Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching

Hassan López
Professor, Department of Psychology and
Neuroscience Program
Associate Director of the Neuroscience Program

Hassan López has a stellar record of teaching, only some aspects of which can be highlighted in this brief citation.

Hassan teaches a variety of laboratory-based and lecture/discussion courses in both the Psychology Department and the Neuroscience Program. His courses are informed by the latest findings in rapidly evolving fields and a corresponding ongoing development of the material, a work which he finds both "energizing and enlightening."

Hassan sees education as a transformative experience, which he helps realize with a rich pedagogy that aims to cultivate a variety of intellectual, technical and personal virtues and skills. He intentionally deploys a number of well-crafted teaching strategies to attain this goal. Hassan sparks students' interest and passion by delivering exciting, engaging lectures. As he puts it: "A great lecture is one that sounds more like a story than a textbook chapter. There should be a theme that runs throughout, an identifiable beginning and end, and dramatic twists," which include "unexpected discoveries, scientific battles, frustrating mysteries, and exhilarating breakthroughs." With a variety of assignments and resources, as well as extensive feedback on their work and constant support, Hassan methodically leads his students to understand, master and critically assess both the process of scientific discovery and its empirical results. These efforts culminate in upper-level courses where students have the opportunity to creatively produce knowledge by proposing and designing novel scientific experiments after reviewing literature on a specific topic.

Hassan's work extends beyond the classroom as collaboration with students is an integral part of his research program, which informs, and is in turn often shaped by, students' ideas and interests. Each semester he leads a laboratory group of Neuroscience and Psychology majors. In his collaboration with them, he sets high standards for rigorous work and effective time management while creating a relaxed and exciting environment that fosters teamwork and collaboration rather than competition. Hassan has, so far, completed collaborative projects with over fifty Skidmore students both as co-presenters at professional conferences and co-authors of peer-reviewed journal articles.

Students universally express admiration and appreciation for Hassan's work in and outside the classroom, and many credit him with igniting new passions and transforming their lives.

We are honored to have Hassan in our community. From the Faculty Development Committee and the entire Skidmore community, thank you for all you do for our students and congratulations!