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Math Teacher from Montgomery College Named Maryland Professor of the Year

Mathematics Professor John Hamman inspires students who hate math, fear math, and love math. His commitment to his students, regardless of where they are on the math scale, earns their love and respect.

It's that passion for teaching and learning that led Hamman to be named 2012 Maryland Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

"Many people and events have shaped my teaching and philosophy of education, but none as profoundly as my high school band director," said Hamman. "It was clear that I not going to have a career involving music; however, he treated me with the same respect and attention as those students who had real musical talent.... His personal, respectful, and patient approach made me realize the power of education and how it can shape the life of a student in unpredictable ways.

"I try to have a similar impact on my students, most of whom are not on a career path to become mathematicians. I want to treat each of them with respect and view them as people on a journey, not just as math students," he said.

"My goal... is to make sure my students have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of what I am trying to teach and make connections to their lives outside of class, in other classes, and outside of academia."

Hamman chairs the Department of Mathematics at Montgomery College's Germantown Campus and serves in many other leadership roles. In 2009, he played a leading role in creating a unique, self-paced computer-based mastery approach for a developmental math class at that campus.

Margaret Latimer, associate dean for instructional programs at the Germantown Campus, characterized Hamman's leadership on the math redesign as "...tireless, creative, and in fact, monumental."

The redesigned course, which was adopted at all three campuses, impacts 2,000 to 3,000 students each semester.

Because of his passion for this style of teaching, Hamman accompanied a Montgomery College delegation to India to explain how a course like this might fit into a community college system the country is creating.

“He is a phenomenal teacher with genuine concern not only for his own math students, but also for all Montgomery College students attempting to be successful in mathematics,” said Katherine Michaelian, instructional dean of business, science, mathematics, and technology at the Germantown Campus.

“His influence in the College’s math program, which touches every student, is enormous. Professor Hamman is also one of those rare faculty members who serves the campus and the College with as much energy and diligence as he serves his students,” said Michaelian.

This year he received both the Faculty Outstanding Service Award and the National Institute for Staff Organizational Development (NISOD) Award for his outstanding service to the College. He is also an active member of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA). He served as program chair of the MD/DC/VA section of the association, organizing and running a semi-annual conference, as well as serving on the executive board. He promotes mathematics to middle and high school students by bringing them to the College for various MAA competitions and a newly formed math circle.

Former Montgomery College student Zaheen Fatima, who will graduate from Smith College in 2013, says she owes most of her success to Hamman. “To this day, he serves as... one of the greatest inspirations in my life. He makes [students] want to excel academically as well as intellectually. He inspires them to reach heights that they would never have believed they could reach before...”

Catherine Shelton, an adult student returning to the College after military service, and now a mechanical engineering major at the University of Maryland, said, “Professor Hamman thinks it doesn’t matter if you are a ‘smart’ student. [What matters is] the student who takes that one idea, and makes the mental leap to discover something new. I don’t consider myself naturally smart, but Professor Hamman inspired me to work as hard as I do and to take that mental leap.”

The U.S. Professors of the Year program salutes the most outstanding undergraduate instructors in the country—and those who excel as teachers and influence the lives and careers of their students. It is recognized as one of the most prestigious awards honoring professors.

This is the sixth time in nine years—and the fourth year in a row—that a Montgomery College professor has been named Maryland Professor of the Year. Dr. Mary Furgol, a history professor, received the honor in 2003. In 2006, Joanne Naake, an English professor, won the award. In 2009, the award went to Chemistry Professor Susan Bontems. In 2010, Dr. Deborah Stearns, a psychology professor, won the award. And in 2011, Music Professor Dawn Avery received the honor.

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[Montgomery College](#) is a public, open admissions community college with campuses in Germantown, Rockville, and Takoma Park/Silver Spring, plus workforce development/continuing education centers and off-site programs throughout Montgomery County, Md. The College serves nearly 60,000 students a year, through both credit and noncredit programs, in more than 130 areas of study.

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