

New Honorary Program Recognizes Top Professors

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The university's 205th commencement ceremony bestowed degrees on an estimated 2,781 graduates — and a new title on four of UVM's top professors. At Sunday's ceremony, Burton Sobel in medicine, Mark Nelson in pharmacology, Rex Forehand in psychology, and Judith Van Houten in biology, became the first faculty members to be named University Distinguished Professors, a new honorific title conferred upon a select number of professors who have attained an international reputation in the areas of teaching, research, scholarship, and service.

The program honors faculty who have brought distinction to the university over an extended period of service; only those with the rank of professor are considered for the award. Nominations, submitted by deans, chairs and full-time faculty, supplemented by curriculum vitae and supporting letters from distinguished scholars around the world, are reviewed by the Faculty Senate. The final selection is made by the university provost.

Going forward, a maximum of two Distinguished Professors will be selected in a year, with up to ten professors holding the title at any time. Those ten will form the Council of University Distinguished Professors, who will serve in an advisory role to the president and provost. New University Distinguished Professors will only be named when existing members of the council leave full-time appointment at UVM. The honor also comes with a \$5,000 annual professional expense award.

The first recipients of this elite award have each achieved remarkable success at UVM and within the academy.

Mark Nelson, professor and chair of pharmacology and a member of the UVM faculty since 1986, was awarded a prestigious MERIT award in 2008 from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The ten- year, \$3.39 million grant provides continued funding for Nelson's research on smooth muscle cells. This year, Nelson was named a Fellow in the Biophysical Society. This award is designed to honor the society's distinguished members who have demonstrated excellence in science and to the expansion of the field of biophysics. Nelson, who has published extensively in such prestigious journals as *Nature*, *Science*, and *Nature Neuroscience*.

Rex Forehand, Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher Professor of Psychology and director of the university's clinical training program, joined the UVM faculty in 2003 after a long and distinguished tenure as Regents Professor at the University of Georgia and as director of Georgia's Institute for Behavior Research. He also started the ongoing Parenting Research Program in the 1970s. Forehand has spent his career researching the role of parenting in promoting children's psychosocial adjustment. He has co-

authored more than 350 journal articles and book chapters with current and former graduate students, as well as three books for clinicians and the lay public on families and children, including the popular self-help book, *Parenting the Strong-Willed Child*. Forehand was a recipient of the American Psychology Association's 2008 Award for Distinguished Career Contributions to Education and Training.

Burton Sobel, professor of medicine and biochemistry, is director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Fletcher Allen Health Care and the University of Vermont. Sobel, also a consulting cardiologist at Fletcher Allen, has pioneered and contributed to ground-breaking research in cardiology that has had a major impact on how heart-attack patients are treated, including extensive research on the dissolution of blood clots and heart disease in patients with type 2 diabetes. Sobel, whose research is extensively published, is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including a Research Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health and a Distinguished Scientist Award from the American College of Cardiology, among many others. Sobel, who graduated with his M.D. magna cum laude from Harvard, has been at UVM since 1994.

Judith Van Houten, the George H. Perkins Professor of Biology, leads the Vermont Genetics Network, a recently awarded \$16.5 million program funded by the National Institutes of Health. She is also the director and principal investigator of the Vermont National Science Foundation EPSCoR grant that builds science and engineering infrastructure in Vermont. Van Houten received her doctorate from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1977 and has been on the UVM faculty since 1980. Her widely regarded research investigates the molecular mechanisms of how cells detect chemicals. She uses organisms as small Paramecium and as complex as mice to provide insights into several biological mysteries including the sense of smell. Van Houten received the Manheimer Award in 1996 for career achievements in chemosensory sciences and the University Scholar Award in 1991.