



Valerie Otero, PhD, won the Provost's Faculty Achievement Award as a new associate professor in the School of Education. She was recognized for her article in *Science* describing the Learning Assistant model. She and her coauthors documented that the use of LAs not only substantially improves student learning in transformed courses, it also increases the learning of the Learning Assistants themselves such that their performance on the Force and Motion Conceptual Evaluation measure is greater than that of incoming physics graduate students.

The article, "Who Is Responsible for Preparing Science Teachers?" by Otero, Noah Finkelstein, Richard McCray and Steven Pollock, can be found at: <http://www.sciencemag.org/archive/> and in the "Search the Journal" box on the left, enter Vol # 313, Pg # 445.

Dr. Otero's research explores the dynamic nature of the learning environment and how it influences (and is influenced by) the evolution of students' ideas. She also studies prospective and practicing teachers' conceptions of students' prior knowledge, and teachers' conceptions of the use of students' prior knowledge for teaching and learning. Her teaching interests include elementary science methods, the nature of science, and physics for prospective elementary teachers.