

COMMITTEE ON DISTINGUISHED TEACHING

NOMINATION FOR THE 2019-2020 DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

The Committee on Distinguished Teaching is pleased to nominate an outstanding educator as recipient of the 2019-2020 Distinguished Teaching Award.

Associate Professor Rebekah Richert

Associate Professor Rebekah Richert joined the Department of Psychology in 2005. Her research investigates the development of religious concepts and the influence of media and technology on children's thinking. Dr. Richert's teaching evaluations for both large and small courses are consistently outstanding. She has taught Introduction to Psychology (PSYC002) to more than 550 students; Cognitive Development (PSYC163) to 150 students, and an Undergraduate Seminar (PSYC169) to 24 students. Impressively, she developed and teaches an intensive laboratory course, Child Development (PSYC182E), to 20-25 students. Dr. Richert also teaches the graduate seminar course PSYC258.

Dr. Richert has mentored 11 Ph.D. students since promotion to Associate Professor in 2011. She trains ~20 undergraduate student researchers every year, and her ability and effectiveness as a mentor has been recognized with several awards.

Dr. Richert's letters and teaching evaluations emphasize her depth of knowledge, overall effectiveness as a teacher, enthusiasm, skill in delivering course material, and her superb mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students. She provides detailed feedback on student papers and encourages undergraduates to interact with primary sources of information from the scientific literature. Letters from undergraduate and graduate research mentees included comments such as "She saw my drive and believed in me...She took the time to help me grow....when speaking to her, it was always very apparent to me that she is someone who cares deeply for the development of every student....Dr. Richert's support and guidance in her class, and in her lab, provided me with the confidence to pursue graduate school and academia."

A unique and impressive feature of Dr. Richert's dossier was her leadership of a Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR) Transformations project funded by the National Science Foundation. CUR has the aim of bringing course-based undergraduate research experiences (CUREs) into undergraduate STEM education. Dr. Richert and other faculty from Psychology and Biology departments at UCR were successful in receiving a CUR award with the goal of transforming the undergraduate Psychology curriculum by embedding research across all 4 years of the program. Under Dr. Richert's leadership, the department has made great strides in meeting the goals of the project. The year 2 evaluation report from the external review team included a particularly strong endorsement of the educational leadership abilities of Dr. Richert: "The psychology team at University of California at Riverside is led by a strong, competent, motivated, and capable person. In an institution like this one, a project like CUR/TP needs a department level champion and UCR has that champion in Rebekah Richert. Through her leadership, she has developed a committed departmental team and engaged the entire department in this curricular initiative."

Finally, Dr. Richert's dossier was all the more impressive, as it was outstanding in all aspects: teaching, research and service. She is well-published and has been the PI on several significant grants that fund her research. Dr. Richert has also been extremely active and productive in university and professional service.

In summary, Dr. Richert has demonstrated exceptional teaching and mentoring of both undergraduate and

graduate students at UC Riverside. It is obvious from the letters and comments on evaluations that her guidance and teaching have greatly impacted the careers and lives of numerous current and former students. For her sustained achievement in teaching excellence and educational innovation, Prof. Richert is fully deserving of the Academic Senate's Distinguished Teaching Award.