

Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching

Dr. Karie Mize



Looking at a snapshot of Dr. Karie Mize's teaching career in 1994, when she taught 33 first graders, and today, as a teacher educator, one may think her career has taken a sharp turn, but on closer examination it's clear that throughout her career as an educator, Mize has been a tireless advocate for Latino communities. Mize, the 2010 recipient of the Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching, is an assistant professor in the Division of Teacher Education, focusing on bilingual education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

"Karie does an excellent job of showing students what it looks like to practice what you teach. Her drive to advocate for the Latino community is demonstrated in the classroom, but also through one-on-one conversations, and her involvement within the Western Oregon community," said Karen Ramirez, WOU graduate and former student of Mize. "This is a rare and special quality for any professor to have. Karie demonstrates in her teaching how to fight for and with the truth. When it comes to the field of education there is no one that gives it her all as much as her."

Mize's first teaching job in 1994 was in Los Angeles. She remembers the days when it was hard to keep track of who was present due to large class sizes and student turnover. There were a lot of variables as a teacher in that environment, trying to determine how to support each student while weighing the various sociopolitical complexities. She eventually moved to Lake Tahoe and taught both first and fourth graders in rural Latino communities as a bilingual teacher for six years. For her last year teaching young children, she moved to Sacramento to finish her doctorate, for which she had been commuting four hours to classes prior to the move.

After earning her Ed.D., Mize joined Western Oregon University in 2005, and has since taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She has also developed a sustainable, summer term study abroad opportunity for students and educators pursuing an ESOL endorsement by taking some of the required classes in Morelia, Mexico. This coordinates with the Bilingual Teacher Initiative, which recruits Latino and additive Spanish-speakers (like Mize) during their freshman and sophomore years to become bilingual educators. In addition to her service to the College of Education and the Division of Teacher Education, Mize dedicates her time to advising the WOU student Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) chapter, an organization that promotes higher education, and Chicano culture and history.

"Teaching cross-culturally added that personal dimension to a profession. I get teased a lot of being a workaholic, but maybe one of the reasons I'm okay with that balance is because there is so much of an overlap for me. I have a lot of personal connections I've made through my work," said Mize.

Dr. Hilda Rosselli, dean of the College of Education at WOU, appreciates Mize's dedication to her work. "Her enthusiasm, can-do spirit, and energy has attracted many students to our program and the courses she teaches frequently cause students to confront their own perceptions and biases. She is admired by many as a role model and will undoubtedly shape the lives of many of her students to become life-long advocates for issues of access and educational opportunity."

The Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching honors a full-time faculty member who demonstrates excellence in teaching and relationships with students, both in and out of the classroom. Once nominees are received, a screening committee submits a list of finalists to the president, who then chooses the recipient.