



## University Relations

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## Regents Honor Outstanding UW System Academic Staff

The UW System Board of Regents will honor this year's recipients of the *Academic Staff Awards for Excellence* at its June 9 meeting in Milwaukee. These awards recognize exceptional service to the university and are the UW System's highest recognition bestowed on members of its academic staff.

"This year's award recipients represent the high caliber of academic staff across the UW System," said Regent Janice Mueller, chair of the selection committee. "We are delighted to recognize the many inspiring and significant ways they are helping our students succeed and making our communities stronger."

Award recipients are selected for superior performance resulting in significant contributions to the department and institution; use of positive personal interaction to manage work changes; and a consistently creative approach that improves productivity and work quality. Each award is valued at \$5,000 per recipient.

The 2017 recipients include two individuals and one program:

- **Jean Creighton, Director of Manfred Olson Planetarium, UW-Milwaukee (UWM).** Dr. Creighton joined the UWM Department of Physics in 1999. Since becoming planetarium director in 2007, her live planetarium shows and personable style have helped to attract more than 100,000 community members in the past 10 years, and she reaches an even wider audience through dozens of radio programs on WUWM, the university radio station.

During the past 10 years, she has shared planetarium shows with 45,000 students, about a third of whom were students from the Milwaukee Public Schools. Her outreach to K-12 teachers has helped improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) instruction in area schools. She teaches astronomy to UWM students in pre-education majors, and she has mentored more than 70 students through internships, master's projects, and student employment. She has forged collaborations to offer innovative joint programs at UWM, such as a storytelling course with the Theatre Department called "A Tale of Scale," in which students use theatrical techniques to explain the scale of the universe to a general audience.

In 2014, NASA selected Creighton as one of 24 Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors for the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy project – SOFIA – the largest moving astronomical observatory. She shared her experience of spending 20 hours at 45,000 feet as part of a TEDx talk, "Musings from the Stratosphere." Each year, she presents at the Great Lakes Planetarium Association conferences and in 2012 received the association's honorary Fellow award in recognition of her commitment to science education and research in innovative fields.

- **Ellen Latorraca, Associate Academic Librarian, Andersen Library, UW-Whitewater.** Ms. Latorraca has worked at UW-Whitewater since 2011. As the education librarian, she maintains the Andersen Library Curriculum Collection and supports the seven departments within the College of Education and Professional Studies.

During her tenure, Latorraca has initiated and strengthened partnerships on and off campus to help train teachers and researchers, while making the library's resources more broadly available. Through her efforts, the number of classroom and one-on-one instruction sessions has increased significantly. She has created opportunities for students in the College of Education and Professional Studies to gain experience with K-12 library collections and children's programming. She draws from her experience in the K-12 system and in adult education to support a wide variety of programs within the college.

Latorraca's responsibilities include coordinating library research sessions for regional schools, collaborating with the Undergraduate Research Program and Research Apprenticeship Program, and supervising staff, interns, and student workers as it relates to the library's curriculum collection. She has created more than 50 online guides that provide tutorials for programs and services, including Endnote, BadgerLink, and Google Scholar. The most popular guide has been viewed more than 850 times. In addition, Latorraca developed detailed research links and tips tied to specific course offerings, including graduate-level coursework. Working with UW-Whitewater's Children's Center, she has launched creative initiatives such as the "Stuffed Animal Sleepover," an event that brings more children, families, students, and teachers to the campus every year.

- **UW System Higher Education Location Program (UW HELP), UW-Extension.** Created in 1971 as the "front door" to the UW System, UW HELP currently serves more than 300,000 individuals each year. Under the leadership of Director Mary Vilmo, the unit provides personalized assistance and admission information to prospective students, parents/guardians, and high school counselors through one-on-one contact, social media outreach, workshop presentations, and webinars.

UW HELP developed the electronic admission application for the UW System, used by more than one million students to date; maintains a database of pre-college programs; and created MajorMania, a database of academic programs to help students find best-fit programs. This past year, UW HELP's text messaging effort engaged 20,000 high school students in conversations about financial aid and preparing for college. This spring, staff built the *UW Journey* mobile application, which high school students will be able to use to learn about and compare UW System institutions.

UW HELP leads the Wisconsin E-Transcript Initiative and recently conducted a pilot with Verona Area High School to initiate electronic delivery of high school transcripts. The initiative will launch statewide to make the transcript process more efficient and secure. Last year, UW HELP co-sponsored College Goal Wisconsin with the Wisconsin Association of Financial Aid Administrators, a free event to help students and families with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

UW HELP staff regularly give high school presentations, including annual workshops for nearly 1,000 school counselors in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois. Creator of the award-winning *Introduction to the UW System* view book, UW HELP has received national awards from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association.

The *Academic Staff Awards for Excellence* selection committee members included Regents Janice Mueller, Tracey Klein, Drew Petersen, and Bryan Steil.