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Momany Named Teacher of the Year 2013

As Teacher of the Year for 2013 at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy Cory Momany strives to replicate the role of a thoughtful, challenging mentor in his classroom, just as his professors did at Rice University where he got his undergraduate degree in biochemistry.

“Often we would meet for meals and casual conversation,” said Momany who carries on that tradition every spring when he invites his students to a picnic at his home. “I try to connect with my students and develop a level of comfort with them that encourages conversation.”

He also tries to develop rapport through his quirky sense of humor, he said, noting that his students get candy rewards for correct answers and get to “keep” the class dinosaur for doing something really special in class.

Momany is an associate professor who teaches the biochemistry course and gives immunology lectures in the pathophysiology course. His research specialty and graduate-level teaching focus on protein x-ray crystallography, which is a method of using x-ray to derive atomic structures of proteins that could eventually lead to drug design.

“From the age of seven I knew I wanted to be a scientist. It wasn’t until later that I decided on teaching,” he said, adding that all of his family members – father, mother, sister and wife -- are educators, so he has had an affinity for teaching all his life. “At family dinners we would discuss educational philosophies and strategies.”

Momany’s teaching philosophy centers on active learning in which students are responsible for their own learning and the instructor serves as a mentor and guide.

“The critical aspect is that the instructor provides the focus but the learning comes from the student,” he said. “I expect students to be active in their own education through extra reading, watching videos, and searching the web outside of class and then engaging in discussion and problem solving during class.”

Momany’s greatest reward comes from “catching the spark in a student’s eye when they understand the material.” His enthusiasm is magnified, he added, when he works with high school students who participate in the College’s Summer Science Institute and UGA’s Young Dawgs and Young Scholars programs.

“These programs act, in part, as a recruitment tool for UGA but they also provide the opportunity to expose young minds to the possibility of careers in science,” he said, adding that all are targeted for diversity. “I do these programs voluntarily because I want to get them engaged and excited about science at an early age. That is crucial.”

Momany’s award consists of an engraved memento, a $1000 gift, funds to attend the American Association of College of Pharmacy meeting in Chicago and a $1000 permanent salary increase. He also will be recognized at UGA’s Faculty Recognition Banquet in April.