

News Release

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Media Contact –Danielle Rush

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Communications Specialist
2300 S. Washington Street
Kokomo, IN 46904-9003
(765) 455-9414
darush@iuk.edu

IU Kokomo professor earns prestigious university teaching award

KOKOMO, Ind. — Eva White wants her students to dream, and she wants them to use literature as an inspiration.

“By reading literature, they can see all these possibilities of what they can do,” White said. “I want them to be empowered to reach out for what they want. It’s important to dream, and dream really big.”

White, associate professor of English at Indiana University Kokomo, has been recognized as one of IU’s best, earning the Herman Frederic Lieber Memorial Award for Teaching Excellence. She will be honored at the university’s Celebration of Distinguished Teaching on April 5 in Bloomington.

She sees the award as recognition for the great achievements on the IU Kokomo campus.

“This demonstrates the quality of our campus,” she said. “We have many talented faculty here. It also is validation for my efforts. Sometimes you need a boost to let you know what you’re doing is right and good.”

Interim Chancellor Susan Sciame-Giesecke is proud to have a faculty member earn the honor.

“Eva is very deserving of this award, as she is one of the most passionate teachers I know,” she said. “She exemplifies the high quality instruction students receive from a faculty committed to student success. Our students choose to study at IU Kokomo because of teachers like Dr. White.”

Scott Jones, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, said the award is well deserved.

“Dr. White is an innovative classroom teacher,” he said. “She has taught more than 25 different courses during her five and half years on campus. Not only has she developed a wide variety of unique and outstanding courses at the undergraduate and graduate level, she has explored alternative delivery methods, such as hybrid and online teaching formats.”

He said in addition to being an outstanding teacher, she is a generous colleague, sharing her expertise with other faculty to help them grow as teachers.

Outside the classroom, she founded the campus literary magazine, “From the Well House,” and redesigned the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.) program.

Marjorie Schaeffner, a 2010 graduate and current M.A.L.S. student, has taken at least 10 classes with White, and worked with her on the magazine. She plans to teach English at the college level, modeling her classroom style on White’s.

“Eva White has definitely had an influence on how I teach,” she said. “She makes you think, and isn’t one to just stand up and give you the answers. She pushes you deeper and deeper, which I think is a great way to study literature.”

White believes her strength as a teacher is she tries to meet her students where they are, without lowering expectations for their achievement.

“You can be great in your specialty area, but unless you are communicating it effectively to your students, it’s not very useful,” she said. “I try to teach at different levels, to meet the students where they are starting. I’m demanding, too, but you can be demanding of the students as long as you give them the tools to accomplish it.”

She brings an international perspective to her students, through her own experiences. White was born in Galicia, a region of Spain, grew up in Switzerland, and has lived in England, Ireland, and Saudi Arabia.

“I bring the world to my students through books,” she said. “When we read a novel, I bring in maps, lots of cultural references and current events that correspond with the novel.

She teaches a variety of literature classes, and has developed courses with professors in history and sciences. She teaches traditional classes in the classroom, along with hybrid classes, which include both online and classroom experiences, and courses that are completely online.

White enjoys the challenge of creating new classes, usually based on her own research and interests.

“It’s my joy, but it’s also my challenge,” she said. “It keeps me enthused and engaged in the classroom. You can’t expect students to be engaged and enthused if you are

not.”

White also developed IU’s only Irish studies minor, drawing on her own love of Irish literature. As a graduate student, she took a class that included a performance by an Irish musician, and the music felt familiar. The musician introduced a song he said was from Galicia, and she told him that was where she was born.

He told her she was a Spanish Celt, spurring her to study the overlapping beliefs between the two countries.

“It’s a part of Spain that looks a lot like Ireland,” she said. “They both have a lot of history of famine and immigration, and parallel paths seeking nationhood.”

White is also proud of her work with “From the Well House,” and the master’s program, because it gives more opportunities to IU Kokomo students.

“We have a lot of talented students who cannot move away to pursue their graduate studies,” White said. “This is an opportunity for them to earn advanced degrees here, and to enrich our region with more highly-educated employees.”

White earned her undergraduate degree from IU Kokomo in 1994, and won the outstanding humanities student award.

Her teaching achievements have previously been recognized with the IU Kokomo Claude Rich Award, which is the highest honor given on campus; and she’s twice received the IU Kokomo Trustees’ Teaching Award.

Despite all of these honors, White says her greatest achievements are her two sons, Eric, 32; and Neil, 31.

“They’re decent human beings, and even if they weren’t my sons, I would like them as people,” she said.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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