

# 2013 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education Recipients

## 2013 Faculty Awards Convocation

### Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education

In only her third year as Assistant Professor of Spanish, Aarti Madan has already become known for her tireless efforts at curricular revision, and for her success in developing students' cultural understanding alongside linguistic competence.

Professor Madan has undertaken the challenge of helping WPI students become fluent speakers of Spanish, by getting students to speak Spanish outside of the classroom. Using a social network called the Mixxer, her students embark on "Skype dates" with native speakers of Spanish from around the world. Eager to learn about a new culture from a person of similar age, both parties use vocabulary and grammar to communicate rather than to regurgitate memorized structures. For example, one of her students gained a Skype pal by helping him plan his vacation to Disneyland in Spanish. Aarti also sends students into the Worcester community to interview Spanish speakers about matters of cultural and social import, thereby not only developing their language skills and cultural understandings but also showing student how their skills can have a local impact.



Professor Madan also designed and directs the Buenos Aires Language and Culture Immersion program, which she has taught for the past two summers. Students pledge to speak only in Spanish, live in homestays with local families, and take language classes instructed by *porteños*, those infamously fast-speaking locals of Buenos Aires. Aarti guides students on daily cultural excursions to museums, soccer matches, cafés and films, but she doesn't lead them there or spoon feed directions; they must navigate the city on their own. Initially terrified, students develop joy and pride in their ability to be independent, resulting in tremendous linguistic, cultural, and personal growth.

For her inventiveness and effectiveness as an educator, and for her commitment to sharing with her students the thrill of linguistic and cultural discovery, we are proud to

present the 2013 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education to Professor Aarti Madan.