

Applause, Applause

Foundation commends superior scholars

Music. Architecture. Computer science. Literature. • Recipients of the UL Lafayette Foundation's Distinguished Professor and its Excellence in Teaching awards excel in different fields. But they have much in common: superior scholarship, initiative and exceptional teaching skills. They also have the respect of their peers, who selected them to be honored by the Foundation. • This year's Distinguished Professors are Dr. Susanna Garcia, an associate professor of music; Dr. Vijay Raghavan, a professor of computer science; and Dr. Mary Ann Wilson, an associate professor of English. Hector Lasala, a professor of architecture, will receive the Excellence in Teaching Award.

The educators will be honored during a banquet on April 24 at the Holidome.

"We believe that exceptional faculty members are crucial to UL Lafayette's continued development," said Joel Gooch, president of the UL Lafayette Foundation. "These awards express our appreciation for their work."

The Foundation has sponsored the annual Distinguished Professor Award since 1964 and the Excellence in Teaching Award since 1992.

MUSICIAN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Dr. Susanna Garcia

Music is something that governs your life. You don't pick it; it picks you."

That's how Susanna Garcia, an

associate professor of music, explains her career choice.

As a child, she listened with fascination to her mother's records of renowned pianist Arthur Rubenstein. "I naturally understood what he was conveying with each piece," she said during a recent interview. That innate talent prompted her to share musical interpretation with others.

"To be a good player, you need to figure out what it is you want to say with the music. It's like being an actor. You have a script, and are a liaison between the words and the audi-

ence," she said. So, she essentially helps music students become more polished actors.

Garcia is the Ruth Stodghill Girard/BORSF Regents Professor at UL Lafayette and the university's coordinator of keyboard studies.

A.C. Himes, director of UL Lafayette's School of Music, wrote in a letter of recommendation that Garcia, "systemically makes sacrifices of her own time and energy for the betterment of all aspects of the School of Music's programs."

For instance, Garcia and Raymond Goodrich, president of Lafayette Music Company, are raising more than \$100,000 to rebuild the School of Music's two Steinway concert grand pianos and to acquire two additional Yamaha semi-concert grand pianos.

In 1999, Garcia co-authored a Board of Regents Support Fund grant



Dr. Susanna Garcia

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of \$137,000 to install a new concert shell in Angelle Auditorium.

"This single installation has revolutionized the performances — changing completely the acoustical environment for every musician who performs in the hall," said Gordon Brooks, dean of UL Lafayette's College of the Arts, in a letter nominating her for the Foundation's award.

But, he added, "Dr. Garcia's most outstanding contribution, and the one that qualifies her so ably for this award, is her research."

A musician's research typically consists of performances. Garcia has performed from Rome to Rayne, but she has also embraced written research. Her work has been published in numerous professional journals and she has presented papers at national conferences.

In March, she presented "The Erotics of Music in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*" at the National Association for Humanities Education national conference in Portland, Ore. Her co-presenter was Dr. Mary Ann Wilson, a fellow recipient of the 2001 Distinguished Professor Award.

FREEDOM TO FAIL LEADS TO SUCCESS

Hector Lasala

Hector Lasala is building more than high-rise designs at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The professor of architecture is also molding students into creative individuals who compete successfully against Ivy League schools for careers in the design industry.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that Hector is one of our most outstanding educators in the School of Architecture," said Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts. "He has been at ground zero for every major change in the curriculum."

Lasala credits his success in the classroom to the teaching style that's

prevalent within his department.

"We have a very student-centered approach to teaching," said Lasala. "Our aim is to offer each of our students an environment where each can be free and confident to explore and risk, fail and succeed, to discover and develop a personal way of designing through which to execute works of the highest quality."



Hector Lasala

One of Lasala's former students said that approach helped jump-start her design career.

"Shortly after graduation, I moved to Los Angeles hoping to break into a recessed job market and worried about competing with graduates from Ivy League or other cutting-edge architecture schools," said Paula May Peer, a 1990 USL graduate. "With a portfolio of my work from the university, I had no problem obtaining a great job with a creative firm. I have had a very successful career to date and am thankful for the solid background and work ethic I developed as a student of Professor Lasala."

Lasala shares his teaching style with the Kennedy Center's Partners in Education program. For more than six years, he has participated in this national program.

"His partnership team has demonstrated continued commitment to the professional development of teachers and has created a program that has become a model to which the other partnership teams aspire," said Barbara

Shepherd, director of the Kennedy Center. "Along with his local partners, he has made numerous presentations at annual meetings of our membership, sharing the success and innovations of his work at the university and in Lafayette, thereby extending his work and the reputation of UL Lafayette nationally."

In addition, Lasala is a member of a committee working toward establishment of The Acadiana Visual and Performance Arts Center in Lafayette; a presenter and member of the Curriculum Planning Committee of Leadership Lafayette; and past recipient of the Blue Key Faculty Excellence Award at UL Lafayette.

"Teaching is all about growing and learning," said Lasala. "And I love teaching. It is what keeps me as excited as I was about architecture when I was a student. It's something I can't get complacent about. My students and my work keep me on my toes and I like it that way."

RESEARCHER'S INTERESTS CONTINUE TO MULTIPLY

Dr. Vijay Raghavan

Dr. Vijay Raghavan is an expert in digital information retrieval.

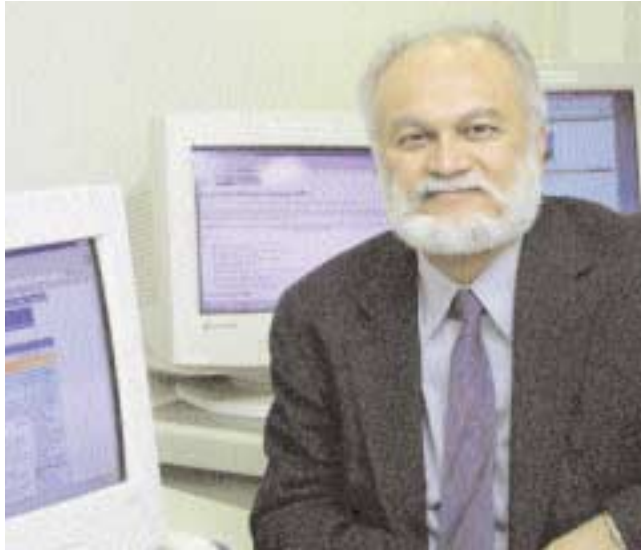
The computer science professor in UL Lafayette's Center for Advanced Computer Studies is known nationally and internationally for his research contributions in that field. But his interests and accomplishments reach far beyond.

He enjoys collaborating with graduate students and other researchers, so he must juggle many projects at once.

"Everyone has some strength and everyone has something to contribute. I try to be very inclusive and work with a lot of people," he explained. "So, I get pulled in so many directions."

A review of his work shows that he's a well-rounded scholar who eagerly shares his research findings in the

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Dr. Vijay Raghavan

classroom and who applies his knowledge in practical ways.

One of Raghavan's most recent interests is database security. He and his former student, Dr. Tom Johnsten, have developed safeguards and new security policies during data mining, which looks for useful patterns within sets of data. For example, a business could use data mining to track customers' product preferences, but keep sensitive information confidential.

"In another evolving area, (semi-structured) multimedia data search, Dr. Raghavan and his team have developed algorithms and techniques for multimedia retrieval from document collections (such as those on the web) that will guarantee a high level of accuracy and coverage," said Dr. Magdy Bayoumi, director of CACS.

Although Raghavan spends a lot of time developing and testing theories, he makes it a point to apply his skills to specific projects. For example, his group developed a Web-enabled system that scientists at the National Wetlands Research Center in University Research Park can use to keep track of more than 8,000 photographic slides.

Through his efforts, UL Lafayette established video conference facilities. And, he helped develop a research program that has brought together students and faculty from UL Lafayette and Southern University in Baton Rouge.

Students benefit from Raghavan's

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intellectual curiosity and desire to be familiar with the latest technology.

The CACS professor introduced courses in several emerging areas, such as data mining, data warehousing and the technical side of e-commerce, and UL Lafayette was first in Louisiana to offer them. "I've tried to be very current. I would sort of stick my neck out and do things that I know very little about and

learn as I go," he said, smiling.

CHANGE INVIGORATES VETERAN EDUCATOR

Dr. Mary Ann Wilson

The University of Southwestern Louisiana (now UL Lafayette) didn't offer any courses in women's literature when Dr. Mary Ann Wilson joined its faculty in 1985.

"I thought, 'We need to get with the times and have this,'" she recalled during an interview in her Griffin Hall office this spring. So, she began teaching English 380, "Readings in Literature by Women." The class has been filled every semester it has been offered.

Recently, Wilson and a colleague, Dr. Yung-Hsing Wu, proposed creation of a women's studies minor. Dr. David Barry, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, supported the idea.

"We got it on the books," Wilson said of the interdisciplinary liberal arts minor. She is optimistic that a women's studies major or graduate certificate in women's studies will be established in the future.

Many female students, she explained, are amazed when they read the work of women writers because it mirrors their own lives.

"They say, 'Wow! She's writing about me.' It's the same thing that happened when African American literature became part of the university curriculum. African American students had that same shock of recognition."

Wilson's academic initiative was one reason she was chosen by her peers to receive the 2001 Distinguished Professor Award.

Dr. Carolyn Bruder, chair of UL Lafayette's Department of English, describes Wilson as "a composite of the qualities and qualifications sought in our Distinguished Professors: preeminence in scholarship, pedagogy and service."

Wilson is noted for frequently teaching new courses. Subjects have ranged from the motherhood archetype in literature to the sexual politics of Jane Austen. "I have to do that to keep myself revitalized as a teacher," she said.

The associate professor finds it particularly rewarding to watch female graduate students' confidence grow as they hone their academic skills with her guidance.

"And then they go off to their own jobs and they write back to you and say, 'You helped shape my career' or 'You set me on the right path.' It's a kind of immortality, I guess."



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Dr. Mary Ann Wilson