

Faculty Excellence Awards

Excellence Award winners are chosen by a committee made up of previous winners and other representatives from tenured/tenure track faculty, university/senior lecturers and academic support professionals across the university. The committee submits recommendations to the President in April and the winners are announced at Convocation.

Winners announced Friday include:

Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Dr. Deborah James

“Dr. Debbie James inspires students and peers to rethink the purpose and potential of liberal arts education in the twenty-first century. Her work is defined by creativity, innovation and discipline,” said GSU president Elaine P. Maimon in presenting the award. James is also credited with leading development of GSU’s new Bachelor’s Degree in Media Studies, advising of the student newspaper and working to build strong collaboration with the campus’ visual media news program, TWAG—This Week at GSU. She works cooperatively with the GSU department of Independent Film and Digital Imaging to make sure that students have a comprehensive view of twenty-first century film and media. James is a prolific scholar and media practitioner. One of her projects is a series of short documentaries on the former Yugoslavia. She has just completed her term as Vice President of the Chicago Public Media Community Advisory Board.

“Debbie is in the forefront of GSU’s transformation. She is committed to incorporating citizenship into her courses and into the co-curricular activities that she sponsors,” said Maimon. She is a leader in implementing High Impact Practices and GSU’s entire LEAP agenda – or Liberal Arts and America’s Promise. She is also one of the first three full-time faculty members to make sure that students experience a true living/learning community as a resident of the university’s first residence, Prairie Place.

Associate Professor of Physical Therapy, Dr. Dale Schuit

“Dr. Dale Schuit is a physical therapist, so helping others comes naturally,” said Maimon. Schuit is doing research to analyze the biomechanics and positioning of neck structures. He presented preliminary results to an international spine conference in Great Britain.

Schuit’s colleagues praise him for being a committed teacher and mentor. He co-chairs the Institutional Review Board—the group that makes sure that faculty research meets or exceeds federal standards. With his co-chair, Dr. David Rhea, he has increased the expectations and clarity of the IRB process. “Dale’s work helps to bring GSU to a new level in the integration of teaching and research,” Maimon added.

Schuit treats students, faculty and staff with great dignity and kindness in his quest to help each achieve his or her own unique potential.

Associate Professor of Management, Dr. Stephen Wagner

“Dr. Stephen Wagner gives new meaning to the word “versatile.” He teaches courses at all levels: undergraduate, MBA and doctoral. He is one of the professors selected from a sizeable group of applicants to teach one of our freshman seminars,” said Maimon in presenting the award. On the doctoral level, he creatively applies his research to developing a core course in

GSU's Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership. He has published his research in the most prestigious, peer-reviewed publications and was awarded the Louis O. Kelso Fellowship from Rutgers University to support his research on employee ownership.

Wagner was cited for challenging students to reach ever higher levels of intellectual achievement and creating an active learning atmosphere by incorporating real examples from his own management experience into the classroom. "He is a master in translating theory into practice. He is a dynamic teacher and researcher. Steve always goes above and beyond the call of duty to provide assistance to his colleagues, while doing an outstanding job in the classroom, publishing in top journals, and playing a leadership role in various college and university initiatives," concluded Maimon.

The Dr. Gerald C. Baysore Endowed Distinguished Service Award

The Baysore Award is presented in memory of Dr. Gerald C. Baysore, GSU Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, who served the university with great distinction for 18 years. This is the highest honor GSU can bestow on a university employee and is presented each year to the individual who has demonstrated the qualities that Dr. Baysore exemplified: absolute integrity, total competence, generous dedication and unfailing civility. "This year the committee felt truly uplifted by the descriptions of many members of the GSU family who reflect Dr. Baysore's characteristics. The decision was not easy," said Maimon.

The 2014 Baysore Award winner is Bettie Lewis of the university's Procurement Department. She is described as kind-hearted, hard-working, knowledgeable, mission focused and student-centered. "She is known campus-wide for dedication to serving others. GSU can always count on her to do things with integrity, punctuality and humor," said Maimon. "Bettie is an example of how an outstanding employee in one campus office truly affects ALL areas of GSU," she added.

The Educator's Legacy Award

With the arrival of GSU's first freshman class, the university presented the first Educator's Legacy Awards. The winners were nominated by entering freshmen as the high school educator who helped them focus their dreams of college and contributed to their academic achievement.

Winners announced Friday include:

Debra Taylor of Rich Central High School was nominated by her student, Nelemiah Booker. As a student who required homebound schooling due to a chronic illness, "Ms. Taylor encouraged and nourished my spirit throughout my high school years," said Booker in her nomination.

Lauren Lamaster of Alan B. Shepard High School was cited as "...not only my teacher, but a mentor ... a dependable and trustworthy adult steer(ing) me into the right path," by Taylor Gentry in her nomination.

Lindsay Beechy-Kociolek of Manteno High School was nominated by Michaela Wascher-Disney who said, "Mrs. Kociolek gave me hope to push through my final years of high school, to stay positive and to think bigger and better things will come in my path."

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