

Doctoral Mentors Prepare Students For Academic Life

EACH YEAR, THE GRADUATE SCHOOL HONORS FACULTY WHO DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE, INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVENESS IN MENTORING DOCTORAL STUDENTS. HERE ARE THE 2011 DOCTORAL MENTORING AWARD WINNERS.



Burns



Fang



Kaid



Kainer



Levey

Allan F. Burns

*Professor of Anthropology
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

Allan Burns' research areas include linguistic anthropology, immigration, health and visual anthropology.

Current doctoral candidate Anna Brodrecht says Burns' mentoring skills go far beyond the nuts and bolts of getting to the degree.

"To untangle Dr. Burns' everyday life from his advisory role is a difficult task, as Dr. Burns is a mentor who lives what he teaches and leads by example," Brodrecht says.

Graduate advising and mentoring is a process of transforming students into scholars and colleagues, Burns says.

"Mentoring each student is like twisting a kaleidoscope so that different parts of mentorship are lined up to match the different needs and circumstances," Burns says.

Yuguang "Michael" Fang

Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering, College of Engineering

Michael Fang prescribes to a famous Chinese saying — "A teacher for a day, and a father for life."

"Hence I work to develop a father-child relationship with my students. I care for them

as if they were my own children," Fang says.

Since 2002, Fang has been "father" to 17 Ph.D. students who have graduated and gone on to have impressive research records and to have landed excellent jobs.

"If a professor's personal achievement could be measured through the glories of his students, I can say that I am a very happy man."

Much of Fang's teaching and fathering occurs on his famous "research walks."

"Walking by the Century Tower, the Swamp, Lake Alice, etc., we talked about everything, from research to everyday life, from the economy to literature," says former student Pan Li.

Lynda Lee Kaid

*Professor of Telecommunications
College of Journalism & Communications*

Lynda Lee Kaid is one of the world's most respected scholars in the field of political communications, but to her graduate students she is a mentor and friend they know they can turn to long after they graduate.

"From the beginning, I view them as colleagues who work with me, not for me,"

Kaid says. "I truly believe they give as much to me as I give them."

"Lynda doesn't try to mold students into versions of herself — rather, she helps them learn the skills to do their own life's work," says former student Colleen Connolly-Ahern.

Karen Kainer

Associate Professor of Tropical Forestry, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Center for Latin American Studies

Just as Karen Kainer works to develop community-based forest management programs in Latin America, so does she seek to develop a community of graduate students at the University of Florida.

"Bringing students together facilitates pragmatic student-to-student mentoring and learning," Kainer says.

By hosting "lab" meetings at her home, Kainer tries to show "that I, too, struggle with negotiating family, career and personal time — an important and comforting reality to share with students."

When doctoral student Cara Rockwell had a daughter while trying to complete her dissertation she knew she faced an increased challenge.

"But Dr. Kainer is an ideal example of an advisor who has been a sympathetic and encouraging voice for those students of hers who have had children," Rockwell says.

Douglas Levey

*Professor of Biology
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

Doug Levey's research explores bird behavior, conservation and the chemistry of wild fruits. Levey also founded and directs a graduate training program which pairs UF graduate students in science and engineering with teachers from disadvantaged middle schools in Alachua County.

"Every student is unique and none comes with an instruction manual," Levey says.

Among the students whose lives he has changed is John Poulsen, a former doctoral student now at the Woods Hole Research Center.

"Four things set Doug apart as a mentor: his enthusiasm for mentoring in science; his ability to work with a diversity of people; his role as a facilitator of learning; and his vision of and appreciation for the broader impacts of science," Poulsen says.