

## Faculty Recognition Award Recipients AY 2024-2025

### Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Awards

The Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize faculty members for their excellence in teaching, including creating an environment conducive to and encouraging learning. Each year, nominated faculty in each of the four faculty ranks (Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/Clinical Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor) are eligible for this honor.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipients are:**

- **Lecturer Nicole L. Breslend, Ph.D.**, Department of Psychological Science, College of Arts and Sciences  
Nicole Breslend's research uses a multilevel approach to understanding peer victimization and aggression, including consideration of family context, peer relationships, individual behavior, and biobehavioral processes. Dr. Breslend conducts and develops research related to effective parenting strategies for caregivers of strong-willed youth, child welfare evaluations, mental health agencies, and easy-to-access parenting resources.
- **Assistant Professor Kaitlin Northey, Ph.D.**, Department of Education, College of Education and Social Services  
Kaitlin Northey's research and teaching centers on advancing early childhood (EC) as a profession. Her courses aim to prepare students to become advocates and agents of change, with a clear understanding of early childhood research, societal spheres of influence in regard to children and families, and educator identities, development, and well-being. Dr. Northey's research demonstrates that both nuanced and overt inequities can affect the workforce, thereby identifying opportunities for improving and strengthening systems and policies.

### Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award

The Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award recognizes a faculty member who has achieved excellence in displaying and enacting responsiveness, availability, concern, respect, and depth of knowledge in undergraduate academic advising. This award is a collaboration of the Office of the Provost, the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee, and the Student Government Association.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipient is:**

- **Instructor Karin (Kari) Hodge, M.A.**, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, Larner College of Medicine  
Kari Hodge advises students interested in futures in the medical field, such as nursing, laboratory science, physical therapy, physician assistants, and medical doctors. She has a keen interest in working with and getting to know both first generation and international students, learning about their families and cultures, and understanding their goals and aspirations. She passionately believes that students make poor choices when they are poorly resourced. Good advisors ensure their students have accurate and timely information to make sound decisions.

### Outstanding Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award

The Outstanding Part-time Faculty Teaching Award, presented annually, honors and recognizes the teaching contributions of faculty that teaches part-time.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipient is:**

- **Clinical Educator I Donna L. Smith, PT, DPT, NCS, GCS**, Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Science, College of Nursing and Health Sciences  
Donna Smith's primary teaching areas include mindfulness-based health and wellness, professionalism and leadership, neuromuscular assessment and treatment, psychosocial aspects of health and well-being, and an introduction to integrative health in the physical therapy curriculum. In her clinical practice, she primarily serves people with neurological conditions such as stroke, brain injury, MS, and vestibular disorders.

### President's Distinguished University Citizenship and Service Award

Nominees for the President's Distinguished University Citizenship and Service Award are lecturers or clinical faculty, full-time tenure or tenure-track faculty, research faculty, library faculty, or Extension faculty who have worked at the University of Vermont for at least five years and have demonstrated sustained and exceptional leadership and service to our community. This includes, but is not limited to, service at the department, college, or school, or university-wide level as a member of committees, governance groups, and advising student organizations or committees.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipient is:**

- **Professor Jane E. Knodell, Ph.D.**, Department of Economics, College of Arts and Sciences  
Jane Knodell is the Mark J. Zwynenburg Green and Gold Professor of Financial History. When teaching her students, she explores macroeconomics, money and banking, and financial history. As a scholar, she is a monetary historian with a focus on the role of central banks during early industrialization. She has held a variety of administrative positions at UVM, such as Department Chair, Associate Dean, Interim Dean, Special Assistant to the Provost, Associate Provost for Budget and Capital Planning, and Provost and Senior Vice President. Additionally, Dr. Knodell has served in significant leadership roles in United Academics, including twice as the lead negotiator for the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

### President's Distinguished Senior Lecturer and Lecturer Awards

The President's Distinguished Senior Lecturer and Lecturer Awards recognize Senior Lecturers or Lecturers for their outstanding teaching, scholarship, and service.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipient is:**

- **Senior Lecturer Linden E. Higgins, Ph.D.**, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences  
As a scientist, Linden Higgins deeply cares about and reinvented teaching and learning at the graduate student level. She explores all levels of educational research, including K-12 through post-graduate, discovering novel approaches and techniques along the way. Dr. Higgins developed data and ideas to demonstrate the effectiveness of such techniques, incorporating them into her teaching and learning philosophy.

### Provost's Award for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring

This award celebrates and honors exemplary mentoring of Ph.D. students by members of the Regular Graduate Faculty. Strong mentoring support is a key factor in graduate student success both during and after graduate study. Training the next generation of researchers is a vital part of the academic mission of the University of Vermont. With these awards, the Graduate College and the Provost seek to reinforce and highlight practices that enhance the overall quality of graduate education.

#### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipients are:**

- **Professor Kelly J. Rohan, Ph.D.**, Department of Psychological Science, College of Arts and Sciences  
Kelly Rohan is the Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher Green and Gold Professor in Psychology. Since joining UVM in 2005, she has secured \$5.5M in NIMH funding for her research on cognitive-behavioral models of depression. Dr. Rohan's mentorship follows the scientist-practitioner model, integrating research and clinical practice training. She mentored 11 Ph.D. students who graduated with three more in progress, maintaining zero attrition. She has also served on 21 additional dissertation committees, evaluated dissertations internationally, assessed teaching for six students outside her lab, and provided clinical supervision to numerous Ph.D. students. She actively involves students in research design, execution, and dissemination while maintaining high scholarly, professional, and ethical standards. Department leadership and students attest to her constructive feedback, support for professional networking, and encouragement of interdisciplinary collaborations. Dr. Rohan creates an inclusive training environment that respects diverse perspectives and holistically addresses students' well-being and responsibilities. Her mentees achieve impressive outcomes:
  - Average of 9 publications and 14 presentations during graduate training

- 6 of 11 former students received NIH funding during graduate school
- All eligible students obtained psychology licensure

Competitive grant outcomes, including three F31, one R36, and two NIMH Diversity Supplement awards. Her students pursue diverse careers including academia, research institutions, private practice, and state health systems. Dr. Rohan's mentorship extends beyond graduation, with one former student noting her continued support 15 years later. From 2013-2022, Dr. Rohan directed UVM's APA-accredited Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program, overseeing first-year advising, guiding student development, and securing a maximum 10-year accreditation. As Dr. Rohan reflects: "Training the next generation of clinical psychological science researchers, practitioners, and educators is my favorite, and the most impactful, part of my job. My mentorship style is based on direct communication and positive reinforcement. I strive to create a lab culture where students feel valued for their ideas and supported in their academic progress and professional development."

- **Associate Professor Nicholas (Nick) A. Cheney, Ph.D.**, Department of Computer Science, College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences  
Nick Cheney has been a UVM faculty member since earning his Ph.D. from Cornell in 2017. A highly-funded researcher (PI/Co-PI on 13 awards totaling over \$13M, including an NSF CAREER award), Dr. Cheney specializes in bio-inspired optimization algorithms for artificial neural networks. Dr. Cheney's mentorship extends beyond his primary lab, where three of his Ph.D. students have graduated, and currently advises seven more. He serves on 11 Ph.D. dissertation committees across six programs and nine Graduate Studies Committees, while also directing the growing Complex Systems Ph.D. program. Students thrive under his individualized mentorship approach within his collaborative, academically diverse lab. Dr. Cheney encourages his mentees to develop professional networks, present research across campus venues, and participate in outreach activities. His students have secured prestigious recognitions including an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, the UVM Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award, and research commercialization awards. Former and current students describe Dr. Cheney as responsive and encouraging, valuing how he creates an inclusive environment "grounded in respect, integrity, and intellectual rigor." His department chair confirms his commitment to developing "happy, well-rounded people as well as great scientists." For Dr. Cheney, the Ph.D. is "about the journey" as much as the destination: *"Students come to this time with different backgrounds, experiences, and unique aspirations that require specialized attention/emphasis. Yet they all deserve to have an experience they will look back on fondly as a period of self-discovery and improvement, but also a time full of community, purpose, and playfulness. Thus, our lab focuses on four main pillars of a Ph.D.: autonomy, mastery, respect, and joy."* Dr. Cheney's impactful, individualized mentorship creates an inclusive environment that embodies Our Common Ground values while fostering "autonomy, mastery, respect, and joy" for his students.

### University Distinguished Professor Award

The University Distinguished Professor Award is the highest academic honor that UVM bestows upon a faculty member. Holders of this title are recognized for having achieved international eminence within their respective fields of study and for the truly transformative nature of their contributions to advancing knowledge.

### The AY 2024-2025 award recipient is:

- **Professor Nicholas J. Gotelli, Ph.D.**, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Science  
Nick Gotelli is the George H. Perkins Professor of Zoology, and a Fellow of the Ecological Society of America. He received his Ph.D. from Florida State University and joined the University of Vermont in 1992. Within the fields of Community and Population Ecology, his internationally recognized and globally impactful work deeply integrates theory with the structure and function of ecosystems in the real world and includes novel experimental ecology, broad-scale observational studies, statistical analyses, and dynamic modeling. His use of advances in computation and software to model ecology has transformed this field. Dr. Gotelli's research addresses fundamental questions about the organization of animal and plant communities. His work explores what forces determine the species composition and abundance of natural assemblages,

how competition and predation affect local community structure, and what biotic and abiotic factors control population growth and extinction risk. Dr. Gotelli has authored 230 publications and five books, and has secured 21 competitive grants from NSF, DOE, or EPA. His contributions to the field include active participation in multiple journals and national societies. He has trained 19 graduate students (five are now tenured professors) and multiple post-doctoral fellows. As one of his reviewers noted, Dr. Gotelli is "a leader in ecology but also a source of inspiration and a role model for colleagues and students alike." For his impactful and influential work, Dr. Gotelli is highly deserving of the UVM Distinguished Professor Award.

### University Scholars Award

The University Scholars Award recognizes distinguished UVM faculty members for sustained excellence in research and creative and scholarly activities in the following two categories: Social Sciences, Humanities, Creative Arts, and Basic and Applied Sciences (including biological, medical, and physical sciences).

### **The AY 2024-2025 award recipients are:**

#### **Basic and Applied Sciences:**

- **Professor Taylor H. Ricketts, Ph.D.**, Gund Institute for Environment, Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources

Taylor Ricketts received his Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from Stanford University, where he also completed a post-doctoral fellowship. Before joining UVM, he served as a Senior Fellow and Director of the Conservation Science Program at the World Wildlife Fund. Since 2011, he has been Professor and Director of the Gund Institute for Environment, including during the transition to an independent institute. Dr. Ricketts has been recognized as a Fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Ecological Society of America (ESA). His highly influential work in ecosystem science and conservation includes pioneering the concept of "ecoregion-scale conservation," which addresses the complex dynamics of entire ecological communities. He has conducted groundbreaking work to delineate, analyze, and prioritize ecoregions across North America and subsequently on all continents. Dr. Ricketts' expertise in spatial ecology, particularly patterns of animal movements, has significantly influenced landscape ecology, conservation science, and species mobility research. His exceptional productivity and international visibility have made him the highest cited researcher in environment and ecology. Dr. Ricketts' scholarly output includes over 150 peer-reviewed publications and six books. His research has been funded by prestigious organizations including the USDA, NSF, USAID, and the US Department of Commerce. As a university stakeholder, Dr. Ricketts has led numerous interdisciplinary teams working on climate and planetary health issues across various fields. He has guided 134 Gund scholars and mentored 10 graduate students, 20 post-doctoral fellows, and numerous undergraduate students. For his impactful and highly influential work on ecosystems, conservation, and planetary health, Dr. Ricketts is highly deserving of the UVM University Scholar honor.

- **Professor Brian L. Sprague, Ph.D.**, Department of Surgery, Larner College of Medicine  
Brian Sprague is the Green and Gold Professor in Surgical Research. He is a nationally and internationally recognized epidemiologist specializing in breast cancer screening and surveillance. Dr. Sprague's research integrates clinical and population health data to evaluate breast cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis, and survivorship in real-world settings. He directs the Vermont Mammography Registry, which links to national databases to create a comprehensive resource of patient radiology, pathology, and cancer diagnosis data that informs long-term outcomes. Dr. Sprague's research has been continuously funded through the NIH, resulting in 200 publications in prestigious journals that have been cited over 13,000 times. His work informs American Cancer Society guidelines, and he is frequently sought after by the National Cancer Institute to serve on planning committees associated with population screening of breast cancer. At UVM, Dr. Sprague leads the Office of Health Promotion Research and co-leads UVM Cancer Center's Population Sciences (CPS) Program, dedicating his time to mentor junior scientists in writing successful grant proposals. He has mentored over 50 trainees ranging from undergraduates to clinical fellows. Having been awarded the Larner College of Medicine Dean's Excellence in Research, Dr. Sprague is highly deserving of

the University Scholar honor for his impactful and influential work.

### **Social Sciences, Humanities, and Creative Arts:**

- **Professor Boğaç Ergene, Ph.D.**, Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences  
Dr. Ergene graduated from Middle East Technical University with a degree in Economics, received a Master of Science from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and obtained a second Master's in Economics from Middle East Technical University. He was awarded a Ph.D. in History from The Ohio State University. Dr. Ergene joined the History Department at the University of Vermont in 2001 as an Assistant Professor, earning the rank of Professor in 2017. He established an international reputation in Ottoman and Islamic legal history. In Spring 2014, he served as the Aga Khan Distinguished Professor in Islamic Humanities at Brown University, and in Fall 2015, he was a Visiting Fellow in the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard University Law School. Dr. Ergene also held a Visiting Professor position at Middle East Technical University in Turkey (2021). His scholarship has been recognized with a book award from his professional society and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities International, as well as internal grant awards from the College. At UVM, Dr. Ergene's teaching and research accomplishments were recognized by the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Lecture Award. His research has received support from numerous prestigious institutions, including the American Council of Learned Societies, Social Sciences Research Council, and American Research Institute in Turkey. Dr. Ergene has authored seven books on critical topics including corruption in the Ottoman Empire, Arab and Turkish responses to Nazism and the Holocaust, the economics of justice in Sharia courts, judicial practices in the Islamic world, and legal practice and dispute resolution in provincial societies within the Ottoman Empire. His scholarly output includes special journal issues, 34 peer-reviewed journal publications, 15 non-peer-reviewed publications, 15 book reviews, and four translations. Dr. Ergene is frequently invited to speak on campus, across the United States, and internationally. For his impactful and highly influential work, Dr. Ergene is highly deserving of the UVM University Scholar honor.