



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 6, 2023

News Release

UW System Board of Regents announces 2023 Diversity Awards

Educators at UW-Stout, UW-Madison, and UW-River Falls recognized for work to support student success

MADISON, Wis.—The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents will honor the recipients of the 15th annual Regents' Diversity Awards on February 10 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 recipient is awarded \$7,500 to support professional development or continue the program being honored.

"We are proud to recognize these people and programs for their profound impact in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion," said Regent Héctor Colón, who chaired the special Regents' committee to determine the recipients. "Students, faculty, and staff of all backgrounds are benefiting from their dedication to building partnerships and expanding opportunity."

Award recipients 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 goals.
- Intersections across multiple dimensions of diversity.
- Collaborations with other units, departments, or communities – within the university and beyond.

The 2023 recipients are:

- **Rickie-Ann Legleitner, Associate Professor of English; Adviser for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Coordinator; and Interim Executive Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, UW-Stout.**
Dr. Legleitner has been recognized for outstanding contributions as a teacher, scholar, and LGBTQ+ individual and advocate, offering her time and expertise to university and UW System colleagues while serving as an advocate and adviser for students. She collaborated with university leadership to create an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Unit and EDI Office at UW-Stout. She also helped develop the EDI Team with representatives from each campus governance group to ensure campus constituent feedback. She revised the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) minor and serves as an adviser for the program. She is a leader in the UW System's Women's and Gender Studies Consortium and has worked with the UW-Stout Menard Center for the Study of Institutions and Innovation to expand work on initiatives around freedom of expression. Legleitner oversaw a major initiative to expand EDI professional development at UW-Stout in summer 2021. To date, about 100 faculty and staff have enrolled in the resulting EDI Canvas modules and 127 faculty and staff have participated in the in-person workshops. She has published and presented her work to a national audience and taught courses in multiple units while also balancing department service and student advising. In 2022, she earned the Enterprising Woman recognition by *Tagg Magazine*, a national publication.

- **Lori Kido Lopez, Professor of Communication Arts and Director of Asian American Studies Program, UW-Madison.**

Dr. Lopez's research and teaching focus on ways disenfranchised communities use media to promote empowerment and social justice, focusing primarily on Asian Americans. She is engaged in numerous efforts across campus to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. As Director of UW-Madison's Asian American Studies Program, she has overseen significant student growth and has prioritized faculty recruitment by hiring early-career scholars into tenure-track faculty roles. She has been instrumental in supporting the university's Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi American (APIDA) Student Center, which serves hundreds of students each year. As co-chair of the Campus Diversity and Climate Committee and co-chair of the College of Letters & Science Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Lopez developed new diversity, equity, and inclusion reporting mechanisms to help build a campus culture of accountability and continual improvement. She advocated to strengthen UW-Madison's Ethnic Studies Requirement, engaging a broad coalition of stakeholders to deepen student understanding of multiple dimensions of diversity. She has written books on race and the media, including an ethnographic study of how Hmong Americans engage with media. Lopez earned the 2020 Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Award, a UW-Madison Distinguished Teaching Award.

- **Upward Bound Program, UW-River Falls.**

The Upward Bound Program, started at UW-River Falls in 1999, is one of the university's longest-running programs, focused on preparing diverse populations for college readiness. Under Director Bee Vang, the program cultivates a network of peers, professionals, and community members to leverage support and high-impact practices for success, providing a framework for students to succeed at a college level prior to arriving on a college campus. The program builds positive peer support and cohorts. Participants enter into the four-year program as the 9th grade cohort and are encouraged to bond and identify supportive and trusting peer groups. The program also emphasizes leadership development, career/professional development, and intersection with individuals of different identities. UW-River Falls is required to submit an annual progress report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education for review and approval to receive continued funding. The program has been renewed six times over 23 years, with the most recent renewal in 2022 receiving an almost 100 percent evaluation score on program performance. In the past three progress reports, an average 91 percent of program participants are both first-generation and low-income. Upward Bound currently serves 83 percent Asian American and/or Southeast Asian students, with the remaining population primarily Black/African American and Hispanic students.

Other members of the selection committee included Regent Angela Adams, Regent Ashok Rai, and Regent Brianna Tucker.

The committee also recognizes the important contributions of this year's other nominees:

- Individual nominees included Meagan Strehlow, UW-Green Bay; Laura Franklin, UW-Platteville; Judy Young, UW-Stevens Point; and Dr. Pilar Melero, UW-Whitewater.
- Program nominees included the PEOPLE Program, UW-Madison; the Campus Climate Department, UW-Platteville; and the School of Biology, Chemistry, and Biochemistry, UW-Stevens Point.

To download high-resolution photos of recipients, see [online news release](#).

###

The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 161,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. Nearly 90 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree - with a median salary of more than \$66,000. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state

investment. UW System universities also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mark Pitsch
UW System
608-265-3419,

mpitsch@uwsa.edu

universityrelations@uwsa.edu

Jerry Poling
UW-Stout
715-232-2384

polingj@uwstout.edu

Kelly Tyrrell
UW-Madison
608-262-9772

kelly.tyrrell@wisc.edu

Dina Fassino
UW-River Falls
715-425-4306

dina.fassino@uwrf.edu