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Faculty Development Committee Honors Magnusen, Klingensmith, and Sellers

KEUKA PARK, N.Y.—The Faculty Development Committee honored three faculty members—all part of the Division of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Physical Education—with its 2004-05 awards.

Professor of Biology Joan Magnusen, received the Committee's Excellence in Experiential Learning Award, Assistant Professor of Biology and Environmental Science Tim Sellers received the Excellence in Academic Achievement Award, and Associate Professor of Biology Kasey Klingsmith earned the Excellence in Teaching Award.

The Excellence in Experiential Learning Award recognizes innovative, structured experiential learning practices or activities that promote the development of life-long learning and career skills that students use to transform experience into knowledge.

“Joan is a professor that challenges her students to learn, understand, and synthesize concepts,” said one of Magnusen's colleagues. “She uses a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom to get the students to challenge themselves to critically think, analyze and understand research.”

In *BIO 135: Cells and Organisms*, Magnusen “presents experimental science as it would be experienced by a working scientist.

“The scientific method includes observation, hypothesis, experimental design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and data presentation,” Magnusen explained.

This all leads up to the challenge she presents her students: design an experiment of their own.

“Guidance is provided to help the students use readily available materials to design their experiment,” said Magnusen. “They complete a planning sheet and then complete a preliminary proposal in response to my comments. They perform a pilot experiment based on this proposal and then modify their design in a revised proposal based upon the data they collect. This experience particularly develops a respect for controlled and uncontrollable variables.”



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Next, students are required to write a report “in the format used for publishable scientific research with an abstract and results section.”

The students post their reports on a bulletin board so that classmates can read their work. “Finally, they give oral reports with projected visual aids,” said Magnusen. “A requirement for the oral report is that they incorporate information from the work of other members of the class. This reporting procedure mimics a formal colloquium or scientific meeting where scientists exchange ideas about content and process.”

The Excellence in Academic Achievement Award recognizes exceptional commitment to advance the knowledge base of his or her academic or professional field.

“Since arriving at Keuka (in 2002), Tim has continued his research on mathematically modeling aquatic productivity in different systems including large rivers and estuaries, and these studies have lead to peer-reviewed papers,” said a colleague. “He continues to work with researchers from across the country on various projects, as well as starting a student-based research program right here on Keuka Lake.”



Sellers has published in *Limnology Oceanography* and has articles coming out in *Ecosystems* and *Marine Ecology Progress Series*.

Among Sellers’ on-going projects at the College are his investigation of seagrass ecology and production in the Florida Keys region.

“With my colleagues from Texas A&M University and the University of Virginia, we are developing mechanistic plant and landscape ecosystem models for Florida Bay,” said Sellers. “These models will then be used to help design the best overall approach for the Everglades restoration.”

The Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes a faculty member who has demonstrated to his or her colleagues a teaching method that is particularly effective in enhancing the delivery of course material.

“[Kasey] is passionate about her field of environmental science and is deeply committed to sharing her knowledge, and passion, with her students,” said a colleague. “She continues to make an exceptional commitment of her own resources, both expertise and technology, to enhance students’ classroom (and outdoors) learning experiences.”



“I bought a digital camera and a color printer to record images to use in my lectures,” said Klingensmith. “Instead of overheads loaded with

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words, I began using photos to convey information. I take the camera everywhere I go, collecting images to use for lecture and to document processes such as maple sugaring, erosion, and the changing of the seasons.”

Klingensmith tries to make the lecture relevant and personal “by using examples from everyday living and current events.

“Sometimes making the connection to their lives entails very simple demonstrations, as in drinking a glass of water when discussing water quality,” said Klingensmith, who also records television news reports to show in class. “Seeing images of the Exxon Valdez grounded on Bligh Reef with beaches and animals covered in oil bring a different understanding than my just talking about it.”

Klingensmith had her *BIO 134: Organisms and the Environment* students tap a maple sugar tree on campus during one lab and for another lab activity they enjoyed a maple syrup waffle breakfast.

“Part of the field trip experience is to hand in a write-up of the concepts covered or a description of the ecosystem we visited,” said Klingensmith. “In this regard, field trips do enhance student learning.”