

Harry McDermott wins highest staff honor in 2022 Awards for Excellence

University Communications
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Seven employees and two teams are being honored for outstanding contributions, creativity and compassion in the 2022 Awards for Excellence, presented by the Staff Council and President's Cabinet.

"The nominations the committee receives each year are extremely compelling, even more so this year," said **Jennifer Lawrence**, Staff Council chair and business and finance manager in the Department of Neuroscience. "University employees bring incredible resourcefulness, ingenuity and commitment to their work. Just look at the breadth of engagement the award recipients have in the University's mission."

For the first time since 2019, recipients will be recognized at an in-person event, happening April 14 from 3-4:30 p.m. at the Student Union Memorial Center Grand Ballroom. Awardees from **2020** ^[1] and **2021** ^[2] also will be honored at the event.

Honorees are nominated by colleagues and selected by a panel of employees who volunteer as judges. Find descriptions of all the awards, including **criteria and eligibility** ^[3], on the website for the Employee Recognition Committee, which coordinates the annual awards.

This year's winners are below.

BILLY JOE VARNEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Given to someone with a career of service to the University and the community who loves the University and acts in the spirit of Billy Joe Varney, associate vice president emeritus for planning and budgeting, who retired in 1988 after a 30-year career. Criteria: demonstrated efforts in practicing inclusive excellence in the workplace; service to the University; service to University employees; service to the community. The award comes with a \$1,500 cash prize.

Harry McDermott | Physician, Campus Health

Many of McDermott's nominators said his expertise, plus preparation efforts he led years ago, helped the University navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Harry chaired the pandemic preparedness committee at a time when many didn't expect to see a pandemic happen in our lifetimes," said one nominator. "Fortunately, Harry was steadfast in working with multiple stakeholders to assemble a comprehensive matrix of campus responsibilities and kept that awareness current with regular updates."

That work helped inform the implementation in the University's point of distribution vaccination clinic, which distributed more than 240,000 vaccine doses in 2021.

Another nominator praised McDermott's commitment to the next generation of physicians.

"To say that Dr. McDermott acts as a competent and knowledgeable resource to students and employees is an understatement," read the letter. "There is much to learn from observing and noting how he listens, supports and appreciates others while offering sound insights. Harry is reliable, honest, dependable, straightforward, and makes himself easily accessible and available."

McDermott joined the University in 1987 and previously served as director of Campus Health.

CENTER/DEPARTMENT/INSTITUTE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Given to units for outstanding excellence in the management of people and resources. Criteria: culture of promoting a satisfying work environment; leadership in creating and sustaining a dynamic and engaging workplace; environment of high performance. The winning unit receives a plaque.

University Animal Care

One nominator praised the unit's work in improving morale and life-work balance, including commissioning a cultural assessment, offering schedule flexibility and implementing regular employee feedback sessions. Another commended UAC for maintaining a high level of service for its researchers while many institutes faced disruptions. "The highest compliment I can provide UAC is that over the last two years, the operation has been 'status quo' to their usual high standard," the nominator wrote.

TEAM AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Given for outstanding team achievement. Criteria: exceptional contributions toward efficiency and effectiveness of

operations; outstanding service to the University community and/or visitors; special efforts in practicing inclusive excellence in the workplace. The award comes with a \$1,500 prize that can either be distributed among team members or used to fund something that benefits the team as a whole.

Campus Health

All of the nomination letters for Campus Health cited the unit's extraordinary efforts in keeping the campus and Tucson community safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. "The safe return of more than 45,000 students and 15,000 faculty to campus could not have been accomplished without the dedicated efforts of Campus Health physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, medical assistants, health educators, pharmacists and receptionists," wrote one nominator. "Through teamwork, creativity and sheer strength of will, Campus Health staff have produced an exceptional list of contributions this past year, which helped our campus weather the pandemic and protected the health and wellbeing of so many in our community, one patient at a time," wrote another.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Given to individual staff members for achievements in activities beyond normal duties. Criteria: outstanding achievement in the workplace; exceptional contributions toward efficiency and effectiveness of operations; outstanding service to the University community and/or visitors; special efforts in promoting workforce diversity. Each award comes with a \$1,000 cash prize.

Camille Andersen | Director, Scholarship Administration, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Career and Academic Services

Andersen, who joined the University in 2010, was praised for overhauling the college's scholarship awarding system. "If Camille did not connect her actions to the University's mission, students would have been hurt," wrote one nominator. "She is exceptional for the system that she created, which is efficient, effective, low waste, and for the transformative results it has created for students." Another nominator detailed that success, saying that the percentage of available scholarship dollars that were actually awarded to students rose from 53% in FY 2017 to 93% in FYI 2021 under Andersen's leadership.

Nina Bates | Director, Operations and Strategic Initiatives, Office of the Provost

One of Bates' nominators praised her ability to turn concepts into reality as part of her work on the Pandemic Academic Coordination working group. "I have honestly never met anyone who is more effective at turning ideas into action," the nominator wrote. "The scale at which Nina is able to operate is absolutely incredible." Another cited the importance of her soft skills. "On top of all her achievements in the workplace, Nina is a joy to have as a colleague. She is outgoing, funny and thoughtful, but also works very hard and is extremely conscientious." Bates began her career at the University in 2003.

Kiri Carini | Geospatial Specialist, University Libraries

One nominator praised Carini, who joined the University in 2018, for her initiative in training the next generation of data specialists. "Recognizing the growing importance of data literacy for 21st century careers, Kiri conceived of a student competition to encourage development in data skills." The Data Visualization Challenge is now in its third year. "Kiri has been a champion for creating opportunities for underserved communities," wrote another nominator, citing her work in featuring women and people of color in the geospatial seminar series she organizes.

Marisa Lester | Assistant Program Director, Undergraduate Biology Research Program, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology

Many of Lester's nominators pointed out her willingness to help others beyond the scope of her role. "On any given day, she can be found taking time out of her busy day to help people figure out how to use the new computer technologies in the Life Sciences South building conference rooms or helping someone run a query via UAccess Analytics to provide data needed immediately for a grant proposal," wrote one. Another added, "She has always been willing to go above and beyond her position to help out anywhere we need it, be it through helping faculty with data on student success (or) volunteering in outreach activities such as Meet MCB." Lester joined the University in 2012.

Brooke Massani | Director of Research Support Services, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Massani, who began working for the University in 2008, was praised for the work she does supporting hundreds of research teams. "She has generated the support of a very diverse and assertive, sometimes anxious, faculty base who have come to understand she sees her mission as enhancing their impact and their success, and the success of the students," wrote one nominator. Another shared, "Dr. Massani champions her team above her own personal interests, (and) looks out for the welfare of both the staff members and the various facilities they run."

Natalie Olson | Business Manager, College of Humanities

One of Olson's nomination letters outlined her ability to get tasks done in almost every corner of the college. "Whether the request is about a completely new initiative (e.g., renovating an old classroom into a podcast studio), a last-minute dash (e.g., rallying a building engineer for an archive's broken AC unit), or a necessary-but-tedious errand (e.g., hauling folding

chairs from one building to another on a semi-reliable golf cart), if Natalie is on it, everyone knows the job is as good as done," the nominator wrote. Another noted her compassion while working through the pandemic: "Her focus was not only on checking the boxes but understanding the fears, concerns and uncertainty of each person she worked with." Olson has worked for the University for nine years.

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Links

[1] <https://recognition.arizona.edu/2021-award-winners/2020-award-winners> [2] <https://recognition.arizona.edu/2021-award-winners> [3] <https://recognition.arizona.edu/awards-criteria>