

**NERCHE Announces the Recipient  
of the 2009  
Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement  
for Early Career Faculty**

*"...The domain of knowledge has no one-way streets. Knowledge does not move from the locus of research to the place of application, from scholar to practitioner, teacher to student, expert to client. It is everywhere fed back, constantly enhanced. We need to think of knowledge in an ecological fashion, recognizing the complex, multifaceted and multiply-connected system by means of which discovery, aggregation, synthesis, dissemination, and application are interconnected and interacting in a wide variety of ways."*

—Ernest Lynton, "Knowledge and Scholarship" (1994)

Dr. Ernest A. Lynton framed faculty scholarly activity as inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented work in which academics share knowledge-generating tasks with the public and involve community partners as participants in public problem solving. At its core, this engagement is driven by "true partnership," a reciprocity by which "both sides [bring] their own experience and expertise to the project."

The annual Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement recognizes a faculty member who connects his or her teaching, research, and service to community engagement. Beginning this year, the Lynton Award is designated as an award for early career faculty—pre-tenure at tenure-granting campuses and early career (i.e., within the first six years) at campuses with long-term contracts.

The Lynton Award emphasizes engaged scholarly work across the faculty roles. The scholarship of engagement (also known as outreach scholarship, public scholarship, scholarship for the common good, community-based scholarship, and community-engaged scholarship) represents an integrated view of the faculty role in which teaching, research, and service overlap and are mutually reinforcing. It is characterized by scholarly work tied to a faculty member's expertise, it benefits the external community, and it is visible and shared with community stakeholders, while reflecting the mission of the institution. Indeed, the scholarly work of the 2009 recipients of the *Lynton Award* and the *Citation for Distinguished Engaged Scholarship* exemplifies how community engaged scholarship helps higher education better fulfill its academic and civic missions.

**2009 Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of  
Engagement for Early Career Faculty:**

***Nick Tobier***

**Assistant Professor, School of Art and Design  
University of Michigan**

This year, we are pleased to present the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty to **Nick Tobier, Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**. Through his scholarship, teaching, and publicly-oriented art, Nick has demonstrated an impressive commitment to engagement both within the University of Michigan and in the communities in which he lives and works. "My goal for engaged creative practice," he writes, "is to see the creative role as one that asks questions with communities rather

than offers pre-existing formal solutions. I am interested in expanding the definitions of what creative work can be beyond conventional forums, and so utilize broad cultural and social bases of creative collaboration, co-creation and expression—from performances and parades through food and gardens—as creative expressions in my research and pedagogical practices.”

As a reflection of this philosophy, Nick strives to unite engagement with the creative process in the courses he teaches. Since 2005, his course entitled “Detroit Connections,” involves undergraduate and graduate students from the School of Art and Design in teaching art to fourth-grade children in underserved Detroit public schools. In preparation for the teaching experience, Nick requires his students to spend considerable time becoming familiar and interacting with the neighborhoods and communities in which the school children live. This experience, as one colleague commends, “gives [the] students a much deeper understanding of the cultural, environmental, educational, and economic environment that is shaping their [mentees’] lives.” In a recently developed summer course, he and a group of undergraduates lived with families in Detroit while constructing an outdoor classroom at an urban farm run by a local soup kitchen.

Nick also teaches a required course in which first-year Arts and Design students spend two weeks building 14-foot-tall puppets for the annual FestiFools Parade in downtown Ann Arbor, a festival that Nick co-conceived and co-founded. Students are organized into “mini-communities” and collaborate on the design and construction of each puppet, sharing resources and ideas within their groups and with other groups, and generating collective artistic philosophies during the creative process. As one Arts and Design professor notes: “The institutional impact of this experience is enormous. Every student who is part of our Arts & Design program by the end of their first year...will have experienced what it is like to work together on something larger than their private vision and desires. They come away with a concrete awareness that in every subsequent class they take, there is an expectation of developing a language that has larger resonance within ever expanding layers of community.” Indeed, since its inception in 2006, the Festifools parade has become a community institution that draws hundreds of onlookers and participants each year, and has the enthusiastic support of Ann Arbor residents and business owners.

Nick’s academic and creative work also has international reach. After traveling to Suriname for a graduate exchange program, he returned the following year with a group of ten MFA students who spent six weeks working with undergraduate and graduate students at the Institute for Advanced Training of Teachers in Paramaribo. The following year he obtained grant funding to host two undergraduates and a faculty member from Paramaribo at the University of Michigan for a month. The undergraduates took classes with U of M students, and the faculty member was provided with studio space, conducted workshops, and lectured on his work.

In a testimonial to Nick’s impact on the School of Art and Design, his dean writes, “Tobier continues to influence and shape the outreach focus of the School’s curricula by identifying new and innovative ways to push students (and the discipline) beyond academic boundaries to create meaningful dialogue across socio-cultural-economic boundaries.” He continues, “Professor Tobier’s versatile artmaking practice, like his teaching, involves public interaction and inserts creative work beyond the gallery and into the streets (literally). His performances and performing objects foster profound contemplation and stimulate interactions across established social barriers—particularly those of class and race.”

**2009 Ernest A. Lynton Citation for Distinguished  
Engaged Scholarship for Early Career Faculty**

***Benjamin Kirshner***

Assistant Professor, **School of Education**  
**University of Colorado, Boulder**

and

***Michele Wakin***

Assistant Professor, **Sociology**  
**Bridgewater State College**

NERCHE is pleased to honor the work of both **Benjamin Kirshner** and **Michele Wakin** with *Citations for Distinguished Engaged Scholarship*.

**Benjamin Kirshner, assistant professor in the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder**, uses innovative community-engagement approaches in his scholarship and teaching in the areas of youth engagement and activism, a focus that stems from his early experience working as an educator in San Francisco's Mission District. He has designed courses that incorporate community-based research (CBR) to better understand the importance of "youth voice" and the formation of youth political identity and agency. These courses, such as his highly successful year-long "Action Research for Youth and Community Development" and "Youth Development, Citizenship and Social Justice," have provided undergraduate students with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to undertake collaborative research with community partners. Currently, he is conducting an on-going study of a community organization that mentors and supports young people who seek to become the first in their families to attend college. Ben has also been a lead participant in interdisciplinary scholarship of engagement projects with colleges and schools at UC-Boulder, and he is an active member of university's Institute for Ethical and Civic Engagement, serving on its steering committee since 2005. Emulating Boyte, Ben attempts "to conduct research as 'public work'" that addresses "problems of public significance" and that is "pursued collectively and builds bridges among people from diverse walks of life." This engaged approach, he writes, "has enabled me to...be a 'soldier' rather than a 'missionary.' A soldier puts himself in the trenches with the people with whom he works; he is part of the team rather than a detached observer."

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"My focus on inequality and social justice," writes **Michele Wakin, assistant professor of sociology at Bridgewater State College**, "unites my research, teaching, and service with the overall goal of drawing attention to and maximizing opportunities for social and educational growth and civic engagement... Raising awareness...is not enough. In order to create social change, we must engage all stakeholders in the process of discovering what issues we are best equipped to handle and tackling them collaboratively." Michele's interest in social justice began when she was a graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and her subsequent teaching and scholarship have highlighted and reinforced the connection between sustainability, social justice, and community activism. During her four years at Bridgewater State College (BSC), Michele has provided venues for her students to engage in service learning and community-focused research that require intensive collaboration with local homeless service organizations and meaningful

community outreach through courses like “Sustainable Cities” and “Homelessness in US Society.” In addition to her faculty work, Michele is co-coordinator of the Center for Sustainability at BSC, where she focuses on social justice issues, campus involvement, and student engagement. Among her many notable achievements in this position, is the development of the “Teaching Module Project,” a campus-based model that invites faculty and staff members to develop “teaching modules”—short lesson plans, videos, PowerPoint presentations, or classroom exercises—to share with other faculty. Additionally, Michele chairs BSC’s *Task Force to End Homelessness*, which involves students and faculty in regional and community efforts to reduce homelessness, and she initiated The Bridgewater Scholars Program, designed to offer scholarships, including tuition and fees, to qualified homeless applicants.

The presentation of the 2009 Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty will take place at the annual conference of the Coalition for Urban Metropolitan Universities (CUMU), “Building Community Resiliency: The Role of University Leadership,” hosted by Widener University in Philadelphia, PA, on October 12, 2009.