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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harriot College Announces Recipients of Inaugural Dean’s Early Career Award

GREENVILLE, N.C. (May 20, 2015) — Two assistant professors at East Carolina University are the first to receive the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Early Career Award, announced Friday, May 15, at a special reception. Created to recognize and reward exceptional performance by tenure-track professors, the inaugural award is made possible through the generosity of the Harriot College Advancement Council.

Dr. Marcelo Ardon-Sayao, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Matthew Whited, assistant professor of psychology, are this year’s award recipients.

“I am truly honored by this award. I am lucky to work with great colleagues and students both within and outside ECU,” said Ardon-Sayao. “I thank my colleagues and the THCAS Advancement Council for this recognition of my work.”

Ardon-Sayao is an ecosystem ecologist interested in understanding how aquatic ecosystems process water and nutrients; how that capacity is being altered by local land use and global climate change; and whether, and to what extent, current and emerging management can reverse or restore lost functions.

Among his many accolades, this spring Ardon-Sayao also was the recipient of a National Science Foundation CAREER grant in the amount of $635,000. The CAREER grant, which is the most prestigious grant given to young investigators, was awarded to Ardon-Sayao in April for his research involving coastal wetlands. Also in April, Ardon-Sayao received the Mercer Award from the Ecological Society of America for a 2013 paper published by the journal, Global Change Biology. The Mercer Award is the most prestigious award presented for a paper in the field of ecology.

Ardon-Sayao received his PhD degree in ecology from the University of Georgia in 2006 and his Bachelor of Science degree in biology and environmental studies from Gettysburg College in 2000.

“I feel honored to be one of the recipients of the inaugural Early Career Award. ECU is a wonderful place to grow and mature as a researcher and educator, as faculty and administrators here understand the synergy that takes place between research productivity and student (especially graduate) training,” said Whited. “I appreciate being recognized as someone who is off to a good start in my career, and I look forward to taking advantage of all the advantages and opportunities that ECU has to offer.”
Whited leads the Depression Specialty Service; part of the Department of Psychology’s PASS clinic. He specializes in behavioral activation and has experience training other clinicians in this treatment approach both regionally and nationally. He received his PhD and Master of Science degrees in clinical psychology from West Virginia University in 2009 and 2007 respectively. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in psychology and biology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2003.

In addition to their recognition at a reception last week, Ardon-Sayao and Whited will be recognized at Harriot College’s fall convocation in August.

In succeeding years, Harriot College will designate up to three recipients, who will represent the college’s breadth of faculty excellence in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics.

“The award’s primary focus is on the faculty member’s productivity in research and creative discovery, which must be judged to be of such high quality and impact that it exceeds expectations. Outstanding performance in professional development must be complemented by demonstrated excellence in instructional effectiveness and service,” said Dr. William M. Downs, dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences. “I am extremely pleased to say this year’s recipients exceeded these qualifications.”

For additional information, please contact Ardon-Sayao at 328-6307 or ardonsayaom@ecu.edu, and Whited at 328-6308 or whitedm@ecu.edu.

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