

# Anthropology professor receives student recognition

By Mary Lichtenwalner  
Of the Emerald

Aletta Biersack was elected January's "professor of the month" by Mortar Board, the University's senior honor society. The award was designed to generate interest in recognizing professors. Mortar Board president Dave Thurman said.

"Professors are an important part of campus, and there's usually no way to recognize them," Thurman said.

Biersack, an assistant professor of anthropology, said she was surprised to receive the award. It may be her "different" approach in the classroom that earned her the honor, she said.

The "professor of the month" awards have been given to University professors for about 15 years, Thurman said. The honor society determines winners by tallying student votes collected in a box in the Main Library and by visiting professors' classes.

"Mostly if the professor gives an informative lecture, then they're a winner. They must obviously care for the students," Thurman said. "He or she must

be an outstanding professor who will go out of his way to help a student."

"I tend to underemphasize the textbook approach...and try to think beyond what anthropology really is. Answers aren't important but questions are," Biersack said.

"My students do a lot of processing themselves. They have to be very active — I don't encourage passivity, and I try not to discourage students," she added.

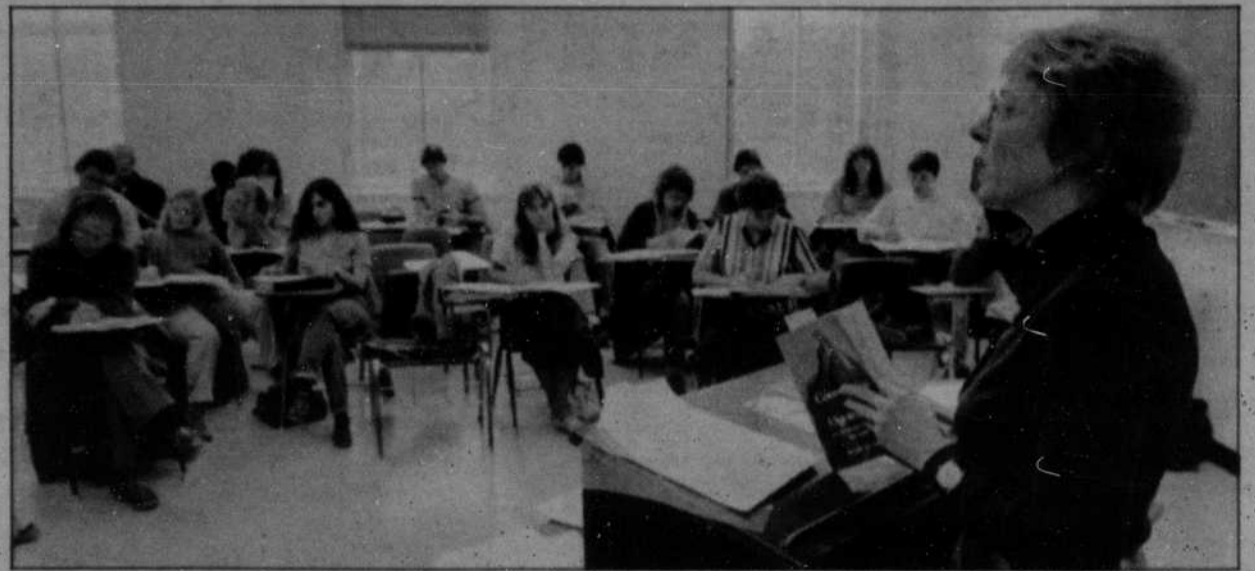
Biersack's lower-division courses focus on developing an appreciation for the different peoples of the world; she said. Anthropology students must understand that the world is not made of one people, she said.

"That's the stock and trade of anthropology — people and peoples."

Upper-division classes revolve around change, she said.

"I think our knowledge as anthropologists is evolving right before our very eyes...it's fluid, and it's changing all the time.

"I think the educational system tends to encourage that



Students chose Aletta Biersack as the "professor of the month" for outstanding teaching skills. Photo by Harvey Young

we've got it figured out, but it's not figured out," she said.

A native New Yorker, Biersack came to the University in 1982 after a one-year stint at Central Michigan University. She was a visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University in 1983 and 1984.

Graduate anthropology student Salvatore Biondello said Biersack's approach is effective, because of its focus. "I think her approach is refreshingly different. I think she is dealing with anthropology as a humanity rather than a science," Biondello said.

Biondello has taken about

seven classes from Biersack. He said it's Biersack's holistic approach to anthropology that prompts him to continue taking courses from her.

Jonathan Aleck said Biersack is also helpful in advising research theses. Although he is a political science graduate student, Aleck said he works more in the area of political anthropology.

"She has read through my drafts extensively, and she points out elements to be discussed in greater detail," he said. "She's a wealth of knowledge on specifics."

"As an instructor, she's cer-

tainly demanding, but she's very well read in areas beyond her expertise," Aleck said. Biersack has worked with Aleck for about three years.

Thurman said the "professor of the month" contest suffers from lack of awareness.

"We don't get enough nominations. All you have to do is drop by the reference desk in the library," he said. "I think many people just don't know about it."

Mortar Board is currently visiting classes to determine February's winner, Thurman said.

## Et al.

### MEETINGS

The Golden Key National Honor Society meets today at 3:30 in Room 110 EMU to elect officers. All members should attend.

The PRSSA is holding a Green Garter Committee meeting today at 3:30 in Room 211 Allen.

The University Telecommunication and Film Association will meet today at 6 p.m. in Room 202 Villard Hall.

The Incidental Fee Committee meets today at 5 p.m. in Century Room F EMU to hear budget requests for the Student Senate, EFSAM, Pre-Health Science and the Foreign Student Organization.

The Christian Science Organization meets tonight in Room 337 EMU. Everyone welcome to attend this weekly testimonial meeting.

### LECTURES/WORKSHOPS

Gubernatorial candidate Ed Fadeley will be on campus today in the EMU Forum Room from 12:30 to 1:30. Fadeley will answer questions about his plans for the state if elected governor.

"South Africa and Sports" is the topic of a free lecture tonight in the Gerlinger Alumni Lounge at 7. The lecture will be presented by University Professors Michael Ellis and Elizabeth Breesan, both of whom visited South Africa this year. Sponsored by SUPE(R).

### MISCELLANEOUS

The HOLIDAY PROJECT organization is looking for volunteers to spend time this Easter (March 30) with those in nursing homes and hospitals.

Persons interested in participating should call 687-9055 or 344-1112.

Voice your concerns about federal financial aid cuts this week by participating in "Financial Aid Awareness Week." Information tables and a letter-writing drive will be held throughout the week in the EMU Lobby.

### INTERVIEWS

Submit bids for campus interviews Monday through Wednesday each week in Room 244 Hendricks Hall. Sign-up space is still available for the following recruiters:

Today: Battelle, N.W. Laboratories (computer-related positions); First Interstate Bank (MBA's — specialized-training program); Uarco, Inc. (sales rep.).

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