University honors 'Women of Impact'

Research, Innovation & Impact

October 2023

Thirty accomplished women took center stage at Stevie Eller Dance Theatre on Oct. 20, to be recognized as Women of Impact by the University of Arizona Office of Research, Innovation & Impact. The awardees, representing a wide range of colleges, units and disciplines across campus, were chosen by committee for their commitment to University values as well as their professional achievements, community impact, unique skills in driving discovery and innovation, and their passion for empowering others.

In video remarks shared during the event, Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs acknowledged the awardees' devotion to elevating those around them.

"It is obvious that you care deeply about our state – from the students who benefit from your dedication and passion to the people across Arizona who are impacted by your truly incredible research, innovation, scholarship, leadership and mentorship," she said. "We are stronger when we have a state that empowers and works for everyone, so please join me in continuing to support and uplift one another, and in blazing trails for all those that come after us."

The next generation of women making a difference in their schools and communities were honored as well, as RII invited principals of public high schools in Pima County to submit nominations for the Young Women of Impact award. The inaugural cohort from 20 public schools across seven Pima County districts was selected based on criteria similar to those used for the University awardees and were integrated into the event.

The young women of impact campaign was created because it's important to strengthen bonds between the University and its surrounding community by connecting motivated young women with University role models and cultivating a pipeline of potential future Wildcat Women of Impact, said Lisa Romero, associate vice president for marketing and communications in RII.

"Our University awardees are creating large-scale, long-term impact, and we need to reinforce to our young women that there is an incredible wealth of talent and opportunity right here in Tucson," said Romero, a 2023 Women of Impact awardee, who added that the University will "support them as they grow into the leaders they aspire to be."

In a video message, University President Robert C. Robbins commended the awardees for their leadership in research and societal impact and encouraged the high school students to return to campus as official Wildcats.

"We couldn't be a top 20 research university without our incredible researchers, innovators, tech transfer experts, communicators and outreach professionals who make it all happen," Robbins said. "You are leading the way while empowering those around you."

RII partnered with several University units on the Women of Impact recognition and celebration, including Arizona Athletics, the BIO5 Institute, the College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Engineering, the College of Science, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Eller College of Management, the Graduate College, the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, the Office of the Provost, the School of Information, Tech Launch Arizona and Tech Parks Arizona.

Nominations for the next cohort will open in late spring 2024.

This year's honorees are listed below.

**Diane Austin**  
Professor, School of Anthropology  
Director, Bureau of Applied Research, School of Anthropology  
Research Anthropologist, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Terry Badger**  
Professor and Eleanor Bauwens Endowed Chair of Nursing, College Nursing  
Director of Research Initiatives, College of Nursing  
Professor, Department of Psychiatry  
Member, University of Arizona Cancer Center

**Susan Beck**  
Professor, Department of Geosciences

**Gurtina Besla**  
Associate Professor, Department of Astronomy
Associate Astronomer, Steward Observatory, College of Science

Stephanie Russo Carroll
Associate Professor, Department of Community, Environment and Policy
Director, Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance
Associate Research Professor, Native Nations Institute, Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

Bonnie Colby
Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
Professor, School of Geography and Development
Professor, Department of Hydrology and Atmospheric Sciences

Laura Condon
Associate Professor, Department of Hydrology and Atmospheric Sciences

Anne Cress
Vice Dean of Operations and Strategy, College of Medicine – Tucson
Professor, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine
Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology
Professor, Department of Cancer Biology

Kacey Ernst
Department Head and Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

 Liesl Folks
Vice President, Semiconductor Strategy
Director, Center for Semiconductor Manufacturing
Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Carmala "Carmie" Garzione
Dean, College of Science
Professor, Department of Geosciences
Member, BIO5 Institute

Rakhi Gibbons
Director of Licensing and Intellectual Property, Tech Launch Arizona

Felicia Goodrum
Interim Associate Department Head and Professor, Department of Immunobiology
Professor, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine
Professor, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology
Member, BIO5 Institute
Member, University of Arizona Cancer Center

Melanie Hingle
Director, Nutritional Sciences Graduate Program
Associate Director and Professor, School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness
Member, BIO5 Institute
Member, University of Arizona Cancer Center

Tanya Hodges
Senior Region Manager, Yuma Campus
Executive Director, Business Initiatives and Grant Development
Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Education, Technology and Innovation

Corey Knox
Deputy Director, Arizona Astrobiology Center

Sharon Megdal
Director, Water Resources Research Center
Professor, Department of Environmental Science
C.W. and Modene Neely Endowed Professor and Distinguished Outreach Professor, Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension

Kathleen Melde
Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Inclusion, College of Engineering
Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Juanita Merchant
Regents Professor, Department of Medicine
Chief, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Member, BIO5 Institute
Member, University of Arizona Cancer Center

Maggie O’Haire
Associate Dean for Research, College of Veterinary Medicine
Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine
Professor, Department of Psychology

Mary Peterson
Director, Cognitive Science Program, Department of Psychology
Professor, Department of Psychology
Professor, Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute

Margaret Pitts
Senior Associate Dean, Graduate College
Associate Professor, Department of Communication

Sudha Ram
Anheuser-Busch Endowed Chair and Professor of Management Information Systems, Entrepreneurship and Innovation,
Eller College of Management
Professor, Department of Computer Science
Member, BIO5 Institute

Andrea Romero
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
Professor, Department of Family Studies and Human Development

Lisa Romero
Associate Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Research, Innovation & Impact

Edella Schlager
Director and Professor, School of Government and Public Policy

Valerie Shirley
Associate Professor, Department of Teaching, Learning and Sociocultural Studies
Associate Professor, Department of American Indian Studies
Director, Indigenous Teacher Education Program
Dean's Fellow for Indigenous Education, College of Education

Shufang Su
Department Head and Professor, Department of Physics

Gayatri Vedantam
Associate Director of Research and Professor, School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences
Member, BIO5 Institute

Ofelia Zepeda
Regents Professor, Department of Linguistics
Director, American Indian Language Development Institute

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