

**The Faculty Excellence Award in Mentoring** was established by a gift from the late Tom Carlson, Professor of Biology, and honors Professor Emeritus of Biology Art Gee who excelled as a mentor to colleagues and students in his many years of service on the faculty. This award recognizes the efforts of a faculty member who serves as a “personal or professional guide” to students or colleagues and who makes a profound difference in the lives of others as a role model, confidant, critic or co-learner. This year we honor Dr. Jason Skipper, Associate Professor of English.

Faculty colleagues praise Dr. Skipper’s dedication to meeting student needs and his passion for encouraging students to find their own creative voice. Jason cultivates a classroom atmosphere of trust and safety, and he possesses an exceptional ability to inform, suggest, and guide without overreaching, without dampening his students’ enthusiasm or optimism, and without any trace of ego. A former student noted his ability to connect with and meaningfully support students, especially those who might otherwise struggle to build connections with faculty members. The student wrote that, without Jason’s “counsel and input along the way, my life would look very different, and I suspect far less fulfilling than it has become thanks to his positive influence as a mentor.”

Another former student writes, “From that first day in a small classroom where we had to push the tables together to make a square he began to model by example what it looks like to be in love with a vocation. He modeled a way to move through life. Jason let us in on his writing practice. He explained his common pitfalls. He shared the tricks he’d used to keep himself working. He encouraged us to keep at it—even when the stuff we submitted wasn’t that good. Jason showed me that there’s such a thing as building up a practice that you return to, day after day. He believed that there was something in this for all of us.... [E]very day that I sit down to write the baffling fact is that I’m gaining and learning more from what Jason gave me.”

As one colleague wrote, “From a first year writing course to the capstone, Jason mentors the room and crafts a supportive environment where people can take chances, be vulnerable, and be and open-minded.” The colleague noted that, “In doing this careful and labor-intensive work, Jason is mentoring these students into new lives as scholar-citizens. Jason’s students are the sort of people I want teaching in schools, running for office, and leading global forces for change because I know what they’ve learned from him. I know they are more thoughtful, more creative, and more collaborative than they were before they came under his guidance.”

For his excellent mentorship, we offer our congratulations to Jason Skipper.