

UW System: Regents honor outstanding UW System teachers

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The UW System Board of Regents will honor the 25th annual winners of its Teaching Excellence Awards on April 7 in Platteville at the next Regents meeting. These awards recognize outstanding achievements in teaching. They are the UW System's highest recognition for members of its faculty and academic staff. The monetary value of the award is \$5,000 for each recipient.

"We are proud to recognize the leadership of this year's recipients in demonstrating how excellent teaching within the UW System builds confidence and transforms lives," said Regent Margaret Farrow, chair of the selection committee. "These dedicated educators use innovative techniques to prepare students to reach their full potential for the workforce of tomorrow."

Award recipients are selected for their strong commitment to teaching and learning; use of effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning; and significant impact on students' intellectual development.

The 2017 recipients are:

- **Richard Hauer, Professor, College of Natural Resources, UW-Stevens Point.** Dr. Hauer, who

was an award-winning student at UW-Stevens Point in the 1990s, returned to his alma mater to teach urban forestry in 2003. During his more than 13 years at the College of Natural Resources (CNR), he has shown a steadfast commitment to developing his teaching abilities and to ensuring engaged learning and success for his students. He makes his courses interactive learning environments. His woody plant identification and use course, for example, is taught completely outdoors. A proponent of incorporating technology in his courses, he pioneered a tool that calculates the economics behind emerald ash borer management. This started as a research question by one of his undergraduate students and developed into an innovative simulator to train students in urban forest decision making. He has successfully incorporated service learning, a high-impact practice, into his capstone Urban Forest course. During his tenure, students in this course have developed forest and resource management plans for 12 local communities. Hauer serves students as the faculty mentor at Neale Hall, one of two campus learning communities, and has advised the CNR Student Research Symposium since 2003. Student participation in the symposium has nearly tripled in that time.

- **Cassandra Phillips, Professor, Department of English, UW-Waukesha.** Dr. Phillips has been a faculty member at UW-Waukesha since 2000, where she teaches a variety of writing skills to students ranging from developmental writers to sophomore English majors. She served for many years as the English Department Assessment Coordinator and more recently has served as the Writing Program Administrator, where she works to serve not only her own writing students but also all first-year writing students enrolled at UW Colleges. Phillips has played a crucial role in creating a cohesive two-year writing program designed around strategies to support underprepared students who are transitioning to college-level reading, writing, and research. The resulting learning outcomes and competencies were used as the starting point for developing UW System definitions for college readiness in reading, writing, and research. Thanks in part to the work of Phillips, the UW Colleges Writing Program earned a College Conference on Composition and Communication (CCCC) Writing Program Certificate of Excellence in 2016-2017, the primary national award for postsecondary writing programs. Phillips values continuous reflection and revision in the context of evidence-based practices. Her pedagogy is guided by the concept of “convergence,” which describes how multiple and varying environments, people, and work experiences come together to inform the way an individual teaches.
- **Department of Animal and Food Science, UW-River Falls.** The Department of Animal and Food Science, chaired by Dr. Gary Onan, has a program of evaluation and mentoring that benefits new faculty members as they develop and refine their teaching philosophies and practices. Specific activities include peer-visiting of classes, ongoing feedback from the chair, and promotion of professional development opportunities for all faculty, especially newer faculty. Department faculty and staff have received numerous teaching awards and recognitions at the college and university levels, as well as within their professional societies and beyond. Nine faculty members in the department have earned the UW-River Falls Distinguished Teacher Award. To meet the changing demographics of students, in particular the increasing percentage coming from non-farm backgrounds, the department recently undertook an intense curriculum review. As part of this review process, the department held face-to-face listening sessions in which faculty members engaged with business owners, state and agricultural officials, sectors of government, and recent and past graduates to determine the effectiveness of curricular offerings. The department is using the results to focus improvements to specific areas, including exposing students to meaningful, hands-on laboratory experiences with animals earlier in their academic careers and increasing student exposure to career

opportunities within animal industries. The Dairy Science program has one of the highest freshman retention rates of any individual program at the university. The department's faculty and staff are committed to recruiting, such as at county fairs and facilities tours, to inform students about the many rewarding opportunities in animal science agriculture.

Others on the selection committee were Regent Tony Evers, Regent James Langnes, and Regent Janice Mueller.