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For Immediate Release

SPIG Honors Mitzi Lewis as Teacher of the Year for 2013

Dr. Mary “Mitzi” Lewis, assistant professor at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, has been named Teacher of the Year for 2013 by the Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

SPIG will present Lewis with the award on Saturday, August 10, at noon during the group’s annual luncheon held in conjunction with the AEJMC convention in Washington, D.C.

“I’m really excited to know that Mitzi has been named Teacher of the Year this year,” said Dr. Kay L. Colley, SPIG head. “Mitzi is a wonderful colleague and teacher and exemplifies the true nature of a teacher.”

Lewis became an instructor at Midwestern State University in 2008, and she was promoted two years later. She has taught several undergraduate courses at Midwestern, including Publication Design, Computer-Assisted Reporting, Web Site Design, Multimedia Design, Introduction to Mass Communication, Foundations of Public Speaking, and an online course titled The Internet and Society.

Dr. Jim Sernoe, chair of the Mass Communication Department at Midwestern, wrote in a letter of support, “When Dr. Lewis joined the faculty in 2008, she was told that she was to take charge of the newly created digital media minor and to run with it. She was also told that because it was a new area – for us and for the rest of the mass communication education world – no one knew exactly what that would mean. In just four years, the mass media landscape has, again, changed considerably, leaving educators attempting to a) understand where the world of mass communication is going and b) figure out how to structure our curricula to address it all in ways that will adequately prepare our students. Dr. Lewis has met this challenge and then some.”

A former student described Lewis as “one of my most important mentors.” The student lauded Lewis’ “open-door policy,” saying, “She supports all students equally with a constructive and positive attitude, ensuring their academic success.”

Lewis earned her Ph.D. in educational research from the University of North Texas, and her dissertation was titled, *A Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Relationship Between Blog Reading, Online Political Activity, and Voting During the 2008 Presidential Campaign*. Lewis received both her master’s of arts degree in communication and her bachelor’s degree in university studies, with a concentration in communication, from the University of New Mexico.

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Lewis has served her university and several professional organizations in a variety of capacities. She has provided leadership for SPIG, serving as the Teaching Co-Chair and Webmaster. Additionally, she was on the ad hoc committee that explored and launched the interest group's first peer-reviewed journal, *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication*, where she served as co-editor in chief in the first year. The journal is completing its second year, and she is the publication's current production editor.

In addition to *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication*, Lewis has been published in the *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, *Behavior Research Methods*, *Workforce Education Forum*, and *Perspectives on Undergraduate Research and Mentoring*.

"I am humbled by this honor from an organization that serves faculty whose primary focus is on teaching, advising, and mentoring undergraduate students," Lewis said. "I've learned so much from my SPIG colleagues and from my colleagues at Midwestern State University. Jim Sernoe, chair of the MSU mass communication department and the person who introduced me to SPIG, has been a guiding force through my development as a teacher. I'm lucky to get to work with such bright, resourceful, and giving educators and with students who challenge and energize me every day."

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