Awards for Excellence Recognize Employees Who Go 'Above and Beyond'

University Relations - Communications
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In recognition of their work above and beyond their normal duties, several UA employees will be honored at the 26th annual Awards for Excellence [1] on Monday.

These awards honor 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.

The awardees will be honored during a ceremony from 3-5 p.m. in the Student Union Memorial Center Grand Ballroom. John Paul Jones III, dean of the UA College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, will serve as master of ceremonies and Provost Andrew Comrie will give remarks.

Awards for Excellence

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

Amy Bergley, credentials evaluator, senior, in the Office of Admissions and New Student Enrollment [2], supervises, monitors and coordinates the daily tasks of six student assistants. She also serves the office as an expert on postal rates and regulations. Her co-workers commend her for being a "consummate professional." "She is dedicated to providing the best service to our prospective students and she understands the paper documents we receive represent an individual and that the work that we do impacts their future," said Arezu Corella, director of undergraduate admissions processing.

Marian Binder, director of the Campus Health Service's Counseling and Psych Services, has worked at the UA for more than 35 years. Binder serves on the UA Behavioral Assessment Team and the Threat Assessment Team. According to nominator Katherine Zilmer, a senior coordinator for the Dean of Students Office: "She is a critical resource for students dealing with mental health issues and/or crises, as well as faculty and staff trying to support their students. ... Innovation is required as a part of her daily work and she is consistently striving to find new and more efficient ways to do things."

Doug Cromey, associate scientific investigator in the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the UA College of Medicine, was referred to as the "go-to" person for experimental design, training and interpretation of data from light microscopic digital imaging. Cromey is the force behind the UA's Microscopy Alliance [3], a resource that combines all information on the microscopes publicly available at the UA. He is also one of the driving
forces for the "Introduction to Digital imaging Workshop," which is held twice a year to help researchers understand more about digital images and how to work with them properly.

Rhea Gowin, director of graduate admissions at the UA Graduate College [4], was nominated for her motivation to go above and beyond the status quo. Gowin's involvement in configuring, testing, training and implementation of the Mosaic Project was extensive, and she represented the Graduate College to ensure that the functionality of the new system met everybody's needs. Gowin is described by her colleagues as an outstanding example of a loyal, dedicated, highly competent, creative employee who has invented and reinvented herself to perfect the work accomplished by her office.

Maria Gordon, operations manager for the Clinical and Translational Science Center [5], also called CaTS, at the UA's BIO5 Institute, has helped many investigators with advice on how to manage their studies. In five years, Gordon has transformed the opportunities for clinical research so that CaTS, which started with no active studies, now has 103 active studies. In addition, Gordon has taken on the management of 21 of those studies. Her colleagues say she inspires her team to take pride and feel joy in helping investigators and forwarding the mission of CaTS.

Emma Melo, program coordinator for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences [6], built and sustained the UA Cochise County Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education by tailoring it to meet the unique needs of the community. For her efforts, she was recently awarded a Pride on the Spot Award from the Bisbee Department of Economic Security Office. The nomination letter for that award read: "Her smile and caring ways in reaching out to others who are here in our lobby during some of the hardest times of their lives makes our day even more rewarding when our customers leave with a smile and comments (that) ... we provide such wonderful service."

Victoria Molina, a Facilities Management [7] custodian, is praised for her organization and customer service skills. "Victoria is always ready to meet the customer's needs by going above and beyond to ensure that her areas are always in pristine condition," said nominator Dierdre Belle-Oudry, instructional lab manager for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Molina manages the high-traffic areas of the Henry Koffler building, which sees thousands of students and has a 300-seat lecture hall. She also serves as the safety representative for Custodial Services Team 107 on the Facilities Management Safety Committee.

Bridget Radcliff, a senior program coordinator in the UA Department of Computer Science [8], has shined in the short amount of time she has held the position, according to her colleagues. "In the six months since she has joined the Department of Computer Science, she as surpassed every reasonable (and unreasonable) expectation we had of her," says Associate Department Head David Lowenthal. Radcliff works with employees and students to make sure the department runs smoothly. "Bridget Radcliff is simply irreplaceable in our department," Lowenthal said.

Steven Randall, program coordinator for the Center for English as a Second Language [9], supervises the education of more than 300 international students and he manages more than 40 idiosyncratic English as a second language teachers. Co-workers say he stays late and comes early to get the job done, all while continuing as a graduate student pursuing degrees in English as a second language and second language acquisition and teaching. He also connects with other departments on campus and goes the extra mile to support other
coordinators and administrators at CESL, according to his colleagues.

Mark Yanagihashi, senior laboratory coordinator for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, can often be found in the advising “trenches” and working with students and staff. "He is a great help to our TAs when they are overwhelmed with student questions or when they confront some type of problem that they cannot solve. His expertise is a great benefit to our program," said Belle-Ourdy. Mark has also been instrumental in creating a new curriculum for the laboratory that complements the new general chemistry program, called "Chemical Thinking."

Department Award for Excellence

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

The Admissions Processing Unit in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions has embraced the essence of “Bear Down,” says nominator Kasey Urquidez, associate vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The unit works behind the scenes reviewing, verifying and processing applications for every student who applies to the University. The team works to provide personal attention and customer service to every student, having individual conversations with the students while keeping them apprised of the admissions process.

"Over the past year, this department has grown and developed in ways I never knew possible," said Urquidez. "As you look out at the Mall between classes at the approximately 32,000 undergraduates, know that one of the APU team members work made that enrollment possible."

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.

Facilities Management's Locksmith Shop and Key Desk Team has been lauded for its strengths in communication, efficiency and quality. The team provides excellent customer service while ensuring that departments and college remain in compliance with University policy, according to nominator Dan Ross, Locksmith Shop and Key Desk supervisor. The team provides security and safety across campus by installing, servicing, rekeying and maintaining door locks, exit devices and electronic locking devices on University buildings. Monica Blancarte, Arizona Athletics program coordinator, senior, says it's "their amazing attitude that makes working with them so enjoyable. Not one person has ever told me no. My deadline may sound crazy, but they work with me to make it happen."

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.
Frank Farias, associate vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and executive director of UA BookStores, is the recipient of the 2014 Bill Joe Varney award. Melinda Burke, UA vice president of alumni relations, calls him a "dedicated member of the UA community with a desire to partner that goes well beyond the norm."

Farias is described as a champion for students. In his time with the UA, he has developed several student scholarships and student academic programs, which have been so successful they have been used as models across the county. He is also a founder of the Tucson Festival of Books, and was instrumental in the creation of the off-campus "A" Stores.

Farias, who has worked at the UA for more than 25 years, will retire on May 30. His colleagues say his legacy will continue to inspire and inform many of the areas with which he worked.

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

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