

## Baylor Honors Princeton Professor with Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching

*Jamie Rankin, Ph.D., University Lecturer in German at Princeton University and inaugural director of the Princeton Center for Language Study, will teach in residence at Baylor*

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WACO, Texas (Jan. 27, 2026) – Baylor University today named [Jamie Rankin, Ph.D.](#), University Lecturer in German at Princeton University and inaugural director of the Princeton Center for Language Study, as the 2026 recipient of the [Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching](#). The Cherry Award honor was announced during the Spring Baylor Faculty Meeting hosted by Provost Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.

Baylor’s Robert Foster Cherry Award is a prestigious national teaching award designed to honor great teachers, stimulate discussion in the academy about the value of teaching and encourage departments and institutions to recognize their own great teachers. Along with a record of distinguished scholarship, individuals nominated for the Cherry Award have proven themselves to be extraordinary teachers with positive, inspiring and long-lasting effects on students.

As the 2026 Cherry Award recipient, Rankin will receive a \$250,000 award -- the single, largest monetary reward presented by a college or university to an individual for exceptional teaching – and an additional \$25,000 to the German Department at Princeton to further Baylor University’s commitment to great teaching. Rankin will teach in residence at Baylor for a semester.

“Dr. Jamie Rankin is a gifted scholar and teacher whose pedagogical innovations shape the way German is taught in colleges and universities across the United States” said Cherry Award committee chair [Kevin D. Dougherty, Ph.D.](#), professor of sociology, Master Teacher and associate vice provost for faculty honorifics. “In his courses as well as through his textbooks and online resources, Dr. Rankin helps transform students into global citizens. His significant contributions to second-language acquisition make Dr. Rankin a fitting recipient of the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching.”

Rankin visited Baylor in October 2025 to present his Cherry Award finalist lecture, “Choose Your Words Carefully: Transforming Language Learning through Research-based Vocabulary Acquisition” and said he looks forward to returning to Baylor, this time to teach.

“At the end of my visit to Baylor as a finalist, having met so many wonderful people on the Cherry Award committee and in the Department of Modern Languages & Cultures, I thought to myself: ‘I would love to win this just for the opportunity to work alongside these colleagues,’” Rankin said. “They were all so genuine, so committed to teaching, so enthusiastic about their academic fields, that I came away hoping to get to know them and learn from them. That and attending as many Baylor basketball games as possible, of course.”

For Rankin, a great teacher needs skill, patience and empathy.

“It’s always seemed to me that the most effective teachers – and that includes coaches, choir directors, mentors of any kind – are people who can put themselves imaginatively in the position of someone who doesn’t yet have the knowledge or skills in whatever is being taught,” he said.

Rankin specializes in second-language acquisition, teacher training and curriculum development, with work published in *Die Unterrichtspraxis* and *The Modern Language Journal*. In 2015, he was appointed as the inaugural director of the Princeton Center for Language Study, supporting instructors and students across languages with workshops, research resources and professional development.

A recipient of Princeton University’s President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, Rankin is a co-author of *Handbuch zur deutschen Grammatik*, now in its sixth edition, and the creator of *der/die/das*, an online introductory German textbook that integrates second-language acquisition research with vocabulary learning. He also has developed a range of digital teaching tools, including an interactive website designed to support language instruction on Zoom during the pandemic.

A member of the Princeton faculty since 1991, Rankin earned his A.B. in music at Wheaton College, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.

### **Finalists, home departments honored**

Cherry Award finalists [Lendol Calder, Ph.D.](#), professor of history at Augustana College, and [Melissa Gross, Ph.D.](#), associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Kinesiology, director of the Behavioral Biomechanics Laboratory and holder of a joint appointment in the Stamps School of Art and Design, each received \$15,000, while their home departments also received \$10,000 for the development of teaching skills.

### **ABOUT THE CHERRY AWARD**

The Cherry Award was created by Robert Foster Cherry, who earned his A.B. from Baylor in 1929. He enrolled in Baylor Law School in 1932 and passed the Texas State Bar Examination the following year. With a deep appreciation for how his life had been changed by significant teachers, he made an exceptional estate bequest to establish the Cherry Award program to recognize excellent teachers and bring them in contact with Baylor students. The first Robert Foster Cherry Award was made in 1991 and has since been awarded biennially.

### **ABOUT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY**

Baylor University is a private Christian University and a nationally ranked Research 1 institution. The University provides a vibrant campus community for 20,000 students by blending interdisciplinary research with an international reputation for educational excellence and a faculty commitment to teaching and scholarship. Chartered in 1845 by the Republic of Texas through the efforts of Baptist pioneers, Baylor is the oldest continually operating University in Texas. Located in Waco, Baylor welcomes students from all 50 states and more than 100 countries to study a broad range of degrees among its 12 nationally recognized academic divisions. Learn more about Baylor University at [www.baylor.edu](http://www.baylor.edu).