Loris Honored by Academic Organizations

Michelle Loris, Sacred Heart University

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Sacred Heart University English Professor Michelle Loris of Fairfield has recently been honored by several academic organizations. The awards will positively influence SHU’s new core curriculum that will be introduced in the fall of 2015. Loris is the current Connecticut Professor of the Year and is acting dean of SHU’s College of Arts & Sciences.

The Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) accepted Loris’ application for participation in the ACTC Columbia-Yale Core Text Summer Seminar on “Tradition and Innovation.” Just 15 international teams from such institutions as American University of Iraq-Sulemani, Xiamen University, Mercer University, Boston University and Universidad de Navarra were chosen to participate. Loris chose English Professor Joe Nagy and Art Professor Nathan Lewis, both members of the Core Curriculum Committee, to participate. This two-week seminar was sponsored by the Teagle Foundation, the Bradley Foundation and ACTC and took place at Columbia and Yale. Its goal was to teach participants about the value and importance of teaching great books.

“An important component we experienced at the “Tradition and Innovation” seminar was the fluidity and connection between the texts. We want the students and faculty to understand the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) as a continuum that reaches to the present, that we are all connected to this tradition and have a role to play in its future,” Lewis said. “Choosing texts that relate and build off of each other is a way to encourage this understanding of a continuum and a foundation. Our committee is currently actively involved in this process of choosing texts as well as looking for ways of supporting the program and dialogue through colloquia, discussion groups, events and exhibitions. The directors of the seminar were very positive about the Great Books program we are building and thought the program would bring prestige to the university. It was an honor for us to be a part of the seminar and to represent SHU there.”

Loris has also been invited by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) to be part of a group of eight drafting a booklet on the core qualities of the CIT. Since no such
publication currently exists, the ACCU seeks to facilitate the creation of a booklet that would provide an introduction to the core qualities of the CIT for faculty, in print and electronic form, by 2015. The group has already begun to work on the project via phone and will do the bulk of the work during a retreat in Washington, D.C., over the weekend of July 25-27. Afterwards, the team will continue to meet by conference call with a goal of presenting a solid first draft by early next spring.

The ACCU is also funding a project submitted by Loris and English Professor Marie Hulme entitled “Assessment Methodology for Core Curriculum Courses on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.” The grant allows the two professors to develop a methodology for assessing whether the CIT has been successfully incorporated into the new core curriculum, Loris said.

The signature academic piece of the new core curriculum will be two seminars entitled “The Human Journey Seminars: Great Books in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.”

“The three grants are important because they will help enhance the committee’s ability to launch our signature academic piece,” Loris noted. “Seminars I and II will be the foundation of the new core curriculum, and all students will take both courses beginning in their sophomore or junior years.”