



## **2003 Madison Scholar Awards**

Work with quarks, budding playwrights, neural network modeling and learning disabilities have earned some JMU professors top university honors as Madison Scholars this year. JMU confers the Madison Scholar award upon professors who have demonstrated excellence and scholarly achievement in their respective disciplines. Professors are nominated by their colleagues, and then one is selected to represent each of JMU's five colleges. All full-time professors who have taught at the rank of assistant professor or above for at least five years are eligible for this prestigious award. This year's Madison Scholars are:

### **Kevin L. Giovanetti**

Physics professor Kevin L. Giovanetti, came to JMU in 1989, and says that he "was very excited when he arrived and found himself in an environment that was passionate about teaching and research." Giovanetti calls his colleagues in the College of Science and Mathematics "excellent scientists and excellent teachers" and praises the college for its "support, encouragement and high expectations."

Giovanetti came to JMU in 1989 as a founding member of the CLAS collaboration at the Jefferson Lab, which provides the high-energy probe he uses to explore the interactions of quarks in the proton, neutron and nucleus. After refining experiments and designing, testing and building instrumentation for the detector, the physicist helped record the first data from the CLAS in 1997. Recently Giovanetti and a team of JMU undergraduates have joined the MULAN research venture, with the goal of improving the value for  $G_f$ , a fundamental coupling constant, by measuring the lifetime of the positive muon.

"I am humbled by the expertise and prowess of many of the people that I work with," he says. "It is rewarding to participate in collaborations with outstanding scientists."

### **Esther Minskoff**

This is the second time Esther Minskoff, professor of special education, has been named a Madison Scholar. She also received the honor in 1992. Minskoff has been teaching full time at JMU since 1978 and has been a member of the College of Education. Her career has spanned the major developments of the special education field and she has been integrally involved with most of them.

Minskoff recently published a book on instructional strategies for high school students with learning disabilities. *Academic Success Strategies for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities and ADHD* is an example of her passion for education, as is her involvement in two federally-funded research projects awarded by the Department of Education. She directed a project to design specialized instruction for college students with learning disabilities, and she is currently the project director for field-testing a Web site designed to teach learning strategies to high school students with learning disabilities.

Minskoff says, "engaging in scholarship informs my teaching and makes me a better teacher, and playing a part in providing an outstanding education for individuals, be they college students or children with disabilities, has been professionally and personally fulfilling."

### **Roger Hall**

After earning his A.B. from Princeton and an M.A. and Ph.D from Ohio State University, Roger Hall came to JMU in 1975 to work in the theater department. During his 28 years at JMU, Hall has been the faculty member in residence for semesters in London and Florence, and has worked with "excellent

student playwrights," he says, and stays in touch with many of JMU's most successful screenwriting alumni in Hollywood.

As a Madison Scholar, Hall will deliver a speech next year about the lasting impact of drama about the American frontier. Hall has also earned the JMU Distinguished Teaching Award and a Kennedy Center Medallion for his work with student playwrights. He has also published a playwriting book, *Writing Your First Play*, and directed 50 productions ranging from Shakespeare to musicals to outdoor drama. He serves on the Kennedy Center American College Festival National Selection Team.

## **Susan W. Palocsay**

As a Madison Scholar, computer information systems professor Susan W. Palocsay will deliver a lecture next fall about her research with neural network modeling, emphasizing applications and comparisons with traditional statistical methods.

Having completed her 13th year of teaching at JMU, in addition to the years she spent here as an undergraduate, Palocsay fondly recalls "a collection of special memories from interactions with students I've worked with and seen grow intellectually."

Palocsay says, "Winning a Madison Scholar award and recognition by your colleagues for your research endeavors is truly an honor." She has also been honored over the years with the 2002 College of Business Distinguished Teacher award and a national award for her dissertation. Holding true to her motto that "nothing worthwhile is ever easy," she cites her most significant professional accomplishments as the completion of her doctoral degree, earning tenure and her promotion to full-time professor, which she believes are the crowning achievements of anyone in academia.

## **Sheena J. Roger**

Sheena J. Rogers, professor of psychology, also received a 2003 Madison Scholar award and declined to be interviewed.

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