



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

Award for Excellence in Teaching
2019

Anne Marie MacKinnon
Educational Leadership Award

DR. ALISON THOMPSON

Dr. Alison Thompson, professor in the Department of Chemistry at Dalhousie University, has demonstrated unwavering commitment to enhancing education at Dalhousie and beyond. Dr. Thompson's underlying conviction "that learning should be accessible to all" drives her quiet persistence to ensure access to science education through multiple pathways. As the Chair of the Board for SuperNOVA at Dalhousie, she believes that all children should have early access to study science. She supported the creation of year-round programming that has grown to reach 14,000 youth across five provinces. Many of those students come from rural, low-income, hospitalized, new-immigrant, African Canadian, or Indigenous contexts. Most recently, she has been involved in creating the SuperNOVA STEPS program that "empowers rural and Indigenous leaders to deliver hands-on STEM workshops" in their communities.

At Dalhousie, Dr. Thompson has been instrumental in ensuring all of her students can access learning. As a result, in the words of one colleague, "she revolutionized her course." She took the lead early in her career to advocate for write-on tablets in lecture halls so students could watch chemical equations unfold before their eyes. She next created online vignettes to supplement lectures that students could watch on their own, leading to the further creation of an online assignment database. This work culminated in the creation of a curriculum process called Concepts in Chemistry, which included some of Dr. Thompson's earlier initiatives and created two companion student work books and complementary fillable lecture slides for faculty use. Three other universities have adopted the Concepts in Chemistry curriculum.

Dr. Thompson has also been an educational leader in the broader chemistry community. As a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the Canadian Journal of Chemistry she argued that, "chemistry education research should be considered for publication alongside chemical research." The journal now includes such research and recently Dr. Thompson proposed that Canada's leading chemistry education researcher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour, be honoured with a special issue in her name. Dr. Thompson notes that Dr. Armour "will be the first female chemist to be honoured with a special issue, despite men being recognized via this means for decades." As a woman chemist, Dr. Thompson also patiently encouraged the NSERC Committee 1504 Chemistry Evaluation Group to pay close attention to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusiveness in their selection of grant recipients.

Her colleagues have awarded her the 2018 Dalhousie Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching, the 2018 Dalhousie Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision, the 2015 Chemistry Professor of the Year Award, and the 2008 Dalhousie Innovation Award. It is fitting that Dr. Alison Thompson's commitment to educational leadership is now being recognized by her Atlantic Canadian peers through the 2019 Anne Marie MacKinnon Educational Leadership Award.