Dr. Chris Mouron '79 Educator

Clarence Day Award Recipient - Rhodes College Associate Professor

Chris Mouron '79 is an associate professor in the Mathematics & Computer Science Department at Rhodes College in Memphis. In May, he received the Clarence Day Dean's Award for Outstanding Research and/or Creative Activity, which includes a $6,000 honorarium. This Award is given to a member of the faculty who has demonstrated excellence in teaching over the previous three years as determined by the assessments of students and colleagues; the effective use of imaginative and creative pedagogy; and motivating students to embrace a life of continuing study.

"Professor Mouron, for the breadth and depth of your many scholarly pursuits, and for visible proof that one can integrate a top-flight research program into the life of a mathematician at a liberal arts college, it is my pleasure to present to you as the 29th recipient, the Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity," said Dr. Michael R. Drompp, Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs, at the awards ceremony.

A leading specialist in his field, Dr. Mouron has published in the *Proceedings of the American Mathematical Society*, which is recognized among the most prestigious mathematics journals in the world, and serves as a referee for several top journals. One of his papers answered a central question in continuum theory which had stumped the experts for over 40 years. In 2007, he was a featured speaker at the International Conference on Topology and Its Applications, in Kyoto, Japan, and for the past two summers in Canada and Mexico, he has taught other specialists about his pioneering techniques. He also serves on the steering committee of the annual Spring Topology and Dynamics Conference.

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Chris holds a B.S. degree from Lafayette College and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Texas Tech University. He came to Rhodes in 2002 after holding visiting positions at the University of Delaware and at Hendrix College.

"Because of the large variety of courses that I have taught, I do not have a singular teaching philosophy--these various courses have different expected learning outcomes, after all. One thing that I have discovered in all my courses is that in order for the student to learn and grow, the professor cannot and should not show the student how to do everything. The student must discover most of the ideas for her/himself. This situation can be very frustrating for the student sometimes, but that is okay. Mathematicians are always frustrated. Learning to deal with the frustration and persevere through the difficult material on one's own is how you begin to truly transform yourself into a mathematician."

"Most of my research is in the area of topology, which is the study of the "shape" of space. In particular, I have been exploring dynamical systems on continua, a certain type of topological space. Mathematicians such as myself who study the relationships between chaotic dynamics and topology are interested in where chaos can and cannot occur. The use of topology helps to describe the "shape" of the space where the chaos occurs. A clear picture of this shape allows order to be distilled from seeming disorder. Much of my work is focused on the classification of continua that admit or do not admit expansive homeomorphisms or positive entropy homeomorphisms."

"I live in Midtown with my wife Solly and my cat Simon. I am a former rugby player. I was the captain of the rugby team at my alma mater, Lafayette College, and I founded and coached the women's rugby team there. I now enjoy playing disc golf. Before graduate school, I taught high school mathematics and coached the wrestling team at Paulding County High School in Georgia. I have taught college mathematics in five different states over the past 17 years, and I have always been able to get to campus by bike or on foot."