

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2017

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Regents' Diversity Awards Winners Announced

The UW System Board of Regents will honor the ninth annual winners of its Regents' Diversity Awards on February 3 in Madison at the next Regents meeting. These awards recognize individuals and programs that foster access and success for students who are members of historically underrepresented populations. Each winner will receive \$5,000 to support professional development or continue the program being honored.

"The recipients we selected for this year's Regents' Diversity Awards are using innovative, data-driven methods to meet the needs of the state by expanding opportunity for historically underrepresented student populations, making sure no talent goes untapped in our communities," said Regent Mark Tyler, who chaired the special Regents' committee to determine the recipients. "We are honored to recognize their leadership and dedication to creating partnerships and building relationships that help make our campuses more effective learning, living, and working environments for all."

Winners were selected using the following criteria:

- Sustainable positive impact on equity and diversity, leading to positive institutional change
- Accountability demonstrated through routine assessment and feedback to promote forward movement on equity and diversity goal
- Intersections across multiple dimensions of diversity
- Collaborations with other units, departments, or communities – within the institution and beyond

The 2017 winners are:

- **Individual: Cyndi Kernahan, Psychology Professor and Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning, UW-River Falls.**

A faculty member at UW-River Falls since 1999, Kernahan has established herself as a recognized expert in the study of racism and prejudice. Under her leadership, the university has improved campus climate and is addressing issues of diversity and inclusion through university-level strategic planning. She helped design and implement a campus climate survey, and worked to create action steps to address issues revealed in the survey results. Kernahan uses data to understand impediments to academic progress and recently helped UWRF earn a grant to improve retention among underrepresented minority students. She developed and teaches The Psychology of Prejudice and Racism, a course that has specific learning outcomes requiring data collection and reporting on a five-year basis. At the university and system level, Kernahan leads faculty development opportunities and serves on diversity-related committees. She has invited expert speakers to campus, presented at conferences, and delivered sessions to student audiences, including a first-year seminar at UW-Barron County and a fraternity at UW-River Falls. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and is cited frequently among scholars in the field.

- **Individual: Angela Miller, Director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA), UW-Platteville.**

Under Miller's leadership over the past five years, OMSA has had a sustainable impact on underrepresented minorities on campus; for example, the grade point average equity gap between underrepresented minorities and white students continues to decline. Miller implemented the Academic Enrichment Program, a comprehensive approach to supporting students who are first-generation or from at-risk populations. Services include supplemental advising, summer bridge programs, and First-Year Interest Groups. Miller also implemented SUCCEED, a three-week residential summer program focused on students of color and first-generation college students, and the DRIVEN Scholars Program, a comprehensive advising model to monitor academic progress and degree completion. With the help of the Admissions office, she developed an outreach program to middle schools and high schools called "Paths to Platteville." She directs the College Club, a school-based program in the town of Darlington that presents students in grades 6 to 12 with the opportunity to learn about college. She is dedicated to helping faculty and staff across campus engage in diversity trainings and conversations about diversity and inclusion. Miller is credited with helping to grow the underrepresented student population at UW-Platteville from 11 to 15 percent between 2009 and 2015.

- **Team: Blugold Beginnings, UW-Eau Claire.**

Led by Jodi Thesing-Ritter, Blugold Beginnings is an innovative pre-college program to increase enrollment and retention of underrepresented minority students in higher education. The program serves fifth graders, middle school students, and high school students, and has expanded to include a campus learning community to support students admitted to UW-Eau Claire. Blugold Beginnings offers a fifth-grade campus visit, which has expanded from its pilot of 60 students eight years ago to serving 2,000 fifth graders, mentored by more than 550 UW-Eau Claire students. Fifth graders are invited back for longer summer camps, and eighth graders can attend a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Day to learn about STEM fields. Summer programming for high school students includes a STEM camp and a transition to high school camp. The program serves and employs students from low-income, first-generation, and historically underrepresented groups; 70 percent of the student mentors mirror the population they serve. In six years, the learning community program has served more than 300 students during their college careers at UW-Eau Claire, with a focus on maximizing their experiences and graduating in four years. Students in the Blugold Beginnings cohort group are welcomed to campus early to jumpstart their college experience and help them to become familiar with the facilities and resources. Students are paired with both upper-class student mentors and a faculty member who helps to guide them through the semester. Research has shown that students enrolled in the program had a higher grade point average than all students of color and first-year students not in the program. Levels of attrition for students in the learning communities are also significantly lower than those in the general student population at UW-Eau Claire. Students of color in the Blugold Beginnings program participate in study abroad programs at the same rate as majority students, reducing the participation gap in high-impact practices.

Other members of the selection committee included Regent Eve Hall, Regent Tim Higgins, and Regent Edmund Manydeeds.

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