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*Distinguished Teachers for 2005: (l-r) include Carol A. Hurney, Sharon Babcock, Karen A. Ford, Pam Johnson and Alexander Gabbin. (Not pictured Diane L. Foucar-Szocki).*

## **Distinguished teachers and students honored at 2005 James Madison Day**

*Story by Nicole Maier (Ö05)*

*Their passion for teaching and seeing their students grow in positive ways before them inspires and connects these six outstanding professors from different colleges. The Distinguished Teacher Award, established in 1981, recognizes professors who have had five years or more service at JMU and demonstrate exemplary teaching.*

### **Sharon K. Babcock**

ÒTeaching has been a passion of mine since the first day of class as an undergraduate teaching assistant in the comparative anatomy lab (University of Oklahoma),Ó says Sharon K. Babcock, Professor of Biology who came to JMU in 1993. ÒI share this award with my former teachers and mentors at my undergraduate (OU) and graduate (Duke) institutions, as well as my colleagues

in the College of Science & Mathematics. They are the inspiration to take the extra risk and to go the extra mile.

After receiving her undergraduate degree in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma in 1986, Babcock went to Duke University where she worked as a graduate teaching assistant while earning her graduate degree. In 2003, she taught a six-week course at the Kathmandu University Medical School in Banepa, Nepal. There she was awarded Best Foreign Faculty, Teacher of the Year award. She has also been recognized for her excellence in teaching with awards from groups such as Delta Delta Delta and Alpha Phi Omega and in 1997 was the recipient of the American Fellow, Post-doctoral Summer Faculty Award given by the Educational Foundation of American Association of University Women.

The accomplishments of her students are what Babcock finds most rewarding about her job. "I have had the joy and honor of being a very small part of many wonderful lives," says Babcock. "I cherish the unexpected "surprise" emails that arrive, seemingly randomly, from students who take the time to share an experience, an idea, or the joy of reaching an academic or professional goal."

## **Diane L. Foucar-Szocki**

"I am humbled by the award," says Diane L. Foucar-Szocki, professor of adult education and human resources development in the College of Education, "as the faculty in the College of Education are among the best teachers to be found at JMU."

The professor concentrates much of her time on the administration of Adult Education Resource Development, a program that promotes learning and development in settings where adults work. Foucar-Szocki works with the Workforce Improvement Network, which offers training to better employee performances in the workforce and the Adult Degree Program. "Building effective communities where lifelong learning thrives motivates me daily," says Foucar-Szocki. "To be recognized for doing that which gives me life is both thrilling and validating. I am so grateful."

## **Alexander L. Gabbin**

"The single most significant factor in my decision to come to JMU was the people," says Dr. Alexander L. Gabbin, Professor of Accounting. "JMU seemed like a very special place in terms of community and teaching/research opportunities." Gabbin received his B.A. from Howard University in Washington, D.C., his MBA at the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. at Temple University in Philadelphia. Prior to coming to JMU in 1985, he taught at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Gabbin holds the honor of being a two time recipient of the Lincoln University Accounting Outstanding Teacher Award and four time receiver of JMU's Outstanding Teacher in Accounting Award. Gabbin assists with NAAA's Franklin D. Watkins Annual Award program which encourages high school athletes to be role models for underachieving minority student. He also works closely with a number of programs which encourage young minorities to pursue continuing education.

"Without question, I am most pleased with the correspondence I receive

from former students several years after they have graduated," says Gabbin. "It is difficult to describe the effect this has when someone cares about what you were trying to do and says "thank you" in this way."

## **Pamela S. Johnson**

In 1974 when JMU was Madison College, Ms. Pamela S. Johnson, Professor of Theatre, joined the faculty as a design teacher. Johnson studied at Mary Washington and the University of Virginia where she received her B.A. in theatre and art and later earned her MFA in Art at JMU.

In 2004, Johnson was honored with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival "Outstanding Teacher" Award. This placed her in nomination for the national fellowship in Costume Design for the Kennedy Center Design Intensive, which she later won.

For Johnson, seeing her student, "achieve what they had not imagined themselves capable of, and watching them "learn," literally reading it on their faces, when they encounter new material," is one of the things she enjoys most about teaching. "After thirty years I am still learning and terrifically excited about learning," says Johnson. "Every project is a new opportunity to grow. Not many people I know can say that about a job they've been at that long."

## **Karen A. Ford**

Karen A. Ford, associate professor of Social Work in the College of Science and Mathematics was also a recipient of the distinguished teacher award. Karen Ford joined the social work faculty in 1996 coming from management and administration in the juvenile justice arena. She has worked in wilderness-based treatment programs as well as at the institutional, regional and community levels of juvenile corrections. She also taught middle school social studies.

Her undergraduate degree is in history and sociology from Emory & Henry College. She received her MSW from Virginia Commonwealth University with a concentration in planning and administration.

She has developed courses in non-profit management, international social work and multicultural practice. She has also developed a *Blackboard*-based course on immigration being taught at JMU and in Holland University in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Ford manages the JMU/Holland University Social Work exchange program. She is the JMU liaison for Influencing State Policy and takes students to Richmond and Washington regularly.

Ford is active in the community serving as president of the Office on Children and Youth board and on the NAACP organizing committee. Her research interests are in internationalizing social work education, policy education, service learning and social work and social welfare history.

## **Carol A. Hurney**

"I felt really happy," says Dr. Carol A. Hurney, assistant professor of biology, on earning the General Education Distinguished Teacher award given annually to faculty who show exceptional achievement in the area of teaching the university's core curriculum. "I still feel happy. I had the best group of

GSCI 103 students last semester and so I sort of feel like I won the award for them and for all the students I have taught here at JMU that were willing to put aside their preconceived ideas of a GenEd science class and let me take them to a new place, a place where they can understand biology.

Hurney received her bachelor's degree in biology at the University of Rochester in New York and was awarded the Graduate Teaching award while obtaining her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia. She continued to do post graduate work at Northwestern University School of Medicine before coming to JMU to spend a year teaching for the GenEd Program. In 1998, when a full time position opened, Hurney joined the Biology Department faculty.

I enjoy the moments when I am in the classroom with my students and I can tell by the look on a student's face that they understand," says Hurney. "When I see the light bulbs turn on inside of my student's eyes, then all of the hard work is worth it."

## ***Student honors presented at James Madison Day 2005***

### **Christopher John Carlson 2005 Faculty Award**

With the highest grade point average in his graduating class and having completed more than 100 credit hours, Christopher John Carlson is this year's recipient of the Faculty Award.

The senior from Danville, Pa., has enjoyed interacting with members of both the Physics Department and Honors Program. "It has been a very positive experience to be involved with the community of students and professors," says Carlson.

Within the university setting, Carlson has found time to explore his varied interests. "Another important part of my education at JMU is the space that I have had to develop as an artist and musician," says Carlson. "The few courses that I have taken in the arts in addition to outside opportunities to produce and share my work with others have been very important."

Carlson plans to continue his work, "in poetry, music, and visual art alongside the pursuit of interactive spaces." He hopes to combine his love of the arts with his major in physics to develop new electronics for music production and performances.

### **Priya Rajeev Naik 2005 Samuel Page Duke Award**

Maintaining the highest grade point average out of her junior class for five consecutive semesters, Priya Rajeev Naik is this year's recipient of the Samuel Page Duke Award, given in memory of the late president of James Madison University (1919-1949).

The Yorktown, Virginia native first fell in love with the university when visiting for All-State band auditions her senior year of high school. "People were so friendly and the campus was so beautiful, that when I went home I told my parents "The college search is over, JMU is where I want to go."

Naik is extremely pleased with her education at the university and plans

to continue her studies of technical communication in graduate school. "The best part about my education at JMU has been the professors," says Naik. "I cannot thank all of them enough for helping me to grow both academically and as a person. I am moved by their passion and knowledge for their subject material, and it has been an honor to learn from them."