



Passing It On

Pacific's Faculty Mentor Award

BY PAULA SHEIL '75

Mentoring must be sought, accepted and nurtured. This effort is so important to the culture of Pacific that it's now recognized with the Pacific Alumni Association's Faculty Mentor Award. PAA initiated the award four years ago to honor professors who have changed the lives of students and alumni. At an awards luncheon in Raymond Great Hall on August 27, four professors — Mark Ealey, Larry Meredith, Jon Schamber and Ruth Brittin — each received a Golden Apple, symbolizing the impact their mentoring has had on students and alumni.

They were nominated by former students, many of whom came to lend congratulations.



Nomination forms for the 2012 Faculty Mentor Awards are available at PacificAlumni.org.

Ruth Brittin

Music Education

"I am preparing students who will become colleagues and fit into this large family," says Professor Ruth Brittin, a music education professor in the Conservatory of Music and the Benerd School of Education. She arrived at Pacific in 1997 and quickly expanded the classroom to include past and present students and the wider musical and educational collectives.

Her nominator, Anthony Dahl '03, directs the bands at Manteca High School and teaches instrumental music. Brittin was more than his adviser and instructor; he says her presence is felt in his everyday teaching life.

"I always felt like I could get honest, authentic feedback from her without feeling judged or unsupported in any way," Dahl says. "The teacher turnover rate is just crazy — something like 33 percent quit in the first three years — and the only way to stop it is to help each other get the tools we need to be successful sooner."

This award is especially meaningful to Dr. Brittin because "it comes from somebody who has had time to reflect on his time here as a student and is now out in the community teaching.

It's an acknowledgment of a long, meaningful relationship."



Mark Ealey Black Studies (Emeritus)

On a recent Saturday morning, Alan G. Green '88 reviewed a graduate research proposal for one of his former students before heading to his son's football game. Mentoring comes easily to Green, now a professor at the University of Southern California, because he was mentored by Professor Mark Ealey.

Now retired, Ealey founded the Black Studies Department in the College of the Pacific in the '70s and advised the Black Student Union.

Green was a young black athlete at Pacific in the mid-1980s and says Ealey helped him navigate the University system. It was the first time Green had experienced a class full of black students with a black professor talking about black issues.

"The discussion related to me, and all around me were people like me, and it was coming from a man like me," Green says. He says it helped him to be "able to interact with anyone and everyone in an appropriate way."

"As teachers, we share our understanding of life with students," Ealey says. "It's my way of life and reason for being."



Jon Schamber '74, '75 Communication

Communication professor Jon Schamber '74, '75 says "a close and caring interaction has long been emphasized at Pacific."

A Pacific alumnus, Schamber returned to his alma mater in 1980 to assume the responsibilities of *his* mentor, Paul Winter, former director of forensics. Schamber also has directed the general education program and Mentor Seminars (now called Pacific Seminars), and served as associate dean.

"You can't force mentoring on a student. It's always a serendipitous thing when rapport develops," he says, but adds, "mentoring is longer lasting, not just restricted to a couple of years like advising a student." That holds true for Pam Gibbs '92, who nominated Schamber. They still maintain contact nearly two decades after her graduation.

"There was a point we when were no longer professor and student; we were colleagues," Gibbs says. Gibbs came to Pacific at age 25, the mother of an 18-month-old child. She faced numerous personal challenges, but says Schamber still expected no less of her in class.

"He made me feel valued. He was the right teacher at the right time," says Gibbs.



Larry Meredith Religious Studies (Emeritus)

In the cluster colleges, created in the 1960s, mentoring was a natural by-product of the small student populations and close contact with professors, says Professor Larry Meredith, religious studies professor emeritus.

"When I came to Pacific, I was excited about being in the community of students. We were with the students all the time," says Meredith. In 1966, he became the dean of the Chapel and professor of humanities at Callison College.

Meredith, however, doesn't acknowledge mentoring as a special aspect of teaching. Rather, he claims "teaching is a celebration of freedom and love, a kind of temple. I wanted to be the 'temple of the unfamiliar.' I wanted students to defrock me. If that's mentoring, that's what I did." Many former students found that philosophy liberating.

"Dr. Meredith had the ability to know what was going on internally in students, then to guide them through turmoil to the other side of intellectual and spiritual synthesis and integration," says David Harnish '76 in his nomination.

"I cannot think of a better mentor I have had in my life."