

2007 Dean's Awards for Excellence in Mentoring

Modeling Balance and Connection

Susan Lozier, Professor of Earth & Ocean Sciences, received her Ph.D. in physical oceanography from the College of Ocean and Fisheries Science at the University of Washington in 1989. Her

Susan Lozier

research interests include oceanic responses to climate change, dynamics of large-scale ocean circulation, and physical constraints on ocean ecosystems.

Dr. Lozier excels at navigating the constantly shifting landscape of her students' needs:

"Susan maintains all of her relationships with a tremendous amount of concern and respect for the individuals involved. In the office, I am so impressed by her acuity at managing and responding to the shifting requirements of a group of students and researchers that is diverse in terms of their ages, genders, ethnicities, and life experiences."

One life experience to which Susan's students find her particularly well attuned is parenthood:

"The first time that I realized how special Susan was, I was sitting in my bedroom my senior year in college reading an e-mail that she had sent me. The e-mail was in response to a list of questions that I had sent ... Her e-mail reply said simply, 'I would love to discuss all of these questions with you in detail over the phone. However, I am taking my son's class on a rafting field trip and will be gone for the next two days. Does Monday at 11 work for you?'... In reading Susan's e-mail response, I felt that I had found a woman that shared in my eventual desire to balance career and family and I realized that Susan would be a perfect role model for me."

The concept of "mentorings," (discussed in relation to faculty mentoring in the March 2006 Provost Office report, *Mentorings of Faculty: Principles and Practices at Duke University*) enables Dr. Lozier's impressive responsiveness. This concept acknowledges that best matching individual needs with mentor strengths often requires a network of mentors rather than a single guide along the doctoral journey. Certainly important for any good mentor to understand; an indispensable truth for someone in Dr. Lozier's position...



"Susan is literally one of a kind. The only physical oceanographer at Duke, she has an extra challenge in promoting and educating her students in the absence of departmental colleagues in the discipline. Still, she fosters her students' development of a wide network of colleagues and a rich knowledge of our field. In addition to frequently attending conferences, I have traveled each summer with Susan to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, a locus for oceanographic research, where Susan holds an adjunct appointment. An overwhelming number of scientists open their doors to me to discuss research simply because I am associated with Susan. Susan believes that a graduate student needs multiple channels for mentorship, and she uses all of her resources and her place of great esteem among her colleagues to provide those channels for us."

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Investing in Talent

Laurie Shannon received her J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1989 and her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1996. As the E. Blake Byrne Associate Professor of English, Dr. Shannon helps students

Laurie Shannon

make unexpected connections between literary works in a variety of fields of interest ranging from medieval to modern. As summarized in one of her nominations and demonstrated in the quotes that follow, “By modeling outstanding pedagogy, rigorous scholarship, collegiality, and engagement with the several facets of academic life, she has fostered (and continues to foster) well-rounded excellence in those fortunate to work under her direction.”

“Professor Shannon has a talent for recognizing and encouraging ambitious and creative work while at the same time instilling practical competence (namely, well-written and thoroughly-researched projects). She is invested in student projects — indeed, in student thinking — in such a way that balances exciting and energetic work with successful and timely completion. This must certainly be time-consuming, but Professor Shannon seems always available to discuss student projects and progress and to give insightful, meaningful feedback. She is easily the most accessible professor on campus and it is this joyful willingness to engage students that marks all of her endeavors, including those beyond the letter of the dissertation.”

“Professor Shannon’s rigorous feedback on my written work — whether seminar papers or dissertation chapters — has suggested themes to develop further, ideas to specify, and other texts to consider; each point is measured and specifically articulated to promote my thought processes, not to inject hers into my work. As a result, I am gaining a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses as a scholar.”

“Professor Shannon’s excellent publications speak for themselves as great works of scholarship; it is my hope that, in nominating her for this award, they might also be recognized as exemplary in their capacity to model great scholarship for her students.”

“I was impressed by her personal warmth and that she seemed to treat me as an equal, not in terms of academic achievement, which would be false, but at a human level. This is an impression I get every time I go to see her, even when she’s obviously busy and tired, and I think it’s a very valuable quality in a mentor, since I think that as graduate students we often occupy an embattled head-space, mostly due to our own slightly tortured personalities. Laurie demonstrates a genuine humility that I find to be rare in academia and elsewhere, but that is an integral part of her intelligence.”



“Perhaps most inspiring, is Professor Shannon’s own commitment to the academic community through her tireless committee work, departmental leadership, and directing of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. In isolation, any one of these activities would speak to a professor’s firm dedication to her work. In Professor Shannon’s case, however, the combination of these efforts reveals nothing less than a passion for scholarship and for mentoring a generation of engaged, rigorous teacher-researchers.”

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Creating an Environment of Support

Herbert Edelsbrunner, Arts & Sciences Professor of Computer Science and Mathematics, received his Ph.D. in Technical Mathematics from Graz University of Technology in 1982. Through appointments at Graz University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Hong Kong University, Duke, and other institutions, Edelsbrunner has guided exciting research in the emerging field of computational topology.

Herbert Edelsbrunner

Dr. Edelsbrunner's nominators for the 2007 *Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring* echo the sense that Dr.

Edelsbrunner excels at being an insightful and effective mentor from the very beginning of the graduate career, all the way to degree completion, and beyond. His nominations are peppered with phrases such as *from the first step*, *right away*, and *early on*.

"I still remember the first question that he asked me when I approached him asking if he was willing to be my advisor: What do YOU want to work on? Theoretical problems or practical implementations? Within the framework of his NSF funded project on BioGeometry, there was scope to work on both aspects but he wanted the decision to be mine and based on my interests. Right from the first step of choosing a research problem, he encouraged me to make independent decisions about my research career while providing the necessary support and guidance."

Edelsbrunner also excels at giving quick and practical feedback on writing, teaching, and research skills. His students appreciate the noticeable improvements they've seen in their presentation skills and writing style as a result.

"From my very first homework to the most recent public presentation, Herbert has closely monitored and dissected every word I write and say. His sense of what I do best and what I really should work on is remarkable: I notice my presentation style improve with every recommendation that he has given me: I speak slower now, carefully watch for the feedback from my audience, and adjust my presentations on the fly to cater to my listeners' interests. All these

skills I learned thanks to Herbert. Same goes for my technical writing skills. Not only has Herbert provided detailed feedback on every paper I have written, but he has figured out entire patterns of my writing which I did not recognize before."



Students note how the impact of Edelsbrunner's mentoring extends well beyond their years as graduate students, both through the lasting collaborations that he fosters and through the example he sets for his students to follow.

"Herbert often collaborated with John Harer from the math department at Duke University and was gracious in introducing me to John. John's vast knowledge of the field of Topology and Herbert's expertise in distilling this knowledge into practical algorithms to solve real-world problems played a crucial role in my progress towards the completion of my doctorate. In fact, I use the insight and technical know-how that I learned during my graduate studies in my current job ... I know that when I'm in a position where I can be of assistance to another student I will be able to follow Herbert's example. This is the most important lesson I take from my experience working with Herbert, and I see this as the hallmark of a great mentor."

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SUPPORTER

Kristina McDonald

Kristina McDonald received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Illinois Wesleyan University and now pursues a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Duke's Department of Psychology & Neuroscience.

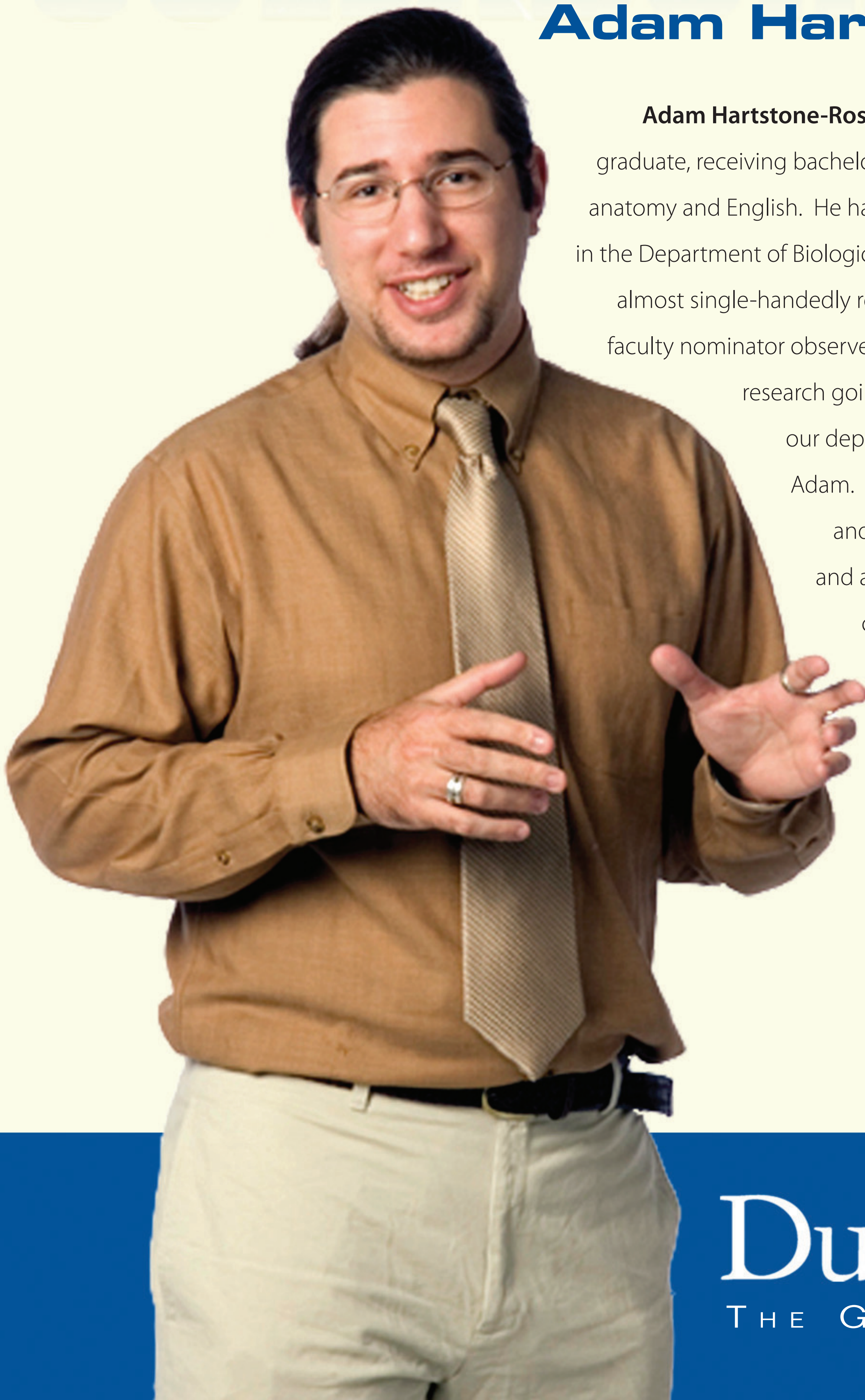
An undergraduate nominator demonstrates Kristina's dedication to mentoring in a chronicle of her practical support during a thesis project. "Everything about this experience has been new to me, but I have never felt lost because of the excellent guidance I have received. She taught me how to analyze data in a variety of ways. She taught me how to put together a poster that I had to present at the end of my summer program. When it came time to design a study, she was extremely helpful generating ideas, but it was clear that it was always my decision for what I wanted to do and how I was going to do it...She kept up communication with me over winter break so that I could get a head start on writing the introduction and methods sections to my thesis. And she has only continued to be a constant source of advice and guidance as I have finished collecting data and begun analyzing it. I feel very confident about where my thesis will end up, and that is mostly because of the support I have received from Kristina."



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COLLABORATOR

Adam Hartstone-Rose



Adam Hartstone-Rose attended Duke University as an undergraduate, receiving bachelor's degrees in biological anthropology & anatomy and English. He has remained at Duke as a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Biological Anthropology & Anatomy. "Adam has almost single-handedly reinvigorated our graduate program," one faculty nominator observed. "There is now a spate of collaborative research going on amongst the graduate students in our department, and at the center of it all stands Adam. He is a naturally collaborative researcher, and he has a penchant for recognizing skills and abilities in others, and drawing them into collaborative projects that exercise those skills. There is no doubt that Adam has made our graduate program better, has greatly enhanced the experiences of the undergraduates that have worked with him, and has taught me a few things about effective mentoring."

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MOTIVATOR

Lawrence M. Boyd



Lawrence M. Boyd received his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Clemson University and master's degrees in bioengineering and engineering management from Clemson and Christian Brothers University. He recently completed his Ph.D. in Duke's Department of Biomedical Engineering. A faculty nominator highlighted the communication skills and professional wisdom he brought with him from nine years in the medical device industry. "Larry has served as

a mentor in much broader context and to a much broader audience than is expected for the traditional graduate student."

As his lab's most knowledgeable expert in translation of technology, Larry frequently guides graduate students, research associates, and faculty considering the translation and commercialization of their research. "When Larry came to Duke, he brought all of his well-honed skills in mentorship and supervision and impressed all of us with his ability to expect the best in each individual, to know and develop the entire individual, to dedicate the time to show interest and understand the person, and as part of this, to enthuse and motivate." One student explains, "Larry was able to strike the perfect balance between providing me the guidance I required and the independence I desired. My growth as a young researcher was clearly important to him, and I worked hard, in part, because I did not want to let him down."