

In 1991 the Mathematical Association of America instituted Awards for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics in order to honor college or university teachers who have been widely recognized as extraordinarily successful, and whose teaching effectiveness has been shown to have had influence beyond their own institutions.

Citation

Dr. Jana Gevertz

The New Jersey Section of the Mathematical Association of America is pleased to present its 2016 sectional award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics to Dr. Jana Gevertz of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ).



Dr. Gevertz is an extraordinarily successful teacher of undergraduate mathematics. She excels both as a teacher in the classroom, and as a mentor and advisor of undergraduate research and capstone projects outside of the classroom. She is a department leader in undergraduate research, and in the development and revision of courses and curricular programs. She has also shared her wisdom and experience with other instructors through pedagogical talks at the JMM, in a PRIMUS article, and through her current service as co-director of MAA-NJ Section NExT.

It is not an overstatement to say that Jana has established a new standard of teaching for her already teaching-oriented department. She is an incredibly energetic and talented instructor who has been

able to successfully create courses that are both welcoming and accessible as well as being challenging. Jana has been successful teaching at every level of the curriculum. She achieves this by both being a talented, dynamic lecturer and by using a discovery-based learning approach in her classroom. Student evaluations for her courses are incredibly high, with a 4.9 instructor average (on a 5 point scale) over her career. Jana creates a high level of student engagement in her classes by including projects and applications, including topics related to her research, and by creating an interesting, interactive, and supportive classroom in which the needs of each individual student are known.

Jana has also distinguished herself as a mentor of undergraduate research projects based upon her scholarship. Recently, she has been the mentor for over half of the department's math research students. Many of these students have presented their work at regional and national meetings (e.g., JMM), and she has co-authored a paper with an undergraduate. Jana stays in close contact with her research students after they graduate, and her mentorship, both academic and non-academic, has been a contributing factor in their success.

Jana has also had a significant impact on undergraduate education with her curriculum development work. She helped realign the Differential Equation syllabus (in 2012) to better conform with the national practices now clearly laid out in the MAA's CUPM recommendations for an Ordinary Differential Equations course. In particular, she shifted its focus from primarily analytic methods by incorporating more numerical methods and adding a dynamical systems slant. As part of the redesign, Jana collaboratively created a course-culminating project related to her research area of mathematical oncology. Jana and her colleague Leona Harris established a new departmental course in Mathematical Biology. This course attracts a diverse set of students from biology and physics, as well as from mathematics. The success of this course has had a clear impact in increasing the number of science students double-majoring and minoring in math, and in the number pursuing interdisciplinary undergraduate research projects. At the program level, Jana had a leading role in the development of the department's

new Applied Mathematics specialization (2012) and the college's Computational and Mathematical Biology minor (2015).

Jana, a Project NExT fellow, has also served as co-director of MAA-NJ Section NExT (2015-present; current cohort of 16 fellows). She and co-director Kaaren Finberg successfully organized three meetings with eight workshops focused on the professional development of new faculty in the section. Workshops on "Group Teaching" and "Inquiry Based Learning" have helped to encourage fellows to experiment with active learning strategies.

Altogether, Jana has made an exceptional impact as a teacher both inside and outside the classroom during the past six years.

Professor Thomas R. Hagedorn of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, The College of New Jersey, nominated Dr. Jana Gevertz for this Distinguished Teaching Award.

Response from Professor Gevertz

It is a great honor to join the list of distinguished faculty that have been recognized by the MAA-NJ Section for their teaching. This honor is amplified when I realize that my name now appears on the same list as my outstanding undergraduate Advanced Calculus teacher, Dr. Amy Cohen, and one of my tireless mentors from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) who has provided me with so much support during my career, Dr. Karen Clark.

I will always be grateful that my Ph.D. advisor from Princeton University, Dr. Salvatore Torquato, was supportive of my deep pedagogical interests and my career goal of working at an undergraduate-oriented institution. Not all thesis advisors would be thrilled with a student seeking out teaching opportunities when they were not required to teach to fund their graduate studies! I am confident that this support was instrumental in getting the opportunity to work at TCNJ. And, speaking of, I am impossibly appreciative that the Department of Mathematics and Statistics took the risk of hiring a newly-minted Ph.D. who clearly cared about teaching, but didn't necessarily have a ton of experience to go along

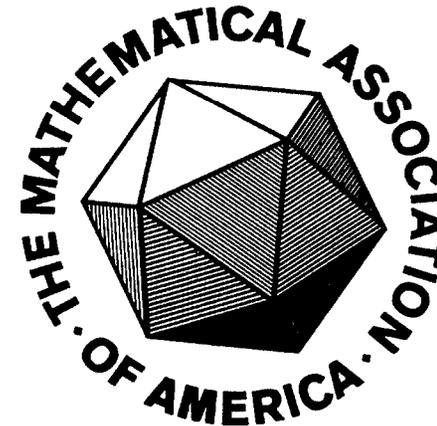
with her passion. Fortunately, participation in Project NExT went a long way in helping a green educator develop as a reflective teacher-scholar who is (sometimes!) willing to take pedagogical risks in the classroom.

My wonderfully supportive colleagues at TCNJ have greatly contributed to my growth as a teacher. While I can always look towards my many colleagues for support, I am particularly indebted to Dr. Carlos Alves for challenging me to be unafraid of challenging my students, and Dr. Farshid Safi (now at University of Central Florida) for sharing his wealth of teaching-related wisdom, and for showing confidence in my abilities as an educator. While all of this support is important, none of what we do in the classroom matters without our students. I am infinitely grateful to the wonderful students I have worked with at TCNJ – they are kind, curious, hard-working, and always more grateful of my teaching efforts than I believe is warranted. They make teaching so much more than just a "job" for me. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Dan, my parents, and other close family and friends for their continuous support and understanding that the job of an educator is not one that works on a 9-5 schedule, and not one that is easily put down at the end of the day.

**RECIPIENTS OF MAA-NJ DISTINGUISHED
TEACHING AWARD**

Sr. M. Stephanie Sloyan, Georgian Court College	1992
Eileen Polani, St. Peter's College	1993
Richard Bronson, Fairleigh Dickinson University	1994
Siegfred Haenisch, The College of New Jersey	1995
Andrew Demetropoulos, Montclair State University	1996
Roger Pinkham, Stevens Institute of Technology	1997
Virginia Lee, Brookdale Community College	1998
Amy Cohen, Rutgers University-New Brunswick	1999
Janet H. Caldwell, Rowan University	2000
Evan Maletsky, Montclair State University	2002
Stephen J. Greenfield, Rutgers University-New Brunswick	2003
Arthur Schwartz, Mercer County Community College	2004
Bonnie Gold, Monmouth University	2006
Bruce G. Bukiet, New Jersey Institute of Technology	2008
Thomas Osler, Rowan University	2009
Robert L. Wilson, Rutgers University	2010
Brian P. Hopkins, Saint Peter's College	2011
Diana M. Thomas, Montclair State University	2012
Sarita Nemani, Georgian Court University	2013
Karen Clark, The College of New Jersey	2014
Denis Blackmore, New Jersey Institute of Technology	2015

**MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
NEW JERSEY SECTION**



**Award for Distinguished College or
University Teaching of Mathematics**

Spring Meeting

**Saturday, April 16, 2016
William Paterson University
Wayne, New Jersey**

MEMBERS OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

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