THOMAS JEFFERSON AWARD

Steven Watts, Ph.D.

Professor of American History
University of Missouri-Columbia

Dr. Steven Watts has emulated Thomas Jefferson in his personal and professional life for as long as he can remember – in his writing and teaching, television and radio projects, as a professional musician, and through gardening, carpentry and sports. Watts believes that a well-rounded person enjoys a fuller life experience.

“Like Jefferson, Watts has had an abiding interest in and lifelong commitment to public higher education, as his own educational background and professional career attest,” wrote one nominator.

Watts is known for his superior teaching abilities, and has been recognized with both the Provost’s Outstanding Junior Faculty Teaching Award and The William T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence. He teaches the survey of American history course, upper-division courses on American cultural history, and graduate seminars in historiography and cultural history. He served as the department chair for five years and has served on numerous committees both inside and outside the university, including panels for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Specializing in the cultural and intellectual history of the United States, Watts has published articles and essays in top journals, and his biographies of some of the 20th century’s most-influential cultural figures have won critical acclaim. The common theme in his books on Walt Disney, Henry Ford, Hugh Hefner, and most recently, Dale Carnegie, is how American history is related to consumer capitalism in a culture obsessed with self-fulfillment, entertainment and leisure. His work has led to appearances on PBS, The History Channel, CNBC and BBC Worldwide.

STUDENT ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Casey F. Burton

Sapentia Development, LLC
Missouri University of Science and Technology

Casey Burton graduated in May with a B.S. in chemistry, but he didn’t spend all his time in the lab. As an undergraduate student he took advantage of research opportunities and maximized his entrepreneurial spirit to realize commercial applications of his projects.

Burton founded Sapentia Development, LLC, where he acts as CEO and manages close to 30 employees. He has effectively bridged the gaming and research journal markets through two unique and profitable products that adopt academic, peer-review production elements to offer a strong connection to readers.

While not a gamer himself, Burton created an online community and publication for fans of the widely popular game, Minecraft, and secured sponsorship from companies that provide server space for the gamers. *MCQuarterly* offers real, relevant information unifying the Minecraft community through articles on gameplay styles, server trends, highlights and releases of new plugins and platforms. *MCQuarterly* is projected to exceed revenue of $200,000 and a readership of 1.2 million in three years.

*MCQuarterly* provided Burton with the experience to develop *The Journal of Undergraduate and High School Research*, a peer-reviewed research journal aimed at high school and undergraduate students. The journal’s purpose is to teach students, involved with scientifically-sound projects, the technical writing skills necessary for research publications. Burton developed and presented a magazine business plan, secured funding for hiring editors and printing, and is working with legislators on funding expansion to make it widely accessible to high schools. It is projected that the potential yearly subscription income could exceed $35 million.

One nominator wrote, “Mr. Burton is truly an outstanding undergraduate student with creative ideas, nonparallel leadership ability and problem solving capacity that go hand-in-hand with his entrepreneurial spirit.”