

# 2005 Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring



## Cultivating a Culture of Mentoring



# The Graduate School



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## Purpose Statement

There is widespread agreement within the academic community that mentoring is an important element of graduate education. First, providing adequate mentoring support for graduate students is a key factor in ensuring that they are well trained in their disciplines, successfully complete their degrees, and have good career opportunities. Second, students who have mentoring relationships are more productive, more involved in their departments, and more satisfied with their programs. Third, whether acquiring a fresh perspective in a particular field or gaining a reputation for identifying and developing top-notch talent, mentors receive immeasurable benefits from the mentoring relationship. The benefits of mentoring are passed on as good mentors promote a tradition of mentoring practices in their students.

Mentoring is a sustained partnership that is necessarily multifaceted and is enhanced by mutual respect and concern. While a mentor can be defined in many ways, a mentor for graduate students is fundamentally someone who serves as a guide throughout their professional training. Far from being just an advisor, a mentor serves as teacher, advocate, sponsor, and role model as well. When unable to fill a particular role, good mentors have access to a network of helpful resources and exercise the discernment necessary to point students to the appropriate resources at the appropriate times in their careers.

To recognize the considerable efforts and accomplishments of faculty who consistently serve as effective mentors, the Duke University Graduate School established the Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring. Designed to allow graduate students to identify faculty who embody both the letter and spirit of mentoring, this award will take its place among the University's continuing efforts to cultivate a culture of mentoring.



## Criteria

1. Promotes successful completion of students' research and degree programs by monitoring progress and offering honest, constructive feedback when needed or sought
2. Commits to advancing students' long-term professional development—throughout their journey from student to professional—by recognizing and making potential colleagues aware of their natural talents and acquired skills and by integrating students into the broader culture of the discipline
3. Ensures that students master the content and skills of their discipline, including the ability to teach or present that content to professional and non-professional audiences
4. Creates a supportive environment for research and scholarship by fostering mutual respect and demonstrating sincere and active interest in the well-being of the student
5. Maintains accessibility by providing consistently open lines of communication
6. Connects students with the resources necessary to take full advantage of academic and professional opportunities and enables students by helping them to develop their own local and national networks
7. Models a solid record of scholarship marked by excellence in research and teaching skills, research presentation and publication, the ability to obtain funding, and the exercise and nurturing of good mentoring practices
8. Exercises discernment in directing students to appropriate resources and shows a willingness to work collaboratively with other faculty in multiple-mentoring relationships



# 2005 Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring

## Linda K. George

Linda K. George, a professor of sociology and psychology, completed her bachelor's and master's work in sociology at the Miami University of Ohio. In 1975, she earned the Ph.D. in sociology from Duke University. She pursued her postdoctoral training in the study of aging at the Duke University School of Medicine and joined its faculty in 1977 as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry. Professor George is an established scholar in social psychology and has earned one of the

top names in gerontology and medical sociology. Her most recent work examines social precursors of depression, the effects of stress on health, and the relationships between religion and health. In 1991, Dr. George was awarded the Trinity College Distinguished Teaching Award for her outstanding work in the classroom.

Professor George's reputation draws a variety of students to her side, from those she formally advises to those who take her classes just to experience her highly regarded teaching skills. She has seized this opportunity to share her gifts with as many as possible, often working with five or six graduate students a year while also mentoring undergraduates and postdoctoral students. One nominator observes, "It is clear to me that she wants each and every one of her students to be successful, and she is willing to do what it takes to get us there." According to another student, George's keen mind gives her "a strong ability to help students understand how to make the most of any topic. Aside from my own experience with her, I have repeatedly seen her take students' ideas and help shape them to make them better." Linda has been a fan of her students' work and a prodding advisor, who affirms her students have something to contribute to the field and pushes her students' abilities to conceptualize everyday life in sociological terms. As one nominator expressed, "In essence, Linda has been a guiding force in teaching me my trade."

A genuine care and concern for her students also jumps from the pages of Professor George's many nominations. "A big part of what makes Linda a great mentor is her empathy, compassion, and outright support during the rough times," says one student. Dr. George truly realizes that students are best able to be successful scholars if they are content in the other areas of their lives.

The following written statement paints a clear picture of the warmth and professionalism that Professor George brings to her mentoring relationships:



*Linda has continuously amazed me with her wonderful balance of intelligence, humor, kindness, and occasionally sternness when helping students reach their goals. These qualities alone do not make her a deserving mentor, but rather her ability to understand her students and foster our growth as academics in a genuinely positive and supportive way...Although it is impossible to list Linda's countless examples of generosity and guidance, I believe her strength as a mentor goes well beyond her obligations as a faculty member and makes her a worthy, if not perfect, model to represent the Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring.*

# 2005 Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring

Alex Rosenberg is the R. Taylor Cole professor of philosophy. He completed his Ph.D. in philosophy at the Johns Hopkins University in 1971 and joined Duke's philosophy faculty in 2000. Previously he was a professor of philosophy and social science at Syracuse University, professor of philosophy at the University of California–Riverside, and director of the Honors Program at the University of Georgia.

Called “a publishing machine” by one of his nominators, Professor Rosenberg has published several texts and approximately 150 papers in the philosophy of biology, the philosophy of causation, and the philosophy of cognitive, behavioral, and social science (especially economics).

## Alexander Rosenberg

Professor Rosenberg's commitment to his students expresses itself in impressive availability. From a door that is “always open” to regular lunch invitations, Alex's students “cannot imagine an advisor who is MORE accessible.” One nominator notes that Alex “displays an impeccable work ethic and a respect for all his students...he takes his work and our time as seriously as if he were meeting a dean later that day...He shows us that all the tasks involved in professional life deserve respect and dedication.”

While his commitment shows in his day-to-day availability, Professor Rosenberg's concern for his students “shines the brightest when they need him the most—when it comes time for them to hit the job market.” Several students credit his recommendations as crucial components of successful job applications. Another nominator observes, “I can vouch for Alex's immense effect on the career paths of his students. He introduced me to my now postdoc supervisor and invited me to attend international conferences where he would introduce me to all his colleagues. He passed on some projects that he was invited to work on so I could increase my visibility in the field.”

As this final observation makes clear, Professor Rosenberg's commitments are a legacy of excellence that he passes on to his students:



*Alex is an outstanding researcher and teacher, and if he weren't so supportive and encouraging of his graduate students, it would be daunting to have him as an advisor...I am amazed by Alex's research productivity, his engagement in university service, and his commitment to his students. How he balances all these things while maintaining a sane lifestyle is a mystery to me, but it is something to which I very much aspire.*



# 2005 Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring

William "Monty" Reichert is a professor of biomedical engineering and director of the Center for Biomolecular and Tissue Engineering. In 1982, he earned his Ph.D. in macromolecular science and engineering at the University of Michigan, followed by postdoctoral work and a faculty appointment in bioengineering at the University of Utah. Monty joined Duke's biomedical engineering faculty in 1988. Professor Reichert's research interests include biosensors, protein mediated cell adhesion, and wound healing. The primary focus of his work is on the behavior of proteins and cells at surfaces. These phenomena are central to many aspects of biology and medicine, for example thrombus

formation, inflammation, complement activation, immune recognition, wound healing, cell-cell recognition, and cell adhesion to artificial and natural substrates. The aim of Reichert's work is to develop new diagnostics and to improve biomaterials.

## William M. Reichert

Professor Reichert dedicates himself to having a close-knit, diverse lab group. The students in his lab know they stand at the top of his priority list, and they strive to sustain the atmosphere of respect, equality, and open collaboration that professor Reichert has encouraged. Recognizing the benefits that diverse perspectives create in a learning environment, Professor Reichert has worked tirelessly to expand opportunities for underrepresented groups to pursue doctoral education in the sciences. Largely due to intentional bridge building efforts during Dr. Reichert's sabbatical year at North Carolina Central University, the number of biomedical engineering students at Duke from underrepresented groups tripled during his tenure as the program's Director of Graduate Studies. Yet, as one nominator points out, "his dedication to diversity does not alter his advising style. Monty is a demanding graduate advisor of all his students in a consistent manner." His fairness and genuine care foster an "easy and respectful work environment, where you know criticism is not personal and Monty is looking out for your best interests."

The genial, professional, and generally helpful atmosphere during lab meetings and in the lab itself reveals Monty's strengths as a mentor and helps students keep their bearings throughout their doctoral journey. "There is no doubt as to when you're heading in the wrong direction or when you have moved to the next step in your research," a student notes, "because Monty tells you in a firm, simple, and often humorous way. Every weekly lab meeting is filled with honest and constructive feedback, which students look forward to."

The unique lab experience that emerges from Professor Reichert's genuine dedication to his students takes shape in the following nomination text:



*There is trust and mutual respect. Every now and then one of the grad students will get up and walk over to his office, where the door is open and Monty is typing on the computer. They knock and he turns around, his whole attention on them. Whether that student is there for two minutes or twenty minutes, Monty will continue to talk the issue over without any sign of impatience or hassle. There is a respect there that you can feel; he knows the student has done his own investigation into the problem before coming to him and that, whatever it is, it is worth discussing. The mutual respect, the easy banter that occurs in the lab, and the productivity of the graduate students and postdocs are the result of an atmosphere created by Monty. It is an atmosphere where you are expected to work hard, but questions are appreciated and help is always available.*