Student success fuels professor's award-winning teaching

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College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences’ (CAAS) Assistant Professor, Rebecca Lawver, has previously received recognition for her outstanding teaching, but the pinnacle of her awards came recently from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Lawver also received the National New Teacher Award in November at the Association of Public Land-grant Universities meeting in Texas. The award is given to just two recipients annually to recognize their teaching philosophy and recent achievements in methodology and self-assessment aimed at improvement.

Receiving awards is gratifying, but Lawver credits her passion for seeing her students become successful teachers as the reason for her own success.

“The things that I do in terms of teaching are all geared toward helping future teachers and helping students be successful,” Lawver said. “For me it doesn’t matter if I’m working with my majors in ag education or if I’m working with majors from across campus, I do whatever I can do to make what I teach meaningful and help them to be successful in their future. That’s why I do what I do.”

Cody Gull, an agricultural education student, said Lawver really stands out from other professors he has worked with at Utah State University.

“The biggest thing that stands out about Dr. Lawver is the fact that she gets to know you on a personal level and is willing to go the extra mile to help you be successful,” said Gull. “She’s genuine, passionate about teaching and helping her students see their potential.”

CAAS Associate Dean Brian Warnick was at the Association of Public Land-grant Universities meeting when Lawver received her award. Warnick believes she is highly deserving of her awards.

“I am thrilled that Dr. Lawver has been recognized with this national award,” said Warnick. “The USDA teaching awards represent the very best teaching faculty in agriculture and natural resources. This is the fifth USDA teaching award for the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, putting USU in the top 10 land-grant institutions in the nation for recognition of teaching in agriculture. It says a lot about the quality of faculty members in CAAS.”

Warnick also spoke highly of Lawver’s commitment to her students’ success through her work in the classroom and with her mentorship of students outside of class.

“The core reason Dr. Lawver is an outstanding teacher educator is because she cares about students and about their immediate and long-term success,” said Warnick. “She has a wealth of experience as a high school teacher in Nebraska and has added a solid background in educational theory and practice.”