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## Faculty members celebrated for service to online education

**Karen Hawkins**

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Florida State University Faculty Senate President Susan S. Fiorito, right, presents an Excellence in Online Course Design award with distinction to Markus Huettel, a professor in the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science. Huettel also was honored with an award for Excellence in Online Teaching.

The Florida State University **Office of Distance Learning** honored faculty and mentors for their contributions to online education during the 2014–2015 Distance Learning Awards held Nov. 18 at the Alumni Center Ballroom.

The third annual event recognized the outstanding work by the university’s distance learning community to promote effective practices for distance learning across all disciplines. Quality course design, exceptional online teaching and superior mentoring support were the focus of achievement.

“It’s hard to imagine the amount of work that goes into designing and delivering an online course,” said Susann Rudasill, director of the Office of Distance Learning. “Let me give you a quick preview of distance from the outside looking in. Our numbers have been exploding, but we’re not abandoning the quality of our instruction. Fifteen years ago, it was an extraordinarily simplistic approach. Now, to develop, teach and support online learning takes competency, commitment, consistency and courage. Thanks to the support of our administration, faculty and staff, the result for our students gets better every year.”

Excellence in Online Course Design recognized high-quality instructional materials, learning objectives, assessment strategies, learner interaction and engagement, course technologies, learner support and accessibility. Awards for excellence with distinction were presented to Ken Armstrong, instructor, Program in Interdisciplinary Computing; Markus Huettel, professor, Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science; and Richard Miller, adjunct professor, Geography. Awards for excellence were presented to Michael Brady, chair and professor, Marketing; Elwood Carlson, professor, Sociology;

Parmjeet Cobb, instructor, Arts and Sciences, Mathematics; Kyle Killian, assistant teaching professor, Art History; Owen Mundy, associate professor, Art; Jeffrey Paterson, professor, Accounting; and Christopher Witulski, teaching faculty member, Ethnomusicology.

Honorable Mention in Online Course Design awards were presented to Nari Jeter, adjunct instructor, Family & Child Sciences; Chad Marzen, assistant professor, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate and Legal Studies; Onsurang Norrbinn, associate teaching professor, Economics; Banyon Pelham, law enforcement training director, College of Applied Studies; and Darren Prum, assistant professor, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate and Legal Studies.

Ensuring that students enjoy a collaborative learning experience was a key goal in online course design.

“We wanted to give students an interactive experience,” said Michael Brady, honored for his course, Basic Marketing Concepts. “We’re in a multimedia lab and I feel like I’m speaking directly to students and that’s important to me, but it’s also important to the students. That was the driving factor in the design of the course, and it’s had an impact throughout all we do. I want students to feel like they’re important because they are important, and I want them to feel like they’re having a great experience that they really couldn’t get in a live setting.”

Excellence in Online Teaching acknowledged the effective use of online teaching strategies that demonstrate superior methods of instruction and student engagement. An award for excellence with distinction was presented to Charles Nyce, assistant professor, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate and Legal Studies. Awards for excellence were presented to Ken Armstrong, instructor, Program

in Interdisciplinary Computing; Michael Brady, chair and professor, Marketing; Parmjeet Cobb, instructor, Arts and Sciences,

Mathematics; Shannon Hall-Mills, academic faculty member, School of Communication Science and Disorders; and Markus Huettel, professor, Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science.

Honorable Mention in Online Teaching awards were presented to Melissa Gross, professor, School of Information; Kathleen McCullough, professor, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate and Legal Studies; and Christopher Witulski, teaching faculty member, Ethnomusicology.

For instructors, connection and student engagement were critical elements of the online teaching process.

"Online teaching really facilitates a stronger connection between the students and myself than a live course would," said Christopher Witulski, lauded for his course, A Social History of America's Popular Music. "I tried to create a series of group projects in an effort to create an online course that really does foster that sort of interaction and cooperation and collaboration that I think can come through in an online course."

Parmjeet Cobb, honored for her course, Discrete Mathematics II, agreed about the importance of connection.

"In order to connect, I wanted to make sure that the students were engaged," she said. "The main goal of an instructor, I believe, is to create a self-learner so that they're able to do this on their own. As the instructor, I'm there to facilitate that process and make students as engaged as possible."

Online mentoring awards recognized the successful use of strategies for student support and engagement in the course materials and learning environment. An Excellence in Online Mentoring award with distinction was presented to Ji Yae Bong, College of Education. Honorable Mention in Online Mentoring awards were presented to Sarah Buck, College of Fine Arts; Judith Cuadra, College of Social Sciences and Public Policy; Katherine Gorman, College of Medicine; and Mehnaz Gul, College of Communication and Information.

All Florida State University instructors of record and mentors were eligible to be nominated. The winners were selected by the ODL Instructional Development Faculty and the Distance Learning Awards Committee, which included past award winners.

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