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Award Spurs Business Professor Onward

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Carole K. Barnett, associate professor of management at the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire, was recently named the recipient of the Class of 1938 Professorship for teaching excellence.

Evaluations by students consistently reflect that Barnett touched their lives and drew more out of them than they believed they could do. Some of that is because many students expect business school simply to help them acquire the skills to earn an income for a comfortable life.

"Think again!" says Barnett, who made a splash in the national media last year with her critical analysis of the destructive group dynamics and "me-first" values portrayed in the hit CBS television program, "Survivor 1." To Barnett, the purpose of a business education is "to develop caring, responsible leaders who will find ways to add value to the experiences and conditions of those around them."

This means servant leadership -- a concept introduced by Robert Greenleaf over 20 years ago but only recently popularized in organizational studies. He made the ultimate test of leadership dependent on answers to such questions as, "Does your greatest fun in business and its long-run success come from seeing people -- including yourself -- constantly growing?"

The core of Barnett's approach to helping her students grow is borrowed from the Tibetan Buddhists. She has iconicized their words for saying hello, "tashi deley," by framing them on her UNH office wall: "I honor the greatness in you. I honor the place in your heart where lives your courage, honor, love, hope and dreams. I

honor the place in you where, if you are at that place in you and I am at that place in me, there is only one of us."

She takes the risk of bringing spirituality into the business-oriented setting, and will expect students to have the courage to do the same -- in and beyond her classroom. The award legitimizes some of the risks she has taken so far, including her recent publication about how business school educators might introduce the notion of spirituality into management courses.

"Being awarded the Class of 1938 Professorship was jolting -- it forced me to look at myself as a teacher more critically than ever before. It has motivated me to work even harder as an educator," Barnett notes. "Now I feel a powerful new responsibility: to have my teaching also honor the University of New Hampshire alumni who cared enough to establish the Class of 1938 Professorship in the first place."

The three-year professorship comes with an allowance which may be spent to support the recipient's academic activities. Barnett is still deciding how best to use the stipend from year to year, but one thing is certain -- she will not be opting to "buy out" of a single minute of her full five-course teaching load. "I love my time in the classroom," she says. "I'd like to concentrate on becoming an even more innovative, courageous teacher than before."

UNH and its Foundation launched the professorships program in 1990 to recognize faculty excellence in teaching, public service and research.

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