



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES  
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

*Award for Excellence in Teaching*  
2016

*Anne Marie Mackinnon*  
*Educational Leadership Award*

**DR. MATTHIAS BIERENSTIEL**

Dr. Matthias Bierenstiel is an Associate Professor of Inorganic Chemistry in the School of Science and Technology at Cape Breton University (CBU). A colleague described him as the “go-to-guy” for teaching because “he has a clear vision for successful teaching and learning ...and he takes on the leadership necessary to fulfill that vision”. Matthias’ initiatives influence the quality of teaching and learning not only in his department and faculty, but on the whole CBU campus and beyond.

Matthias believes that “only through interactions are we able to improve and become a catalyst for better teaching and learning”. With his chemistry colleague, Dr. Stephanie MacQuarrie he has developed a teaching strategy which uses two-stage mid-term tests as a summative and formative assessment tool. He initiated and developed unique assignments with colleagues from Business and History. Chemistry students encounter the subject from different disciplinary perspectives by working side by side with students from these disciplines to complete projects which illustrate the relevant interdisciplinary work that happens in the real world.

In 2014, during his service on the President’s Council on Teaching and Learning, Matthias organized the first CBU Faculty Teaching Retreat. The retreat is in its third year and has been established as an annual event. As the Interim Chair of the Teaching and Learning Evaluation Committee of Senate, Matthias was instrumental in the development and ensuing acceptance by Senate of the CBU Teaching Policy and the standard student course evaluation. From 2011 to 2013, Matthias was Faculty Liaison for Teaching and Learning and interacted with faculty and the Teaching and Learning Centre’s Coordinator to encourage and enhance teaching development. Matthias has also challenged convention with the development of a new method for teaching the periodic table of elements. He has shared his method with colleagues through presentations at the Atlantic Universities’ Teaching Showcase, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education annual conference, and two national chemistry conferences.

Beyond CBU, Matthias is the representative for the Canadian Society of Chemistry for Eastern Nova Scotia. In this role, he has assisted local high school teachers to administer and evaluate the annual Canadian Chemistry Olympiad and Canadian Chemistry Contest competitions. Matthias has also provided professional development for local public school science educators through such initiatives as the NSERC PromScience program and the Science Teaching Certificate for elementary school teachers. When the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education annual conference and the Atlantic Universities’ Teaching Showcase were hosted at CBU in 2013 and 2014 respectively, Matthias was a key member of the organizing committees.

In 2015, Matthias received the Cape Breton University Instructional Leadership Award for his work in teaching and learning at his home institution. It is very fitting that the Association of Atlantic Universities recognize Dr. Matthias Bierenstiel with the 2016 Anne Marie MacKinnon Educational Leadership Award.