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New President's Teaching Scholar combines humanities, technology ^[1]

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DENVER ? Diane Sieber, an associate professor of humanities in the College of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has been named a President's Teaching Scholar in recognition of her success in teaching the humanities through technology.

Raised in Spain, Sieber earned graduate degrees in Spanish literature at Princeton, and joined the CU-Boulder faculty in 1993 as an assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. She later incorporated a part-time interest in computer programming, web design and social media into an integral and innovative part of how she teaches her students.

As a President's Teaching Scholar, Sieber joins a select group of university faculty members honored for their dedication to excellence in teaching, creative work, scholarship and research. Seventy-four professors have received the recognition since 1989. Those selected serve as teaching and research ambassadors on their respective campuses, and develop individual, departmental and campuswide projects to assess classroom learning.

"This is both an honor and a great new challenge," Sieber said of the recognition. "I am looking forward to developing my scholarship of teaching and learning research project with the help of my new PTS colleagues, and to many years of ongoing collaboration and service work on campus."

Sieber is well-known for her interdisciplinary scholarship and her keen ability to establish a rapport with students through the use of digital technology. From July of 2004 to July of 2007, she served as co-director of the prestigious ATLAS Research Institute, and has served as director of the Herbst Program of Humanities in Engineering since July of 2007.

"Professor Sieber embodies all that we value in our faculty," said CU President Bruce D. Benson. "She is committed to ensuring our students have a well-rounded academic experience, and that reflects well on our mission as a public university dedicated to teaching and research excellence."

In a nomination letter, Brian M. Argrow, associate dean for education at the College of Engineering and Applied Science, wrote, "Diane has had a tremendous impact in the College of Engineering and Applied Science, and has led a "cultural revolution" in the engineering curricula."

In the fall of 2008, Sieber gained national media attention from an informal, in-class experiment she conducted after noticing that some students were distracted because they were busy e-mailing, blogging and playing online video games in class. She recorded the names of students who were "digitally distracted" before administering a written exam, and later announced that the average score of the "laptop subset" was a full 12 percent lower than that of the rest of the class.

Some of her students changed their ways and saw their test scores improve, but those who resisted repeated their lower academic performance, according to Argrow.

"Diane made it clear, however, that these results did not imply that digital devices should be outright banned from the classroom," the associate dean wrote in his nomination letter. "Instead, she recognized that these devices are ubiquitous and students learn most effectively in the world in which they live, not in the artificial world that is

sometimes created in the classroom environment.?

Read more about Professor Sieber and the Herbst Program of Humanities for Engineers at <http://www.colorado.edu/engineering/herbst/people> [2]

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