

Fort Lewis College picks Dr. Brian Burke as 2005 recipient of New Faculty Teaching Award



Published: Friday, April 15, 2005 by **External Affairs** Author: Caitlin Dent

For his dedication to the promotion of student learning, Assistant Professor of Psychology Dr. Brian Burke has been chosen as recipient of Fort Lewis College's New Faculty Teaching Award for 2005.

The college will honor Burke and other award winners at the Annual Recognition Reception at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, May 2 in the College Union Ballroom.

Burke, who will be completing his second year of teaching at Fort Lewis College at the end of the semester, is a passionate advocate for a liberal arts education. This was his top specification when he was applying for teaching positions at different colleges.

His second specification was size. Knowing that the student/professor ratio directly represents a college's priorities, Burke chose to apply to institutions of higher education that obviously prioritized teaching over research.

"Our job as professors is to make sure we have an educated populace in order for democracy to work," explains Burke after remembering an inspiring National Science Foundation workshop he attended this March on campus.

Though Burke is widely involved all over campus, he explains that his favorite experiences at Fort Lewis are in the classroom. "I am first and foremost a teacher," he said.

That being said, he also serves the college by working in the Counseling Center, delivering professional workshops, serving as Psi Chi and Psych Club advisor, writing articles for the *Independent*, leading a group for socially anxious students and initiating substance abuse screenings on campus.

"So far he's a very effective classroom teacher and aspiring scholar — a great fit with the Psychology faculty," said Psychology Department Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology Ziarat Hossain. "We hope he will serve us well for many years to come."

Burke currently teaches the freshman-level course "Intro to Psychology," sophomore-level "Personality," junior-level "Abnormal Psychology" and senior-level "Counseling Skills." His final course evaluations from students have shown an overwhelming success.

Burke devised the acronym MORE (Meaning of the material to daily life, Organization, Relationship with students, and student Engagement) for the leading principles in his teaching style. With all four principles strongly implemented, his success is plain to see. "Students need to connect not just with me, but with each other," he said. "If I had 60 people in a room and simply talked at them for an hour, I'd be selling everyone short and wasting a golden opportunity for active engagement."

In his classroom, Burke prefers that his students call him by his first name. “Respect doesn’t come with your title, it’s something that you earn,” he explained.

“Brian is fun, energetic and organized,” said sophomore Kieran Hall, an international student from Blackburn, England. “He respects his students by sticking to his syllabus, showing up before class, never running over the allotted time for class, and with thorough preparation.”

In showing respect for things as basic as his students’ time, Burke provides his classes with the structure needed for a learning environment to be successful. His commitment to his students’ learning experiences is then often matched by the students themselves. Research has shown that when a professor shows up to class on time and prepared, students are more likely to do so as well.

In two short years at Fort Lewis, Burke has appeared in the news quite frequently. He won the prestigious Doug Bernstein Award for a poster he presented at the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology conference in St. Pete’s Beach, Fla., in 2004. He was honored for his poster, “Abnormal Psychology in Saguaro Cacti: Seeing Is Believing,” which paired photos of saguaro cacti with a variety of psychological disorders. A cactus with many arms facing skyward but one arm pointing to the ground represented bipolar I disorder; many exuberant arms represent mania; one tiny arm falling toward the earth represents depression; a saguaro skeleton represents cocaine abuse. Burke won the Bernstein Award for a second consecutive year in 2005, honored this time for his poster featuring a creative and artistic way to teach students about Piaget’s developmental stages.

Shortly after joining the Fort Lewis faculty, he published an article in the October 2003 edition of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, which rejects 98 percent of the submissions it receives. Burke’s article featured a meta-analysis (a highly intricate statistical procedure) of studies that evaluated the efficacy of motivational interviewing, a promising treatment for substance abuse and other behavioral problems.

Burke became interested in motivational interviewing while attending graduate school at the University of Arizona. He remains active in substance abuse treatment and education through his work in the Counseling Center and at alcohol screenings sponsored by student and employee wellness groups on campus.

He also became the only current psychology faculty member to be a licensed psychologist in the state of Colorado last November, something that he says has an immensely positive impact on his teaching. “I bring in actual cases to my teaching to help the material come alive,” he said.

Burke received his doctorate in clinical psychology in 2003 from the University of Arizona, where he also obtained his certificate of college teaching in 2001 and his master’s degree in clinical psychology in 1999. He received his bachelor’s degree in psychology from McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, in 1997.

First awarded in 2000, the New Faculty Teaching Award is given out each spring. To be selected, a nominee must be non-tenured on a tenure track and must to work full time. Faculty members must be nominated by their department. The department chair must submit supporting information to be reviewed by the Teaching Committee, which selects the award winner.

The complete list of New Faculty Teaching Award recipients includes:

YEAR	NAME	TITLE
2005	Brian Burke	Assistant Professor of Psychology
2004	Craig Tyler	Assistant Professor of Physics
2003	David Gonzales	Assistant Professor of Geosciences
2002	Maggie Cason	Assistant Professor of Teacher Education
2001	Nancy Oppenheim	Assistant Professor of Business Law
2000	Ashley Shultz	Assistant Professor of Physics

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