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Faculty honored for teaching excellence

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

OU honored some of its most accomplished teachers, researchers and scholars on Founders' Day at the eighth annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon. A total of 25 faculty members were recognized at this year's luncheon on April 17 in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms.

"This luncheon is great because in academia you often work in isolation. You might hear about what faculty members are doing in other departments, but this event really makes you feel value in being associated with a community of scholars," said Associate Professor of German Christopher Clason. "The ceremony is really a joyous and positive occasion."

Each year, the OU Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and the University Research Committee honor faculty whose teaching and research efforts merit singular praise or recognition. The four individuals who received such honors include:

- **Mary Stein**, associate professor of teacher development and educational studies, recipient of the Teaching Excellence Award;
- **Robert N.K. Loh**, professor of engineering, recipient of the Research Excellence Award;
- **John Seeley**, assistant professor of chemistry, recipient of the New Investigator Research Excellence Award;
- **Phyllis Wolfe White**, special lecturer of music, theatre and dance, recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award.

Professor of Chemistry **Paul Tomboulian** received special recognition and a standing ovation from the packed audience when he was named 2003 Distinguished Professor.

Tomboulian was recognized for his preeminence in university service and highly successful record as a scholar and teacher of environmental chemistry. He also is a charter faculty member, having been appointed OU's first and only chemistry instructor in 1959. "Tomboulian is widely known and admired for his pioneering work in ecological studies," said Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Virinder Moudgil. "By all accounts, his enthusiasm for the application of science to the public arena is reflected in the zeal with which he approaches his teaching, as several generations of students have attested."

The OU Board of Trustees created the faculty rank of Distinguished Professor in 1988. The criteria is based on preeminence in scholarship, teaching and public or professional service. Tomboulian joins 10 other OU faculty members who have been honored with this prestigious status.

"We all consider Paul Tomboulian most distinguished," said Clason, who also is one of this year's honorees. "He represents what we all strive for – the idea of belonging and being connected to this institution. He's so deserving. I'm really proud just to know the guy."

Before the 2003 honorees were recognized, last year's excellence award recipients – Jude Nixon, associate professor of English and director of the Honors College; Meir Shillor, professor of mathematical sciences; and Balaji Rajagopalan, assistant professor of management information systems – delivered remarks.

"After being a faculty member for just two years, I feel a little uncomfortable with the word 'excellence,'" Rajagopalan said. "I concur with the words of Professor of Sociology David Maines, who spoke at last year's luncheon on winning a research excellence award. He said 'I've worked like a dog and had a few successes.' I feel much the same, but I've enjoyed every moment at Oakland University. The support of my department, Dean (of the School of Business Administration) John Gardner and my colleagues encourages me to move forward."

The complete list of 2003 honorees includes:

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

- **Bonnie Abiko**, associate professor of art and art history and the international studies program
- **Gottfried Brieger**, professor of chemistry
- **Christopher Clason**, associate professor of German

- **James Dow**, professor of anthropology
- **Annette Gilson**, assistant professor of English
- **R. Douglas Hunter**, professor of biological sciences
- **Mary Karasch**, professor of history
- **Paul Kubicek**, associate professor of political science
- **Cynthia Sifonis**, assistant professor of psychology
- **Xiangqun Zeng**, assistant professor of chemistry

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

- **Mark Isken**, assistant professor of management information systems
- **Arlene Savage**, assistant professor of accounting

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

- **Gerald Freeman**, professor of education
- **Linda Pavonetti**, assistant professor of education
- **Luellen Ramey**, associate professor and chair of counseling

SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

- **Manohar Das**, professor of engineering
- **Lunjin Lu**, assistant professor of computer science and engineering

SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

- **Robert Jarski**, associate professor of exercise science

SCHOOL OF NURSING

- **Suha Kridli**, assistant professor of nursing

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

- **Richard Pettengill**, assistant professor, Kresge Library

2003 DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

- **Paul Tomboulia**, professor of chemistry

2003 TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

- **Mary Stein**, associate professor of teacher development and educational studies

2003 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD

- **Robert N.K. Loh**, professor of engineering

2003 NEW INVESTIGATOR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD

- **John Seeley**, assistant professor of chemistry

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

- **Phyllis Wolfe White**, special lecturer in music, theatre and dance

Hosted by the Office of the President, Founders' Day honors the memory of benefactors Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson, who donated 1,500 acres and \$2 million to establish Oakland University.

SUMMARY

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