

# Professor teaches with alternative methods

BY REBECCA HYDE  
Staff Reporter

For Ann Mari May, teaching and learning alternative viewpoints in education is like viewing a sculpture.

"To understand it, you have to view it from a variety of angles," said May, a UNL associate professor of economics. "It's worth considering even though it's different and sometimes it's uncomfortable."

May spends each class day challenging her students to think critically about economics in history and its relationship with gender.

And University of Nebraska-Lincoln students rise to her challenge; not one student has called her course "easy" on an evaluation, but her upper-division classes always are full.

One alumna said the classes make students desire to learn more.

As a result, May received the University of Nebraska Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award this year.

But the recognition and its \$3,500 stipend haven't slowed her pace. May's enthusiasm for academia is still going strong, both inside and outside the classroom.

"In this freeze-dried culture where everything is presented to students in the easiest way possible," May said, "it's not an easy task to get students to think critically."

That's where her instructional creativity comes in. May takes risks, she said, and isn't afraid to try something different to make students think.

May doesn't think this is the secret to filling her classes, though. The subject matter is just interesting.

Economics is a very theoretical field. But May teaches economic history, which combines theory with reality and is more captivating, she said.

When she isn't teaching, she attends university committee meetings, works on reports for the committees or tries to finish a scholarly abstract or another type of paper — even when she's on vacation.

"I look forward to vacation because I get a chance to get more work done," May said.

“It's not an easy task to get students to think critically.”

ANN MARI MAY  
associate professor of economics

"Most days there is nothing that I would rather be doing (than working), although I think I'd like more opportunities to do more on campus."

A lot of work lingers on campus in two very important areas: encouraging faculty members' talents and building diversity, she said.

The university needs to provide more incentives for faculty members to do well, and post-tenure review doesn't do that, she said.

"The faculty are the heart of the university," she said. "We need to be more employee-friendly and build that into our management structure."

"The trend is away from that."

May also said the university must make serious changes in how it deals with diversity.

As part of her contribution to campus diversity, May developed a new course, Women and Work in the U.S. Economy, which examines women's economic roles since the nation's founding. Students in the class complete both traditional class assignments and undergraduate research projects that apply facts and statistics on gender and economy to the real world.

For instance, students first learn about occupational segregation — the traditional division of labor along gender lines — in the classroom.

Then students must go to a mechanic's garage or call a bank and interview employees on whether occupational segregation plays a role in their workplaces. Suddenly, the harsh reality of occupational segregation and people's aversion to dealing with it appear.

"Often (students) get hung up on, or people refuse to talk to them," May said. "Amazing things happen when they get out there."

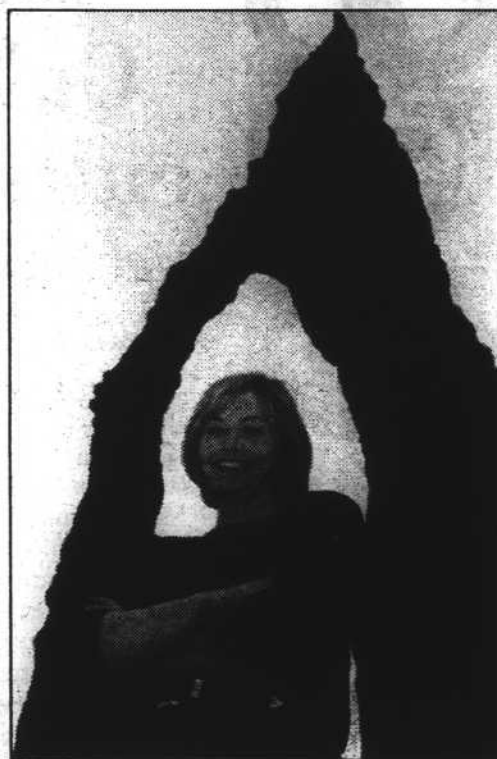
This kind of ingenuity in teaching has created a lasting impact on students, including Milissa Johnson-Wiles, a UNL alumna and Lincoln attorney.

"One of the things that impressed me the most was her ability to connect to the students and make them interested," Johnson-Wiles said. "In most classes you go in and information is regurgitated for you, but she would point out things to relate the whole picture."

Johnson-Wiles said she almost changed her major after taking three of May's classes.

In the end, the desire to become a lawyer won out. But Johnson-Wiles still remembers May's excitement and love of her field.

"You graduate college and there are profes-



JOHN HOUGHTON/DN  
ANN MARI MAY, associate professor of economics at UNL, stands beneath a campus sculpture. May recently received the University of Nebraska Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Awards.

sors who you remember more than others," Johnson-Wiles said. "She was one of those professors who had an impact."

## Law & Order

### Credit card scandal

Two people tried to defraud a department store out of more than \$2,000 in gift certificates with two fake credit cards.

A man and a woman tried to use questionable Hughes Aircraft Employees Federal Credit Union Visa cards to purchase thousands of dollars of Sears gift certificates Tuesday afternoon, Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

The couple split up and went to different departments of the store trying to buy the gift certificates.

The cards would not read when swiped through credit card scanners. However, when the account numbers were punched in by hand, the accounts were recognized but not approved.

The man tried to buy \$1,000 in gift certificates in the computer department before trying the same

thing, unsuccessfully, in the paint department.

When an employee started to question the man, he fled the store and was seen getting into a Chevrolet minivan outside.

He is described as a dark-haired white male in his late 20s, 5 feet 7 inches tall and 150 pounds.

The woman fared about as well with her card.

After trying unsuccessfully to buy the gift certificates in two departments, she also was confronted.

When asked for identification the woman flashed a driver's license and left the store.

She was later seen entering the same minivan as the man.

She is as 5 feet 5 inches tall, in her mid 20s and 110 pounds.

No loss was reported by the store, and both credit cards were seized.

### Clarification

A reference to political science professor David Forsythe may have been misinterpreted in

Wednesday's Page One story. Though Forsythe stepped down as chairman of the political science department, he is still a professor at the university and on leave in Europe this semester.

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