Awards for Excellence to Honor Exceptional Employees

University Relations - Communications
April 2015

Several dedicated UA employees will be honored tomorrow at the 27th annual Awards for Excellence ceremony.

The awards recognize outstanding achievements in the workplace, exceptional contributions toward efficiency and effectiveness of operations, special efforts in promoting workforce diversity, and outstanding service to the University community and visitors. Winners are nominated by their peers and selected by judges.

Andrew Comrie, senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, will present the awards during tomorrow's ceremony at 3 p.m. in the Student Union Memorial Center Grand Ballroom.

Awards for Excellence.

Awards for Excellence are awarded to benefits-eligible employees for outstanding workplace achievements.

Jennifer Bevins, admissions evaluator in the processing unit of undergraduate admissions, inspires other members of her team with her willingness to tackle any task, according to her colleagues. "Jennifer's creative suggestions have absolutely saved us time and money in every facet of our office," Danielle Crosby, assistant director of admissions, wrote in her nomination letter. "In addition to Jennifer's splendid display of skill and expertise, she also inspires other members of our team to improve, learn and grow within their job."

Jill Calderón, program director of Latin American Project Development in the Office of Global Initiatives, contributes to study abroad programs, the Center for Latin American Studies and the UA's Global Studies Program. Elizabeth Oglesby, associate professor of Latin American Studies and the School of Geography and Development, nominated Calderón for the Awards for Excellence. She wrote in her nomination that "Jill is more than simply an appreciated staff member: She is a colleague whose dedication to students, programmatic creativity and intellectual acumen far exceeds her job description and is key to the (Latin American Studies) center's development and success."

Brent Gambrell, a credentials evaluator in the Senior Undergraduate Admissions Processing Unit of the UA’s Office of Admissions, has unlimited energy and enthusiasm, and his dedication and passion to his work helps advance the mission of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, according to nominator Nancy Warne, senior coordinator for data integrity and admissions. "He has incredible creative energies and is a pleasure for all to work with," Warne wrote in her nomination letter. "He exemplifies our mission to receive and process applications in the best interest of perspective UA students."

Isela Gonzáles-Cook is an administrative associate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and handles all matters related to the department's graduate office. She also coordinates services for 30 faculty members, 108 graduate students and 5,500 graduate students in the department. Anxton Olarre, a professor of Spanish and Portuguese, nominated Gonzáles-Cook, writing in his nomination that he "cannot think of a person who embodies the virtues of commitment and dedication beyond the call of duty to the success of the UA better than Isela Gonzáles-Cook."

Sumayya Granger, assistant director of academic services at the Center for English as a Second Language, is said to do anything and everything required to perform her job exceptionally. She organizes the center's international new student orientation, hires faculty and oversees student workers. She also serves as a leader for the center's Cultural Orientation Task Force and as a lecturer in the UA's English department. Steven Randall, coordinator for the Intensive English Program, nominated Granger for the Awards for Excellence. "Her compassion and willingness to help other, be they teachers, students, student workers or administrators, truly set Dr. Granger apart from others," he wrote in his nomination letter.

Larry Xiaoming Lang, senior program coordinator at the Confucius Institute at the UA, was nominated for his outstanding work ethic and achievements. His projects at the institute have earned grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and he has been able to arrange for UA student musicians to perform in China many times thanks to his involvement with the UA Fred Fox School of Music. Lang was nominated by Zhao Chen, professor at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health and co-director of the Confucius Institute. Chen wrote in her nomination that Lang's "passion, dedication and professionalism in CIUA work and collaboration have made CIUA an invaluable asset at the University and in the Tucson community."

Sharonne Meyerson, program coordinator in the Department of English, serves double duty in the department's Creative Writing Program and Rhetoric, Composition and the Teaching of English Program. Despite all of her responsibilities, her colleagues say she continually exceeds expectations and is one of the department's most dependable employees. "Sharonne Meyerson is the single most capable, hardworking, wise and humane staff employee I've ever worked with," nominator Christopher Cokinos, director of the Creative Writing Program and associate professor of
Meyerson was nominated for the Awards for Excellence by Fenton Johnson, associate professor of English.

Jeffrey Ratje, assistant dean of finance and administration in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is said by his colleagues to embody excellence and commitment to the UA in everything he does. Ratje, who is also treasurer for the Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station, provides accurate and timely financial information to help the college operate more efficiently. He was nominated for the Awards for Excellence by Carolyne A. Greeno, senior business manager in Agriculture Extension Administration.

Abigail Sorg, program coordinator in the Office of the Registrar, assists in the course approval process for the office. Her job also requires the challenging task of maintaining accuracy of the UA's Course Catalog. Colleagues say she not only performs her duties with precision, but also makes them look easy. Sorg was nominated by Fernando Chavez, assistant registrar in the Office of the Registrar.

Grace Thompson, assistant registrar for the College of Medicine, provides mentorship and support for students. In Thompson's nomination, Amy Waer, associate dean for the College of Medicine, wrote that Thompson "has been the foundation of the Office of Student Affairs and a constant over the past several years. Her ability to do her job superbly while always willing to go above and beyond is truly amazing." Thompson was nominated for the Awards for Excellence by Kelly Lynch, assistant registrar for the College of Medicine – Phoenix.

Sarah Wieland, director of academic advising and student services at UA South, works tirelessly on behalf of the students she assists. In addition, Wieland has worked to strengthen relationships between her staff and their counterparts at local and regional community colleges. "Sarah has made a significant and positive impact on the UA, UA South as the UA branch campus, and on many Arizona community colleges," wrote James W. Shockey, dean of UA South, in Wieland's nomination letter. Wieland was nominated for the Awards for Excellence by Danielle Crosby, assistant director of admissions.

Department Award for Excellence

This award goes to a single campus department for excellence in managing people and resources.

There are a few units across the UA campus that affect every student attending the UA, and the Department of Room and Course Scheduling in the Office of the Registrar is one of them.

The department works directly with academic units to schedule courses each semester, while also assisting clubs and off-campus organizations to reserve rooms for special events.

In the department's nomination, Gail Burd, senior vice provost for academic affairs, commended team members for their outstanding work serving students, faculty members and employees.

"RCS is one of the units students, faculty and staff depend upon every day for an essential service, while not even knowing the unit exists – until there is a problem," Burd wrote. "Fernando Chavez and his colleagues run an exceptionally lean operation that has proven to be an essential resource."

Team Award for Excellence

This award is given to teams of three or more people committed to a common purpose or goal at the UA.

The Teaching Support Office in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry supports, trains or assists more than 14,000 students per year. In a single semester, the office operates more than 100 lab sections; schedules, trains and assists incoming lab instructors; staffs an information window; manages and updates multiple D2L sites; schedules all chemistry and biochemistry classes; handles teacher course evaluations; and supervises the "prep room," a supply center for all chemicals and instrumentation used in the labs.

"The necessary teaching support functions are so extensive that no single faculty member ... can ever hope to understand all the complexity and mechanics of the work being done by the Teaching Support Office," wrote Andrei Sanov, associate head for education and academic affairs in the department, in the team's nomination letter.

Bill Joe Varney Award

This award is given to one benefits-eligible employee with at least 15 cumulative years of employment at the UA to recognize a career of dedicated service.

Dorothy "Dotty" Spears, senior program coordinator for Maricopa County Cooperative Extension, has been essential in developing 4-H clubs throughout Maricopa County. She also developed a strong rapport with the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community to promote both youth and adult program participation. Her colleagues say she is an exceptional worker who has demonstrated passion and commitment to the UA and its land-grant mission.
“Dotty goes far beyond the general role of a supervisor,” wrote Scottie Misner, associate nutrition specialist in the Department of Nutritional Sciences[2], in Spears’ nomination letter. “She has mentored many students and staff, inspiring them to achieve their college degrees. She takes the time to find each person’s strengths and incorporates them into high-functioning teams.”

More information about the Awards for Excellence is available on the Staff Advisory Council website[1].

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