

UW System Board of Regents: Honor outstanding UW System teachers of 2019

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Educators in Whitewater, River Falls, and Eau Claire recognized with Regents' top teaching award

MADISON, Wis. – The UW System Board of Regents will honor the 27th annual winners of its Teaching Excellence Awards at the next Regents meeting, April 5 in Madison. The awards recognize outstanding teaching and are the UW System's highest recognition for members of its faculty and academic staff. Each recipient is awarded \$5,000.

"These exceptional educators are devoted to ensuring student success," said Regent Janice Mueller, chair of the selection committee. "We are pleased to recognize their innovative and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning."

Each award recipient demonstrates a strong commitment to teaching and learning; uses effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning; and makes a significant impact on students' intellectual development.

The 2019 recipients are:

- **Rex Hanger, Professor, Department of Geography, Geology and Environmental Science, UW-Whitewater**

During his 19-year career at UW-Whitewater, Dr. Hanger has been a practitioner of multiple high-impact practices to support student success. He is recognized for his work in the classroom and for the experiential, hands-on learning opportunities he presents to students through his field study, study

abroad, and independent study courses. A strong advocate of inclusive excellence goals, particularly gender equity in the natural sciences, he has mentored 51 undergraduate researchers, of which nearly 75% were female and two were McNair Scholars - underrepresented students selected for federal support to prepare them for PhD programs. Fifteen of his students went on to receive research internship awards, primarily in research museums, and four students were awarded prestigious Smithsonian Institution Natural History Research Experiences internships, more than any other faculty member in the United States. Hanger has developed trips to take students to fossil-rich locations in the western U.S. and has twice led large study abroad groups to Scotland, the birthplace of modern geology. He is at the forefront of creating online lab science courses at UW-Whitewater, which expands course options for students unable to participate in face-to-face lab courses. Since 2005, he has been the associate director for the Special Initiatives Program for Underrepresented Groups at the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium. Recently he was named adjunct curator of geology for the Milwaukee Public Museum.

• **Gary Onan, Chair and Professor of Animal and Food Science, UW-River Falls**

Over his nearly 21-year career at UW-River Falls, Dr. Onan has taught a variety of general and discipline-specific courses and regularly advises 50 or more students. As department chair, he is leading the Animal Science program during a time of significant enrollment growth and rapid programmatic change. Animal Science is now the largest program at the university and has added an emphasis in companion animals, both to meet industry needs and to better serve pre-veterinary medicine students. Onan works to provide meaningful undergraduate research opportunities for students, especially important for students who want to be competitive in veterinary school placements, participate in the McNair program, or pursue a graduate degree. In 2015, Onan was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to work in Romania, where he taught two courses in animal production and collaborated with faculty there to redesign courses to create more hands-on laboratory exercises and develop effective outreach programming. He has co-authored two books with a long-time Romanian colleague: a laboratory manual for general introductory Animal Science courses, *Animal Production, Practical Exercises for Veterinary Medicine*, and a general swine management text, *Alternative Swine Management Systems*, currently going to press. Onan is a member of the American Society of Animal Science and the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists and earned the Professional Animal Scientist designation in

2006. He is highly sought after as a judge for county and regional fairs in Wisconsin and Minnesota, often serving at 20 to 25 fairs each summer.

- **Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, UW-Eau Claire**

UW-Eau Claire's Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD), chaired by Dr. Vicki Samelson, delivers an innovative undergraduate program and prepares graduate students for licensure in speech language pathology with in-person and fully online degree options. Its mission is to prepare competent, compassionate, and collaborative professionals who understand the scientific, theoretical, interprofessional, and social bases of human communication to foster access for an increasingly diverse clientele. The program also provides students with multiple interprofessional experiences outside the traditional classroom, where students can further develop their teaching, clinical, and research skills. From an on-site speech and language clinic to a camp for patients with speech challenges, the program focuses on building learning opportunities for students while simultaneously serving important community and regional needs. The department engages in regular discussions of teaching through their reciprocal mentoring program, recognizing that everyone along the experience scale, from new to veteran educators, can provide value supporting and mentoring others.

Others on the selection committee were Regent Mike Jones, Regent Jason Plante, and Regent Carolyn Stanford Taylor.