

LEARNING MATTERS at LINGNAN

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From the Editor:

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'Learning Matters at Lingnan' are short papers that aim to promote a dialogue on teaching and learning. I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the University. If you feel you have something which might be appropriate for inclusion in an issue of this publication, then please forward it to the TLC. I would be delighted if staff (and not only academic staff) from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre were to be prominent or even occasional contributors.



Vignettes of Excellent Teaching

Recently, an awards presentation ceremony was held to honour two outstanding teachers of Lingnan who received the Teaching Excellence Award (TEA) for 2001/2002. When only two such awards are given over an academic staffing of approximately 150, then the expectation was that these teachers must really be special. In fact, we were not disappointed.

Dr. Li Dong-hui

Teaching Translation subjects, Dr. Li Dong-hui believes that excellence in teaching requires a constant quest to go beyond one's current self and look at things newly and freshly to try to bring rediscovery to familiar things. Dr. Li therefore always revises and updates the subject matter of the courses she teaches, and in doing so has intertwined her scholarship and research to this end. But mere subject knowledge is not enough to enhance student learning and development. Treating teaching as her lifetime career, Dr. Li enjoys interacting with students, both inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, she sees a lecture as a conversation with a dialogue in place where one needs to listen and use questioning for engagement rather than necessarily searching for the right answer. Her enthusiastic and stimulating teaching approach has successfully turned her classroom into such an eventful spectacle, which encourages students to join in discussion and express their own views, while at the same time imbuing academic theory in the process, always in an attempt to master translation techniques through active learning and through practice.

Outside the classroom, Dr. Li is keen to help students develop into a whole person. She is also Warden of a student hostel block and therefore has a lot of opportunities interacting with students on an informal basis. She is always available and makes students feel comfortable when they come and talk to her. She is patient enough to listen to students' requests and even grievances, a teacher to all, culminating in her students' deepest love and respect for her.

Her students commended her in word and deed by nominating Dr. Li for the Teaching Excellence Award. In view of her intense love for teaching and for her students, and her commitment to Lingnan, it is absolutely befitting in word and in deed that she be honoured with the 'Teaching Excellence Award'.

Dr. Jimmy Ran

Dr. Jimmy Ran of the Department of Economics is an outstanding teacher who pushes his students intellectually. Without question, students leave his classroom with a profound view of the issues they are studying. He is able to accomplish this by setting high standards combined with an empowering classroom style. As such, his students are deeply challenged while simultaneously developing trust in their ability to think and explore issues in new and much deeper ways.

Dr. Ran regards teaching as his primary professional responsibility, although he is also a competent researcher who devotes equal attention and time to both of these academic roles achieving a great deal of success. He believes in the nexus between teaching and research and has been able to integrate the two to make them mutually beneficial to each other. Dr. Ran is extremely serious about teaching and his students. He always collects students' opinions and feedback on his courses and teaching seeking not only the students' views of his ability as a teacher, but also their comments on various aspects of his courses and ways to help students learn better. He always keeps unrestricted office hours, informing the students that he is available at most time during the term. He provides advice on academic matters, career choices and the occasional personal problem. Students find Dr. Ran a very amiable teacher to whom they can confide their problems and personal feelings.

Dr. Ran has also been very effective in making use of tutorials and seminars for better student learning. He carefully goes over the assigned tasks and questions and uses samples of work from previous students to give helpful hints in tackling problems and to illustrate the pitfalls and mistakes to be avoided. The fact that Dr. Ran makes an effort to simplify the materials, to use everyday words rather than to mystify, is appreciated by students as this attitude and approach facilitate learning. Dr. Ran is a rare and exceptional teacher. There is no question that he is deserving of the recognition for his devoted work as a teacher that this award would bring.

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