



The art of making a difference

Music professor and visual resources curator earn 2004 JMU Alumni Association Awards

Story by Cheryl Lock ('05) and Lisa Freedman ('05)

The JMU Alumni Association honored two of Madison's own during the 2004 Homecoming Gala. The annual black tie gala celebrates Madison involvement by faculty, staff, alumni and friends of JMU. This year's honorees have made an art of making a difference.

Voice professor In Dal Choi was awarded the James Madison Distinguished Faculty Award for his outstanding career achievement and performances in operas and concerts around the world. Christina Updike ('73), visual resources curator in the School of Art and Art History, earned the James Madison Distinguished Service Award for her extensive volunteer service to Madison.

Voice professor In Dal Choi

In Dal Choi measures his success by his students' accomplishments. Three of those students repaid him by nominating him for the Distinguished Faculty Award. Amy Call ('98), Daniel Hoy ('00) and Jaimie Standish ('02) felt that Choi deserved such an award after helping each of them recognize their professional dreams.

"My students have gained professional success, including employment at New York City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Tanglewood Summer Music Festival, Theme Parks, the musicals, cruise ships and voice faculties at universities," says Choi

In fact, Choi points to one of his students as his biggest accomplishment. "Jaimie Standish ('02) was a finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council's Middle Region Competition when she was a sophomore," Choi says. "In the same year she was invited to sing with Tony Orlando at Taj Mahal in Atlantic City for Trump's New Years Eve Concert. Recently, she was employed in Japan's Tokyo Disney performing leading roles in Broadway musicals."

While Choi's students are finding various successes in their careers and moving forward, Choi's passion for music began early in life. "I was very much influenced by becoming involved in church Sunday School," says Choi. "Along with church choir I also took violin lessons, which landed me as a member of Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra as a violist before coming to the USA."

Choi graduated as a voice major from The Julliard School, received his doctorate from Indiana University and researched vocal pedagogical methods of different voice teachers by observing and participating in world-renowned voice teachers' master classes. He received his Master of Music from the Manhattan School of Music, and did special studies in Mozart Conservatorium in Germany. "My goal was becoming a performer," Choi says. "I performed in opera, oratorio and recitals at the Lincoln Center and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City earlier in my career."

Choi has taught at JMU since 1977. "I feel former president Dr. Carrier contributed greatly with

his vision quantitatively as well as in the quality of education and directions for future generations," Choi says. "JMU's academic standard and reputation is highly advanced now. I try to have students see ahead and set goals for long-term planning for their future starting from freshmen years. I give honest advice that students' parents would give to their own children for their future life in society."

From Julliard to the classroom to the stage, Choi has been successful in his endeavors, and his success and his students' success are proof.

"I would like to contribute not only to the JMU student population, but also in communities and wider global communities through music activity," he says.

"Dr. Choi taught me so much that goes far beyond the basics of music," says Standish. "His knowledge and his passion for music are what make him one step ahead of the rest. He cares about his students and works on a professional level with each student's individual needs. I'm glad he has been recognized for his excellent work and teaching."

Visual resources curator Tina Updike

Christina Beck Updike's dedication to Madison earned her the 2004 James Madison Distinguished Service Award. "Christina has been a valued employee of JMU for nearly 30 years and is one of JMU's most dedicated alums and boosters," says Cole Welter, director of the School of Art and Art History.

Updike ('73), and her husband Phil Updike ('73), generously funded the School of Art and Art History's first endowed professorship -- the Paul E. and Lillieanna P. Beck Professorship in Art and Art History. Christina also created JMU's Visual Resource Collection, a library of more than 100,000 visual images that serve the university. In 1997, Updike was recognized with the Visual Resources Association Distinguished Service Award.

Updike's dedication to JMU, her colleagues and her field is apparent in her long list of leadership roles, including chair of the JMU Employee Advisory Committee, chair of JMU's Employee Appreciation Day Steering Committee, international president of the Visual Resources Association, chair of the national Visual Resources Curators Organization and Virginia representative to the Southeast College Art Association Board of Directors.

"Christina served as the first chair of the Employee Appreciation Day Steering Committee, and has been highly influential in keeping the group moving it in a positive direction," says Richard Whitman, dean of the College of Arts and Letters. "This celebratory day is in its 10th year and is much anticipated by the entire university."

Updike also helped create the Madison Digital Image Database educational software that has revolutionized the use of digital images in and outside of the classroom. This tool is used by America's top universities and the program earned JMU its first grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. MDID has put JMU among the leaders in the use of digital images in teaching.

"Christina is one of JMU's most dedicated alumni and supporters," says Steve Smith, associate vice president for constituent relations. "The tireless efforts that she has put forth during her tenure at JMU have earned her this award for excellence and leadership."

Whitman adds, "Christina represents the very best of what it means to be a JMU Duke."