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Students and Teachers Recognized for Outstanding Achievements by UW System and Alliant Energy Foundation

Four University of Wisconsin System students and three teachers are being recognized by the UW System and Alliant Energy Foundation for their outstanding achievements. The *Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr. Academic Achievement Award* recognizes 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/Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Award* recognizes outstanding commitment to student success. The awards are presented to students and teachers from UW System campuses located within Alliant Energy's service area.

"We are proud to partner with Alliant Energy to recognize these impressive students and instructors," said UW System President Ray Cross. "Their outstanding academic and volunteer efforts create a dynamic educational experience and serve to inspire future generations to reach their full potential."

"These awards are part of Alliant Energy's investment in education and our shared future," said Julie Bauer, Executive Director of the Alliant Energy Foundation. "It is an honor to build on the legacy of these two awards and recognize the students and faculty for all of their hard work."

The recipients of the 11th annual *Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr. Academic Achievement Award* are:

- **David Ababio**, senior, UW-Platteville. Ababio served as lead counselor for the *Exploring Engineering Summer Program*. He helped train other counselors and led about 60 high school students in weeklong activities on campus. Ababio became a student mentor for FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics, which works with high school students to inspire interest in engineering. He is also an active member of the *Engineers Without Borders* chapter on campus. Ababio expects to earn his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering in May 2018, along with a minor in Microsystems and Nanotechnology.
- **Avamarie (Ava) Brueggeman**, senior, UW-Platteville. Last spring, Brueggeman successfully applied for a summer research position in a graduate laboratory, the Center for Robust Speech Systems at the University of Texas in Dallas. Her paper about cochlear implants earned an honorable mention for the Barry Goldwater Scholarship, the country's most prestigious undergraduate scholarship in natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Brueggeman is the president of UW-Platteville's engineering honor society, Eta Kappa Nu. She expects to earn her Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in May 2018, along with minors in Mathematics and Computer Science.
- **Kevin Hernandez**, senior, UW-Madison. Hernandez has served as treasurer of two student organizations, Energy-Hub and the UW-Madison chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. He is also actively engaged in the Leaders in Engineering Excellence and Diversity (LEED) Scholars Program. Hernandez participated in a summer internship at the National Office of Energy Efficacy and Renewable Energy where he conducted a cost-to-benefit analysis for the conversion of traditional energy methods to geothermal. He expects to earn his Bachelor of Science degree in Geological Engineering and Geoscience in May 2018, along with a certificate in Energy Sustainability.

- **Ariana Saffold**, senior, UW-Madison. Saffold's leadership and service activities include tutoring and outreach programs that aim to increase diversity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. She works with the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program to prepare high school students from underrepresented backgrounds for the rigors of college by imparting good habits and critical thinking skills. She has also volunteered with Expanding Your Horizons, a one-day conference that encourages middle school students to pursue STEM careers. She expects to earn Bachelor of Science degrees in May 2018, double-majoring in Chemical Engineering and Chemistry.

The 25th annual *Alliant Energy/Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Award* recipients are:

- **Russ Castronovo**, Professor, English Department, UW-Madison. Dr. Castronovo joined the faculty of UW-Madison's English Department in 2002 and became chair of the department in 2016. He teaches and researches American literature, with interests including African American literature, American Studies, cultural theory, and popular culture. A highly respected teacher, mentor, scholar, and author, Castronovo asks himself and his students how literature can lead to new, unexpected ways of thinking. Over his three decades of teaching, he has prioritized strategies to reconsider what we think we know about social identities, democracy, and literary expression.
- **Kayoung Kim**, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Education, UW-Fond du Lac. Dr. Kim specializes in experimental psycholinguistics. Her research examines the relationship between literacy experiences and human cognition. She has taught a number of psychology courses and received awards for her excellence in teaching and mentorship. From live-streaming classroom debates to animated film adaptation of life stories, Kim has crafted meaningful, creative assignments to enhance student learning. She has partnered with the Fond du Lac Children's Museum under a National Science Foundation grant to create a Living Laboratory research program, a collaboration that provides opportunities for her students to develop their own research projects.
- **Evan Larson**, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, UW-Platteville. Dr. Larson co-founded the Tree-Ring, Earth, and Environmental Sciences (TREES) Lab at UW-Platteville, where he serves as a supervisor and mentor. The TREES Lab provides undergraduate students with hands-on research opportunities. Larson has had over 50 students present their research at professional meetings. He has received 44 grants totaling more than \$600,000, all stipulating undergraduate involvement as a major component. He has used the grant money to fund undergraduate research fellowships, as well as to set up service-learning class projects.

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 Underkofler awards are given as a tribute to the energy company's long-time senior executive, the late James R. Underkofler (1923–2015), who was a staunch proponent of excellence in undergraduate teaching.

Both award programs are administered by the UW System's Office of Academic and Student Affairs. For more information about each of the 2017 recipients, see the [awards program online](#).

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