

Student advisors net top awards

Three members of CAS received the highest award possible from the local chapter of the National Academic Advising Association.

Teresa Phimister, academic advisor and coordinator, and **Aaron Whelchel**, instructor of his and academic advisor, both at WSU Vancouver, along with **Justine Nicoll Rupp**, senior academic coordinator, biological sciences, are among five WSU student advisors who received WSU AC Outstanding Achievement in Academic Advising awards.

“WSU ACADA’s awards committee was very impressed by the breadth and depth of the high-quality academic advising that these exceptional members deliver to students,” said Yung-Hv Anna Chow, awards chair. “They see the opportunity to support students as an honor, both in assisting students toward their career and life goals and in their commitment towards student success and retention. That’s the mark of excellence in advising, and these individuals are true professionals in that arena.”

The award in the advising category, for those with more than three years of experience in the field, went to Phimister in the “primary role” group and to Rupp in the “administrator” group.

Whelchel’s award is in the “new faculty” group of the new advisor category, for those with fewer years of advising experience.

Following tradition, this year’s awardees will be nominated for regional and national honors.

Phimister appreciates advising “tools”

Phimister knows the WSU curriculum well. She earned her bachelor’s degree at WSU Vancouver, and returned to campus in 1997 as an academic coordinator. Now a full-time advisor and CAS academic coordinator, Phimister has 17 years’ experience at her job and is passionate about student success. She values her arsenal of advising “tools”—experience with prescriptive, developmental, and



Teresa Phimister

appreciative advising—and her knowledge of University and academic standards and requirements.

“Teresa’s success as an advisor (comes from) her ability to lead with an awareness of what ne to be done coupled with a sense that students are complex people who are being asked to fu requirements.... (She has) an empathetic approach that balances the student’s accountability her deep understanding of the university system,” one of her award supporters said.

Phimister is passionate also about helping others in her field. In addition advising nearly 400 undergraduates, she participates in numerous University committees, trains new advisors at advising philosophy and theory, and helps faculty members prepare to mentor students. Phimister played a leading role in creating the Vancouver Advising Committee and in securin recognition as a formal committee on campus.

Whelchel encourages students to be proactive

Whelchel earned two bachelor’s degrees, a MBA, and a PhD in world history at WSU, and he teaches the core History 105 course (Roots of Contemporary Issues) to students on the Vancouver campus. He sees his institutional background and networks as “critical to my ability to assist students” and to enabling him to act as a liaison between his department and the College of Arts and Sciences Advising Center.



Aaron Whelch

Whelchel helps students connect with faculty members, assists faculty in their interactions with students, and links his advisees and students with resources encountered in advising. His instructor/advisor connections helped him develop a supplementary instructor program for the Roots course this fall.

“As both an instructor and advisor, I encourage students to be proactive. (They) have a variety resources to assist them in reaching their goals, but only they can determine what those goa are, and only they have the motivation to work, sometimes through significant adversity, to achieve them,” Whelchel said. “I value my work with the many fine students we have on our campus and am humbled to have the opportunity to play a small part in the shape of their liv

Rupp enjoys providing student services

Rupp earned her master’s degree at WSU and became an employee in the School of Biological Sciences in 2002, where she is now an academic coordinator senior with a variety of student services responsibilities. About half of her job is devoted to “on-the-spot” advising, which includes talking with prospective students and their families, and answering enrolled students’ questions and concerns about a variety of topics, including courses, course planning, regulations, petitions, grades, and



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internships.

"I have had a role in student services for 12 years and still love to help students in any way I can," Rupp said. "I feel it is important for them to take ownership of their education from the beginning.... It is gratifying to help (first-year students) with course selection and soak up their enthusiasm! I also enjoy working with students who are struggling. It is nice to help them figure out a set of goals—short- or long-term—and guide them to visualize and navigate what the steps are to attain those goals."

Her administrator role also involves training and supervising academic advisors, mentoring faculty on advising issues, and working on curriculum issues, advisor assignments, and scholarships.

WSU ACADA is an allied member of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) which is headquartered in Kansas. WSU ACADA is part of NACADA's northwest Region 8.

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