

UW System: Regents announce University Staff Excellence Awards for 2022

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MADISON, Wis.—The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents today announced the recipients of the University Staff Excellence Awards. These awards recognize exceptional service to the university and are the UW System's highest recognition bestowed on members of its university staff. The 2022 recipients will be honored at the next Regents meeting, September 30.

The awards, in their second year, are part of a family of awards that the Regents sponsor, including the Regents Teaching Excellence Awards, the Regents Academic Staff Excellence Awards, and the Regents Diversity Awards.

"The Board of Regents is proud to recognize this year's recipients of the University Staff Excellence Awards," said Regent Kyle Weatherly, chair of the selection committee. "We are delighted to spotlight the many ways their dedicated service supports student success and strengthens our UW campus communities."

Award recipients are selected for superior performance resulting in significant contributions to the department and university; use of positive personal interaction to manage work changes; and a consistently innovative approach that improves productivity and work quality. Each recipient is awarded \$7,500 to support professional development or program enhancements.

The 2022 recipients include two individuals and one program:

Nicole Owen, Academic Department Associate, Department of Mathematics, UW-Eau Claire.

Owen is the academic department associate for one of the largest departments on campus. In addition to supporting the mathematics department chair, faculty, staff, and students, she helps plan large-scale events the department sponsors, including recruitment events such as the annual Math Meet. A member of the University Staff Council since 2016, Owen was elected council chair in October 2020. She participated in campus deliberations during the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting with shared governance, the Rapid Response Team, the chancellor's leadership team, and community health leaders to understand the pandemic, debate concerns, and reach consensus on how to create a safe learning environment. In 2016, she co-developed the Administrative Professional Collaboration Group, and in 2021, she joined the UW-Eau Claire Caregiving Group, which advocates for caregiving needs for both staff and students on campus. Owen is part of the planning team for the 2023 National Conference on Undergraduate Research, a major event UW-Eau Claire will host next spring for 4,000 student researchers from across the country.

Jolanda “Jo” Johnson, Assistant Director of Payroll and Benefits, Human Resources, UW-Stout.

Johnson has worked in the Human Resources office at UW-Stout since 1999, taking on positions of greater responsibility over that time. The campus community appreciates her empathy, dependability, and big-picture thinking. She helped conceive of and implement the AskHR program to ensure timely responses to requests and questions. She also worked with programmers to develop a work overload tracker to replace an outdated spreadsheet system. For both new systems, she helped implement the software solutions and the change management process. She is part of the Administrative Transformation Project advisory committee and collaborates with UW-Shared Services to provide feedback and review training materials developed for payroll and benefits across the entire UW System. She became a trusted resource for employees to go to for help and guidance during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Johnson earned the Stout University Staff Employee of the Month in January 2018 and has been nominated for the award more than any other employee.

Custodial Services, UW-River Falls.

The UW-River Falls Custodial Services departments are an integral part of campus life, creating a clean, safe, welcoming community for students, employees, and visitors. Staff embody the spirit of campus core values and contribute positively to the university's mission of helping prepare students to be productive, creative, ethical, engaged citizens and leaders. The program employs more than 50 student

custodian employees, including a student hiring coordinator and student trainers. Professional supervisors and custodians work together with the significant student custodian staff to provide excellent service to campus. Custodial units adapted their job responsibilities and increased cleaning procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic, finding new ways to meet the expanded workload, even when understaffed. As one example, they helped to empty and clean a large residence hall in one week so it was ready for COVID-19 quarantine and isolation. Campus visitors consistently compliment the cleanliness of the university buildings and their positive interactions with custodial staff. Custodial Services earned the first Chancellor's Recognition Award for University Staff in 2021.

Other members of the University Staff Excellence Awardsselection committee included Regent Scott Beightol, Regent Jennifer Staton, and Regent Dana Wachs.

The committee also recognizes the important contributions of this year's other nominees:

Individual nominees included Amy Ibuaka, UW-Green Bay; Jeri Baller, UW-La Crosse; Glenn Morgan, UW-Milwaukee; Keith Hussey, UW-River Falls; and Nick Ciesinski, UW-Whitewater.

Program nominees included the UW-Madison DoIT Digital Publishing and Printing Services; UW-Milwaukee Mail Services; UW-Stout University Dining Services; and UW-Whitewater Sustainability Program.

To download high-resolution photos of recipients, see [online news release](#).