2007 DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD
Dr. Galen Turner

Dr. Galen Turner received his B.S. from Loyola University (New Orleans) with majors in Mathematics and Religious Studies in 1992. He was a member of Pi Mu Epsilon and was awarded the Pi Mu Epsilon award in mathematics during his senior year. In addition, he was honored when the Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa, the National Honor Society for Religious Studies/Theology, published his undergraduate thesis on Children in the Hebrew Bible. He continued his studies in Mathematics at Louisiana State University where he earned his M.S. in Mathematics in 1994, and his Ph.D. in 1999. He has spent the last seven years at Louisiana Tech University where he currently serves as Program Chair for Cyberspace Science and Engineering and the Maxfield Professor of Mathematics and Statistics. Dr. Turner has served on several MAA committees at the section level including the Executive Committee where he served as Louisiana Vice Chair of the section in 2005-06. He has taught courses at all levels, from the most basic undergraduate courses in algebra to graduate courses in algebra, graph theory and combinatorics. He has published in a number of areas including Engineering Education as well as graph and matroid theory.

Dr. Turner has been recognized as an effective teacher of mathematics since his earliest days of teaching at LSU. While at LSU, he received the graduate student teaching award four times (each year it existed) from the Mathematics Department and was given the Alumni Association’s Graduate Teaching Award in 1998 – this is the only university-wide award that recognizes excellence in teaching by graduate students. Beginning his tenure-track career at Stephen F. Austin State University, Dr. Turner quickly became a leader in course development. Moving to Louisiana Tech, he continued to develop courses for the mathematics program that served both the needs of the undergraduates as well as those in other disciplines, like Computer Science, Engineering, and Education. He has been quite successful in recruiting students to take courses in combinatorics and algebra by bridging the gap between disciplines through research efforts, but always with a teaching stream in mind. “Recruit minors to mathematics,” he says, “and you won't have to worry about the majors.” Developing courses that showcase how mathematics lays a foundation for other disciplines has been a major focus for Dr. Turner at Louisiana Tech. His ability to reach students where they are, challenging them to think, write, and communicate more clearly, are just a few of the qualities that stand out among his students' comments.

While at Louisiana Tech, Dr. Turner has influenced mathematics education at both the university and regional level. At the university level, Dr. Turner has been a leader in Louisiana Tech University’s Integrated Engineering Curriculum, having served for 4 years on the Leadership Team for Undergraduate Programs within the College of Engineering and Science. He has been successful at writing numerous grants and serving as the lead mathematics PI on a number of National Science Foundation awards in recent years. The most recent of these was awarded through the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program, a program that seeks to increase the number of qualified STEM teachers in our K-12 systems. He also serves as the mathematics PI on an NSF-STEP and S-STEM project, where the aim is to increase exposure to and interest in STEM majors. One of the successful aspects of these projects is the development of a Freshmen Enrichment Program that introduces students to college life through a living and learning community centered on STEM. This program’s success builds upon the Integrated Curricula at Louisiana Tech in that students enter a program during the summer prior to their Freshman year and are part of a new living and curricular infrastructure put in place within the past two years. Dr. Turner is a part of a team of faculty who jointly lead the program, his role being the primary instructor for a contextual based college algebra course and the mathematical content leader for the hands-on engineering projects in the summer. At the regional level, Dr. Turner has been very involved with professional development for K-12 teachers and activity weekends for their students. As part of the NSF-STEP project mentioned above, Dr. Turner serves as the lead mathematics PI on the grant and works with a team of faculty to develop meaningful engineering activities for High School teachers and their students that showcase the mathematics and science that the teachers teach in their classrooms everyday. This project seeks to establish a long-term relationship between teachers and university faculty as well as give High School teachers applications for the subjects they teach. Finding practical applications for High School mathematics seems overwhelming for some teachers, and this project alleviates this feeling among the participants. Further, a number of students who have participated in the project have enrolled at Louisiana Tech, some of them currently serving as student mentors in the program. These numerous roles related to teaching were a key part of his being named as Program Chair for Cyberspace Science and Engineering at Louisiana Tech. This is an emerging area of national need and is one that cuts across many different disciplines. Dr. Turner's experience in integrating programs, curricula development, research, and teaching, have put him in a position to help facilitate the development of this program to serve our region and the nation.