March 18, 2019

Fifteen receive top honors at the 29th Annual Engineering Awards Luncheon

The Michigan State University College of Engineering recognized demonstrated excellence and distinguished contributions during the 29th Annual Engineering Awards Luncheon in the Kellogg Center on Friday, March 15. Fifteen faculty and staff members received some of the college’s most prestigious awards.

Tom Voice, associate dean for administrative affairs for the College of Engineering, welcomed the 120 guests during the annual spring ceremony.

“We’re here today to recognize our colleagues who have done great things,” Voice said.

Dean Leo Kempel served as emcee, calling the 2019 award recipients an outstanding group of people.

“We are proud to recognize those who truly do exceptional things for our students,” Kempel said.

Amanda Idema, assistant dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs, presented certificates of recognition to student group advisors. Ten-year certificates of gratitude were presented to advisors Wen Li, Eta Kappa Nu; Amanda Idema, Society of Applied Engineering Sciences, and Kyle Foster, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. Five-year certificates went to Andre Lee, MSE Society; Sandy Christlieb, Society of Women Engineers; and Richard Enbody for SpartaHack.

The Withrow Endowed Teacher/Scholar/Service Award program was established through a gift from MSU alumni Jack Withrow (BS, MECH EGR, ’54; MBA ’71) and Dottie Withrow (BA, speech therapy and elementary education, ’55) to recognize members of the MSU College of Engineering who have demonstrated excellence in instructional and scholarly activities and rendered distinguished service to the university and the student body.

The 2019 awards and recipients are:

Gloria Stragier Award for Dedicated and Creative Service
This award is presented annually to a staff member in the College of Engineering to recognize exceptional and
creative job performance and/or concerned and creative leadership.

Meagan E. Kroll, graduate secretary in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, is admired both for her positive, helpful attitude and her amazing organizational skills. As graduate secretary for the largest graduate program in the college (230 graduate students), she has taken what had been a loosely governed program and made it into a highly organized model of efficiency. Professor Tim Hogan said “her efforts have helped establish the tools we need to better manage our graduate programs. I feel our graduate program continues to improve, in no small measure, due to the diligent efforts of Ms. Kroll.”

Withrow Student Service Award
This award is presented to an advisor, academic specialist, or non-tenure-track instructor for outstanding service to students in the college.

Lindsay A. Naylor, an advisor in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science (CHEMS), is a proactive advocate for students who uses the tools and resources available to her to help students even before they come to her with issues. Fellow advisors look to her as a mentor and supportive colleague. She is known for not only advising students on which classes to take, but also counseling them on their professional career pathways. She has a proactive advising style, is dedicated to the training, mentorship, and support of the entire advising team, and goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Global Leadership Award
This award recognizes faculty and staff members who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in advancing global scholarship through research, teaching and outreach.

Wei Liao, an associate professor in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering (BAE), has demonstrated a strong commitment to international activities across the MSU campus and around the world, including South America and in Central America, where a pilot facility in San Jose, Costa Rica, promotes integrated solar-bio-power waste/wastewater utilization in the region. The success and impact of the project led to the formation of a regional Biogas Council, along with similar efforts in Brazil and Germany. Additionally, he was worked with scientists and engineers in Europe and Asia. His international research activities have made significant contributions to MSU’s goal of developing solutions that address global challenges. He has made a significant impact in student experiences for MSU students and students at international partner locations, while also yielding high impact development and humanitarian results.

Excellence in Diversity Award – Emerging Accomplishments Award
This award recognizes faculty and staff members who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in advancing diversity through research, teaching, and outreach.
Nelson Sepúlveda, an associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to promoting diversity, and is a leader in attracting and educating graduate electrical engineering students from underrepresented groups. From the time he was a graduate student under the Sloan Engineering program, he has helped recruit, mentor and guarantee financial support for outstanding minority graduate students. As the ECE graduate recruitment coordinator, he continues to display that enthusiasm and commitment to students. With the recent retirement of Professor Percy Pierre, he is slated to take over administration of the Sloan Engineering program at MSU. He has significantly advanced the percentage of underrepresented students in the College of Engineering.

Excellence in Diversity Award – Sustained Excellence Award

This award recognizes faculty and staff members who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in advancing diversity through research, teaching, and outreach.

Christina Chan, the George W. Bissell Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science, has shown extraordinary commitment to training and educating women and other underrepresented students in STEM research. Over the course of her career, she has shown an unwavering commitment to cultivating an inclusive environment and is a strong proponent of “training by doing” to help prepare her students to work in teams and train younger engineers. A valued mentor to colleagues, she has taught at the ASEE Summer School for Chemical Engineering to help junior faculty members prepare for an academic career and develop engaged learning experiences. As one colleague said, “From teaching high school students and undergraduates to guiding career development for young investigators and professors, her teaching skills have had an impact on a spectrum of scientists, and she has a large and successful sphere of influence in the communities she serves.”

Exceptional Service Award

This award recognizes a faculty member who has demonstrated exceptional institutional, public, and community service. Nominations are submitted by department chairpersons to the dean and associate deans for final selection.

Eric K. Torng, an associate professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, has provided exceptional service in leadership roles within the department, the College of Engineering, Michigan State University, and the broader community. As graduate director for the CSE Department (since 2007), he has spearheaded many innovative practices to effectively recruit top applicants, obtain University Fellowships and other funding for students, diversify the CSE graduate student population, build community among students, and support students to successfully
complete their degree programs. Many of these practices are now recognized as “best practices” and have been adopted by other Engineering departments. In addition to service, he has contributed significantly to improving the broader mid-Michigan community. His nominators succinctly note: He achieves a great deal because when he spots a problem, he does not worry about whether or not the problem is his to solve, but instead pushes forward to find a solution. He has a consistent willingness to engage in challenges and go above and beyond expectations.

Other awards presented at the 29th annual engineering luncheon were:


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