Summaries of 2012 Distinguished Educator Award Recipients

Bertram (Bert) Ashe, Associate Professor of English and American Studies
Dr. Ashe has been tremendously creative in developing new courses and helping transform the Richmond curriculum. Recently he created and organized the English Department’s wildly successful NEH course and lecture series, which involved an interdisciplinary course on “Blurred Boundaries” with six guest speakers and a class trip to New York. Students applaud Dr. Ashe for his dedication and passion and for the way he pushes and challenges them. One student summed up the opinions of many when she wrote to Dr. Ashe, “You showed me that college wasn’t all about what happened on Saturday night, but instead college was about asking questions, thinking critically, and engaging with the kinds of issues which have been pondered by humanity for hundreds of thousands of years.” Dr. Ashe’s scholarship is of the highest quality. His colleagues note that the way he draws his readers into his subject matter is similar to the way he disarms and captivates his students. He is currently working on two books, has recently published essays in significant collections on Jazz and Blues Influences in African American Literature and Film and on Barack Obama’s autobiography, and has edited a special issue of the African American Review. A model University citizen, Dr. Ashe is coordinator of the American Studies Program. In this role, he is working to develop curricular programming and co-curricular events around a theme, and is creating exciting opportunities for a thriving learning community in American Studies.

Henry (Hank) Chambers, Professor of Law
Whether he is addressing law students, lawyers, academics, or K-12 educators, Professor Chambers is the consummate teacher. He has developed multiple areas of expertise, teaching courses from Employment Discrimination to Voting Rights to Law and Economics. He is a challenging professor, and students frequently comment on his ability both to push them to learn the law and to train them for the practice of law. One student noted that “Anybody can memorize laws and tests, and most people can understand the thought process behind the law, but Professor Chambers’ students learn to understand the practical application of the law to the myriad facts of life.” Professor Chambers extends his teaching excellence beyond our law school. He regularly teaches K-12 educators about the Constitution and the law to improve their ability to incorporate these subjects in their classrooms. He has taught federal judicial clerks, appellate court attorneys, and Congressional legislative staffers, and he is a sought-after speaker because of his remarkable teaching and presentation skills. Professor Chambers’ scholarship also includes many areas of the law, and his work has been published in leading journals and book collections. His recognition as a national scholar is evidenced by his selection as a member of the American Law Institute. Professor Chambers has provided extraordinary service and leadership to the Law School, the University, and his profession by chairing numerous committees, including the Law School’s curriculum committee, University Faculty Council, and the Section on the Education of Lawyers of the Virginia State Bar.

Dr. Dean Croushore, Professor of Economics and Rigsby Fellow
Dr. Croushore joined the Economics Department after a distinguished career at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. The epitome of the teacher-scholar, Dr. Croushore engages his students in experiential learning and integrates research into every course he teaches. He
requires that each student get his or her hands dirty by working directly with macroeconomic data, giving them insights into the economy that students miss when they only look at data in the context of theory without actively manipulating the data. In the words of one student, “Learning econ from Dr. Croushore is like learning basketball from Michael Jordan.” That is, students get to learn from someone who has been on the front lines of discussions about monetary policy. He regularly invites prominent guest lecturers to his classes and facilitates interactions between his students and nationally known economists. He mentors honors students and independent research students and has collaborated with over a dozen students in developing a real-time dataset that is posted on the Philadelphia Fed’s website and is widely used in macroeconomic policy research. Dr. Croushore has a national reputation in macroeconomics, having done seminal work in building real-time macroeconomic databases and demonstrating their value in policy analysis. His scholarship has been published in top journals and has been cited over 1,300 times. A leader in the Robins School of Business and in the wider University community, Dr. Croushore has developed innovative courses, served as department chair, and recently served as chair of University Faculty Council.

**Dr. Jennifer Erkulwater, Associate Professor of Political Science**

Whether meeting with a City Council Representative to talk about how her students can help shape policy to revitalize the district, working with students to collect data about challenges faced by the poor and the agencies that help them, or working on her scholarship on political participation, Dr. Erkulwater is focused on the goal of helping students understand how intellectual work manifests in policy implementation. She is an outstanding teacher and a leader in developing and implementing rigorous community-based learning courses at the University. In her Poverty and Political Voice course, Dr. Erkulwater exposes her students to a variety of intellectual explanations for poverty and ideological approaches to solving the problem of poverty. Students partner with numerous agencies in the Highland Park neighborhood and work directly on the critical issues of work and family life, crime and violence, children and schools, and health and the lived environment. Students are quick to praise Dr. Erkulwater for the excellent learning environment she creates for them. Dr. Erkulwater is the author of *Disability Rights and the American Social Safety Net* and co-author of *Medicating Children: ADHD and Pediatric Mental Health*. In drawing on her research in her teaching, she demonstrates to her students the importance of applying critical thinking and analysis to social problems and public policy.

**Dr. Lidia Radi, Associate Professor, Department of Modern Literatures and Cultures**

Dr. Radi has had an extraordinary impact on students in three different academic programs—French, Italian, and Renaissance Studies—as well as on dozens of students who have taken part in her residential programming and mentoring as Director of the “Moore International” living and learning community. In her first five years at Richmond, she taught 23 sections of 16 different courses in three languages, and she has regularly mentored students completing funded research projects. Whether teaching a beginning Italian course or an advanced French Literature class, Dr. Radi inspires her students. She is demanding, relentless, passionate, and dedicated. As one student states, “I never encountered a professor so deeply committed to our University’s goal of creating a true, integrated living and learning environment—an environment that allowed me to flourish as an intellectual, but also as an empathetic, open-minded individual.” Dr. Radi recently completed her work on a critical edition of *Le penser de royal memoire* by Guillaume
Michel, dit de Tours, and it will be published this year by the most prestigious publisher of Renaissance studies in France. Dr. Radi has been praised as a “leading specialist in the area of renaissance studies on a national and international level” and her work has been lauded for its “vast erudition.” Dr. Radi serves as the coordinator of the Italian Studies program, as a President’s College Associate and Faculty Fellow in Moore Hall, and as a member of the Undergraduate Research Committee.

Dr. Patricia Strait, Associate Professor, School of Professional and Continuing Studies
Dr. Strait serves as the chair of both the undergraduate and graduate programs in human resource management in the School of Professional and Continuing Studies. She is an excellent classroom teacher, a productive scholar, and an enthusiastic University citizen. Students at all levels—from graduate students in human resource management to students in her First Year Seminar course—praise Dr. Strait’s passion for and knowledge of the topics she teaches and her ability to challenge them to reach their potential. Dr. Strait’s colleagues note that her most extraordinary contributions are in two areas—the internationalization of the SPCS curriculum and the engagement of students in substantial research activity. She created the first study abroad opportunities for adult students in SPCS with programs in Spain, Mexico, and Ireland; she developed five courses with an international component; and she brought the Culture and Languages Across the Curriculum program to SPCS. This past year Dr. Strait co-authored three conference papers with three different students, one of which was accepted for publication. She has created a Directed Research course to provide graduate students a special opportunity to pursue research opportunities, and she regularly serves as advisor to students completing their theses. Dr. Strait is tireless in her service to her students, her school, and the University community, as evidenced by her service on numerous committees and task groups across the University.

Dr. Thaddeus (Thad) Williamson, Associate Professor of Leadership Studies
Dr. Williamson is a transforming presence in the lives of students at the University. Through his courses in the Jepson School, his first-year seminars, and his public and community-based learning efforts, he embodies the very best of a teacher-scholar who provides rigorous training in the classroom and helps students make the connection between ideas and social action. Students praise Dr. Williamson as a superb teacher who effectively integrates theory, empirical research, and student experience. They note that he has extremely high expectations for them, yet he goes beyond reasonable expectations for helping students achieve. One of Dr. Williamson’s most important contributions in the area of teaching is his leadership of the required course Justice and Civil Society. Teaching this course well requires the ability to present normative theory and social analysis and to appreciate and integrate experiential learning into high-level debates about political theory and public policy. Dr. Williamson is a master at this juggling act. Dr. Williamson is an extraordinarily productive scholar whose teaching and research are inextricably linked. His book on Sprawl, Justice and Citizenship has been praised as “original, rigorous, and socially important” and as “courageous in the extreme.” In addition, Dr. Williamson has two co-edited books that appeared this year, one on John Rawls and property-owning democracy and one on leadership and global justice. Dr. Williamson is a diligent University citizen, serving on countless committees, particularly focused on community-oriented work.