

Sacred Heart University

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James Castonguay



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[Dr. James Castonguay](#) of Redding, CT, associate professor in Sacred Heart University's [Department of Communication and Media Studies](#), and [Tuvana Rua](#) of White Plains, NY, professor of [Management](#) in the [John F. Welch College of Business](#), were honored for going "above and beyond" their expected duties as faculty members during Sacred Heart University's annual Commencement Breakfast for part-time adult students on May 15.



From left are Professor Tuvana Rua, President John J. Petillo and Dr. James Castonguay.

Also recognized were two students, Jennifer Johnson, who received the Gold Medal of Excellence, and Teresita Vega, who received Silver Medal of Excellence. They were selected based on their grade point average.

Dr. Castonguay, also the director of the [Master of Arts in Communication \(MACOMM\) program](#), and Prof. Rua were selected by their students, who are invited to nominate professors who demonstrate a genuine interest in them and their subject matter, use an active teaching style in the classroom to encourage greater participation, make good use of technology to enhance learning and in other ways to stimulate a heightened interest in the course work. A [University College](#) committee screens the nominations. The awards were first presented in 2004.

Dr. Castonguay has been with the Department of Communication and Media Studies for 12 years, and served as its founding chairperson from 2003-2009. He has published on film, television and digital media in journals like *American Quarterly*, *Cinema Journal*, *Global-e*, *Discourse*, and the *Hitchcock Annual*, and has written for several anthologies and encyclopedias.

He was the recipient of SHU's Marian Calabrese Outstanding Faculty Award in 2005, and has served as the Information Technology Officer and Webmaster for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. He is a contributing writer to the human rights magazine, *Witness*, published by Vision Project (<http://visionproject.org>), and is writing a book about the media and the war on terror. Prior to joining the faculty at SHU, Dr. Castonguay taught at the University of Michigan in the Department of Communication Studies and the Program in Film and Video Studies. He received his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and his undergraduate degree from Clark University.

He describes the University College students as "self-directed and motivated learners who understand the importance and appreciate the value of education. It has been extremely rewarding to work closely with them on their various projects and papers and in my online UC media studies courses. "While I always try to do anything I can to help all of my students succeed academically, I also realize that University College students often have additional obligations outside of school or face difficult obstacles that many of our full-time students are thankfully not burdened with to the same degree."

Because of those adult students' circumstances, he said he tries to make himself available to them as much as possible outside of the classroom through face-to-face meetings as well as video conferencing, e-mail and by phone. "I also try to give substantive responses to UC students' work and ideas because they engage seriously with the course materials and deserve the same kind of substantive feedback from me."

On being selected for the award, he said, "It is especially rewarding to me to be recognized by UC students because they have consistently been among the most conscientious, smart and hard-working learners in my classes. To think that I may have played a small role in helping some of them reach their educational goals is extremely pleasing - and humbling - to me."

University College offers educational opportunities for working adults who must often balance family and career responsibilities with pursuing advanced education. Mary Lou DeRosa, the dean of University College, said the "21st-century students" – as they are now called – are 23 and older who are returning to higher education or entering for the first time. They juggle family, work and other responsibilities while attending classes. Many, she said, have come to SHU because they see the value in this economy to have a degree. Others, some of whom received their associate's degrees from the community colleges, are completing their education. They pursue degrees through University College in a cross-section of majors.

"They value their time in the classroom," said Dean DeRosa of the adult students. "They are investing their time and money and they work hard." The students' focus and accomplishments, too, are recognized by the faculty members, who give them a standing ovation at commencement. "It is heartwarming to see," she said.

Prof. Rua has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Bogazici University, a Master of Business Administration from University of Monaco and a Master of Arts in Integrated Marketing and Communications from Emerson College. She is currently completing a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior at the City University of New York. Her primary areas of research focus on ethical and group decision-making and across cultures.

On receiving the recognition, Prof. Rua said, "I was honored and humbled by this award. This was my first year teaching University College students, and throughout both semesters, despite the accelerated and condensed format, the dedication, motivation and the professionalism of the University College students made the time fly for me in class. I am very happy to hear that they felt the same way about their experience in my classroom"

She adds, "My interactions with the University College students in the [AHEAD](#) sections and the discussions we had in these classes have been so rich that it was a pleasure to be part of these students' experience at SHU."

She said University College students bring in a tremendous amount of value to the classroom due to their working background, maturity and motivation. "These students, in my opinion, are closer to our [MBA](#) students in terms of profiling and as a result can analyze the business situations we discuss at a deeper level and can relate to the concepts that are discussed much more easily," she said. "Therefore, my role in these classes has been more of a devil's advocate, promoting them to

think in ways that they didn't think before and then grounding these thoughts back in the theories that we are supposed to be discussing in the outlined course.”

To do that, she said, she constantly challenges their analytical reasoning and creates an atmosphere in the classroom where it is not only acceptable but it is expected to intellectually challenge both the instructor and their peers in a professional way.

“As a result, I have structured my classes in a more practical approach where students engage in behavioral exercises, debates and in-class discussions while ensuring that I cover the required theoretical background. I also try to make sure that they practice their public speaking, not only during the group discussions and class discussions, but in a more structured format in which they would have to stand up in front of an entire audience not only to present a project that they worked on throughout the semester but also to present it at a moment's notice in a format that is understandable by their audience.”

University College has approximately 700 adult part-time students and 19 of them graduated on May 15.