

UW System, Alliant Energy: Recognize outstanding students, teachers for 2021

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MADISON, Wis.—Four University of Wisconsin System students and three educators are being recognized today by the UW System and Alliant Energy Foundation for their outstanding achievements. The Alliant Energy Erroll B. Davis, Jr. Achievement Awards recognize the outstanding academic and community-service efforts of students from traditionally underrepresented minority groups who are pursuing a degree in business or engineering at UW-Madison or UW-Platteville. The Alliant Energy James R. Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize outstanding commitment to undergraduate student success and the ability to inspire in students an enthusiasm for learning. The awards are presented to students and educators from UW System campuses located within Alliant Energy's service area.

"I thank the Alliant Energy Foundation for their continued generosity supporting these student achievement and teaching awards," said UW System President Tommy Thompson. "And I congratulate these dedicated students and instructors on their significant accomplishments."

"We are honored to continue the legacy of these awards, which were created to recognize the hard work of students and faculty," said Julie Bauer, Executive Director of the Alliant Energy Foundation. "These annual awards reflect Alliant Energy's long-standing investment in education and our shared future."

The recipients of the 15th annual *Alliant Energy Erroll B. Davis, Jr. Achievement Awards* are:

- **Alfredo Balleno, UW-Platteville.** Balleno graduated in May from the School

of Business at UW-Platteville with a degree in business administration, an emphasis in international business, and minors in Spanish and international studies. His career aspirations include running a successful business and working for a company that offers work-related travel opportunities. At UW-Platteville, he studied abroad in Fiji and Germany, participated in the university's Men's Soccer Club, and held a summer internship with American Income Life Midwest, honing skills in sales and customer relationships.

- **Toyota Alexander Borgmann, UW-Madison.** Borgmann graduated in May from the School of Business at UW-Madison with a bachelor's degree in business administration, including a double major in actuarial science and risk management, as well as a certificate in Japanese professional communication. While in college, he passed several professional actuarial examinations of the Society of Actuaries. He finished his college career with internships in this competitive field. Prior to graduation, he accepted a full-time job as an actuarial analyst at Willis Towers Watson in Chicago, where he currently works.
- **Victoria Chanez, UW-Platteville.** Passionate about the environment, Chanez joined a research team made up of undergraduate and PhD students to learn more about how scientists can create a long-term solution for nuclear waste. She has also volunteered for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. A member of UW-Platteville's Women in STEM Living Learning Community, she has volunteered at the Women in STEM Career Day, serving as a role model to high school girls interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. In summer 2019, she was hired as an engineering aide to work on a City of Oshkosh infrastructure project. Chanez plans to graduate in May 2022 with a degree in environmental engineering and a minor in chemistry.
- **Jazsmin Washington, UW-Madison.** Washington volunteers to teach K-12 students about STEM through fun, hands-on activities, inspiring a younger generation from all backgrounds to believe that a STEM degree can be attainable and rewarding. She has served in several leadership roles with the UW-Madison chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers, which led to the Dean of Engineering selecting her to be the student representative on the College of Engineering's Strategic Planning Committee for Climate, Inclusion and Diversity. Washington plans to graduate in December 2021 with a degree in chemical engineering and a certificate in international engineering.

The recipients of the 31st annual *Alliant Energy James R. Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Awards* are:

- **Holly Attenborough, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics, UW-Platteville.**

Dr. Attenborough strives to involve students in every class to help them establish a foundation on which they can build future knowledge. During the pandemic, she has continued fostering student engagement, for example by successfully using discussion boards on Canvas. Attenborough's commitment to teaching, love of mathematics, and search for 'aha' moments have also led her to engage with learners outside the classroom, including serving as the university's Math Club advisor since 2014. She has taken students to conferences, advised senior seminar students, led students through independent studies to help with graduate admission, and is involved with numerous outreach programs. She earned UW-Platteville's Early Career Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence in 2018 and a Mathematical Association of America Wisconsin Teaching Award in 2020-21.

- **Mary E. Fiorenza, Faculty Associate, Department of English, UW-Madison.**

Dr. Fiorenza teaches small seminar-style writing classes to a wide range of undergraduates and has been instrumental in the curriculum development of the first-year writing course, English 100, which typically serves 2,000 students annually. She designed the curriculum and its delivery to ensure students develop the range of writing practices necessary to meet the demands of their university education. In response to the pandemic, she took the lead in redesigning the course for online instruction for the 2020-21 academic year. Fiorenza participates in and presents research at national, regional, and local conferences, including the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. She has mentored dozens of instructors, many teaching writing for the first time, and was selected to participate in the TeachOnline@UW Learning Community in 2020 and 2021.

- **Daniel Patrick Thurs, Assistant Faculty Associate, Department of Physics, UW-Madison.**

Dr. Thurs is the course coordinator and an instructor for the department's two largest courses, Physics 103 and 104, which enroll about 1,200 students each semester. He played a principal role in shaping the course content as the lead member of the Physics REACH team, which was tasked with transforming them into "flipped" classes using active learning techniques. Thurs contributes to student success with his approachable teaching style, thoughtful course

content, and engaging course design. He piques students' interest using real-life applications, such as how cells move, how geckos adhere to a surface, and properties of blood flow. He also co-facilitates the weekly instructors' meeting with the teaching assistants, setting a model for teaching and reflection. Thurs was selected as an Honored Instructor at UW-Madison in 2015, 2017, and 2020.

About the Awards

The Alliant Energy Foundation established an endowment in 2006 to honor Erroll B. Davis, Jr.'s distinguished record of public service. Davis, the first African-American leader of a "Business Week 1000" company, is a former chief executive of Alliant Energy and a former member of the UW System's Board of Regents. He was interim Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools from 2012 to 2014.

The James R. Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Awards are given as a tribute to the energy company's long-time senior executive, James R. Underkofler (1923-2015), who was a staunch proponent of excellence in undergraduate teaching. He spent his entire career with the Wisconsin Power and Light Co. (now Alliant Energy), ending with his retirement in 1990 as chairman and CEO.

Both award programs are administered by the UW System's Office of Academic and Student Affairs. For more information about each of this year's recipients, see the [2021 awards program online](#).

For more information about the awards, visit:

- wisconsin.edu/grants-awards/erroll-b-davis-awards/
- wisconsin.edu/grants-awards/james-r-underkofler-awards/

[Download high-resolution photos of the recipients.](#)