a valued colleague.

Dr. Mari Lee Mifsud, Associate Professor of Rhetoric: As an Associate Professor of Rhetoric, Dr. Mari Lee Mifsud’s teaching focuses on Classical, Medieval, and contemporary rhetorical themes, topics students generally have trouble warming to and grasping. Her zeal for teaching is evidence by the ways in which she helps student decipher difficult texts, explore complex arguments, and take on challenging problems. Students appreciate Dr. Mifsud’s passion for her discipline, stating “She is more concerned with overall growth than instant knowledge” and “She calls us ‘scholars’ and in her class I felt like one.” As an active scholar whose essays have been published in top-level journals and scholarly books, Dr. Mifsud is adept at drawing her own research and writing projects into the heart of her classes. She commits a great deal of time and energy to mentoring dozens of students in independent and collaborative research. Dr. Mifsud is highly regarded by rhetoric scholar peers, having served in prestigious association positions and participated on panels of renowned scholars in the field. In addition to being a teacher/scholar, Dr. Mifsud has served as Chair of the Department of Rhetoric and Communication Studies since 2006; been a member of several University committees including the Common Ground Action Group, University Faculty Council, University Scholars, and PETE; and for many years has served as an academic advisor to undeclared students as well as majors. For her dedication to teaching and instilling the love of learning in her students; active and engaged scholarship; and commitment as a University citizen, Dr. Mari Lee Mifsud is presented the Distinguished Educator Award.

Dr. Daniel M. Roberts, Jr., Associate Professor of Liberal Arts: When people ask Professor Daniel Roberts what he does at the University of Richmond, he answers “I do history.” This simple answer captures his unique role as a public historian, classroom teacher, and program and curricula developer. Since 1994 Dr. Roberts has promoted his discipline and showcased the University of Richmond through *A Moment in Time*, a radio program which reaches over seven million people daily with the message that history is interesting, vibrant, and important to their lives. This scholarship of outreach directly links with the classroom -- the integration of *A Moment in Time* with the on-campus classroom engages Professor Roberts’ students each semester in performing historical research that will be used to teach others. Dr. Roberts’ dedication to outreach additionally shapes his interest in curriculum development. He serves as chair of the Liberal Arts Program, and oversaw the creation of the innovative and interdisciplinary Weekend College Program, an accelerated degree completion program for adults. An extremely capable classroom teacher, Professor Roberts has taught both traditional-age and adult students in the Schools of Continuing Studies and Arts & Sciences. One student said of Dr. Roberts, “I have never experienced a more knowledgeable and talented professor ... He was one of the best, most challenging, and intellectually stimulating teachers I ever had.” Professor Roberts furthers his commitment to the University as a representative to the University Faculty Council and Senate; and representing the School of Continuing Studies and the University at numerous local and national external functions and media appearances. The University is pleased to recognize Dr. Daniel Roberts as a Distinguished Educator.

Dr. Robert M. Schmidt, Professor of Economics: For his entire career, Dr. Robert Schmidt has taught Business Statistics and Econometrics, two quantitative and challenging classes that are not typically approached with eagerness by students. He has achieved a remarkable blend of rigor and enthusiasm coupled with a sensitivity for his students’ anxieties in these subject areas. Students appreciate Professor Schmidt’s spirit of caring for their well being and success, both in the classroom and beyond, saying he is “very warm hearted and friendly” and “always approachable and receptive.” As a well-regarded scholar in the area of demography, Dr. Schmidt has published numerous articles in some of the most prestigious journals in this field; however, he is most appreciated by his colleagues for his willingness to lend his time and expertise to others. Dr. Schmidt has co-authored papers with several members of the Economics Department, and is perennially sought after by the honors students to guide them through the econometric aspects of thesis work. His service contributions at the departmental, Business School, and University levels are exemplary. At the Business School, Professor Schmidt has served as Department Chair since 2001; as chair of the Full Professors Committee and the Tenured Faculty Committee; and as coordinator of student evaluations of faculty. At the University level, he serves as the University Faculty Secretary, is a member of the Committee on Committees, and has recently served on two important A&S *ad hoc* committees. Dr. Robert Schmidt is a selfless and effective teacher, serving as an important mentor and role model to our students.

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