

Professor receives award

Lara Pudwell named Henry L. Alder recipient

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Valparaiso University math professor Lara Pudwell was awarded the prestigious Henry L. Alder award last month. This award is given every year to a professor in his or her beginning years of teaching, whose teaching has been extraordinarily successful. It is awarded by the Mathematical Association of America, Pudwell, who is in her sixth year of professorship, is at the perfect point in her career for this award.

What sets Pudwell apart is her teaching style. In every class, she attempts to make her teaching more collaboration than lecture. She tries to give students every opportunity they need to succeed, and the opportunity to experience the joy of discovery.

"Something that I've always admired about Dr. Pudwell is her efforts to reach the whole class," senior mathematics and computer science major, Timothy Goodrich said. "She takes it on herself to teach her students, not merely to get a paycheck, but to make a difference in their lives."

Pudwell also uses research to teach her students with things like counting problems. Her research involves finding a proof that explains why statements are true.

"I see my teaching and research as very intertwined," Pudwell said. "My research also affects my work in the classroom. My favorite course to teach so far is Experimental Math, which is a class I've developed. This

course lives on the boundary between research and teaching. Some of the class activities are directly inspired by research problems I've worked on in previous years."

Pudwell also added that counting problems makes teaching and researching easier for her to use and explain. This marriage of research and teaching helped her students come into their own as students of mathematics.

Goodrich was accepted into the North Carolina State graduate school next fall, and credits Pudwell as an integral influence on his academic career.

Ken Luther, the head of the Math Department, nominated Pudwell for the Alder Award.

"On a semester by semester basis, Professor Pudwell consistently receives the highest student evaluations in the department," Luther said.

Pudwell seems to have an effect on her students, inspiring them to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

"Basically, having Professor Pudwell as a role model allows students to go into the discipline with strong dedication, which strengthens the discipline as a whole," Luther said. "For students who are not inclined to pursue math as a discipline, she can still help them realize that math isn't terrible, has its own appeal, and perhaps those students can then help demonstrate that attitude to others."

"My favorite part of working at Valpo is the students," said Pudwell, "I've been fortunate to work with inquisitive, hardworking, and courteous students every semester I've been here. They, along with fantastic colleagues, are what make Valparaiso a community I'm proud to be a part of."

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