



# MSU honors top faculty

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Dedicated teachers, dynamic researchers and faculty devoted to the betterment of Montana are among the winners of the top Montana State University 2011 faculty awards announced this week. The annual awards honor achievement in faculty research, teaching, outreach and creative projects. This year the awards will be presented at the inaugural MSU Spring Convocation set at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 11, in Reynolds Recital Hall.

## The Cox Family Faculty Excellence Award

**David Dickensheets**, professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, **Christiana Stoddard**, associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics, and **Tom Wood**, professor in the School of Architecture, are the recipients of the 2011 Cox Family Awards for Creative Scholarship and Teaching. Each will receive a \$2,000 honorarium from the Winston and Helen Cox Family Endowment, as well as an \$800 stipend to buy books dedicated in their honor at MSU's Renne Library.

Dickensheets is known for his consistent and creative marriage of research and teaching, which has resulted in enormously improved opportunities for student learning. He has taught 16 different classes, two of which he created. In addition to mentoring many undergraduate and graduate students, he created the Optics Teaching Laboratory where students conduct experiments with lasers, lenses and polarizers, and optoelectronic devices. He also built and serves as Director of the Montana Microfabrication Facility, a cleanroom facility serving researchers in the Northwest and providing hands-on learning as a teaching laboratory.

Stoddard's research blends economic theory and empirical analysis to answer questions of practical relevance related to education policy. She has published seven refereed journal articles in high-quality economics journals, has made more than a dozen conference presentations and has grown her grant activity markedly since joining the DAEE faculty in 2002. In 2005, Stoddard was called upon to conduct a teacher compensation market analysis for the Montana Legislature. Stoddard's teaching earns high praises from her students and colleagues, and won her the Betty Coffey Award in 2007.

Wood is the director of MSU School of Architecture's Integrated Design Lab, where students work with architects and engineers throughout Montana to achieve energy-efficient commercial buildings. The lab integrates cutting-edge research with student education. The students who work there are trained in energy-efficient design and analysis and when they graduate find employment in firms around the country where they have become leaders in high performance building design. The lab produces manuals and teaching presentations on integrated design and high-performance building design and is a resource for all MSU architecture students and faculty.

## James and Mary Ross Provost's Award for Excellence

**Greg Keeler**, professor of English, received the 2011 James and Mary Ross Provost's Award for Excellence, which recognizes excellence in teaching and scholarship. He will receive a \$2,500 honorarium for the award.

A prolific poet, writer and performer, Keeler is also a highly respected professor who is commended for bringing to life poetry and literature in his classroom. Keeler has written seven books of poetry, six plays and two memoirs and dozens of chapters that have been published in books and magazines, recorded a score of audio tapes and CDs of his performances. His work has been featured on NPR shows including "All Things Considered" and "Writer's Almanac." He has won many university and state awards including the Governor's Award in the Humanities, the Scripps Howard Award in Broadcast Journalism, the L&S Distinguished Professor Award, the Wiley Award for Research and Creativity and the Phi Kappa Phi teaching award. In addition, he regularly receives high rankings from his students and has inspired dozens of students to pursue writing and careers in teaching.

**President's Excellence in Teaching Award**

**Chris Bahn**, adjunct instructor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, **Jill Davis**, adjunct instructor of English, and **Brock LaMeres**, assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, have won the 2011 Excellence in Teaching Award. Each will receive a \$2,500 honorarium.

Bahn loves chemistry and it shows. He is known for his phenomenal energy and exceptional creativity in integrating classroom and real-world experiences. He excels in teaching large introductory level classes as well as small graduate classes. He is a pioneer in introducing technology in the classroom, a devoted mentor of students and an expert at evaluating classroom materials.

Davis is an innovative teacher with unbounded energy who has inspired a passion for both writing and public service among her students. Davis' classes are recognized as a spark for positive change in the MSU and Bozeman communities. Among those projects are the Students for Danforth Park that resulted in raising \$35,000 for the restoration of one of MSU's oldest gardens, which will be rededicated next fall. A T-shirts for Haiti clothing drive she coordinated resulted in thousands of items of clothing sent to the country decimated by earthquake. Her students' interviews of Bozeman's homeless resulted in "The Homeless Connect Yearbook Interviews Project." Her students also raised awareness on sexual assault through "The Faces Project."

LaMeres has earned a reputation as a superior classroom instructor, undergraduate research mentor and academic adviser. He is known for making learning exciting without dumbing down the content. A prime example of his skill and dedication as a teacher was his work as "chief instigator," project coordinator and technical adviser for MSU undergraduates who built a robot that won the 2010 NASA Lunabotics competition at the Kennedy Space Center.

**Provost's Award for Undergraduate Research/Creativity Mentoring**

**Michael Babcock**, psychology, and **Lynda Sexson**, professor of humanities, won this year's undergraduate research/creativity mentoring award. They will each receive a \$2,000 honorarium.

Babcock is both a prolific and respected researcher and highly sought-out teacher. During two decades at MSU, he has mentored more than 50 undergraduates, including more than 20 minority students who have worked in his lab through several National Institute of Health-funded programs. He has published more than 20 academic papers with students and published 31 presentation abstracts with students. Babcock is also co-principal investigator of the MSU-based Consortium for Community-Based Research in Native American Health, a \$6.5 million NIH grant that provides opportunities for Native American students to learn about and engage in research.

Sexson has a long tradition of mentoring students to produce the highest caliber of creative and scholarly work and support them as they find research interests in a wide range of academic fields. Her most recent example of mentoring was the production of *Corona 5*, a literary journal based at MSU. The recent version was a "cabinet of curiosities" that displayed an array of creativity. A challenging and inspiring professor, Sexson has long been recognized as among the best and best-loved teachers at MSU. She has demonstrated the bringing together of scholarly and artistic work by publishing a body of fiction. She also co-edited with Michael Sexson, MSU English professor, a recent film, "My Book and Heart Shall Never Part." Sexson continues to mentor many former students as they pursue cutting-edge scholarship in the humanities at some of the most prestigious institutions in the country.

**Provost's Excellence in Outreach Award**

**Duane Griffith**, Extension Farm Management Specialist and **Otto Stein**, professor in the Department of Civil Engineering, were selected as the 2011 recipients of MSU's Provost's Excellence in Outreach Award. Each will receive a \$2,000 honorarium.

Griffith made significant contributions to the Montana agriculture community by developing easily accessible analytical software for assessing average crop revenue election (ACRE)--part of the 2008 Farm Bill available to farmers in 2009. He also conducted workshops to help farmers understand the software and this very complex farm program. The ACRE decision tool and accompanying programs have been worth many millions of dollars to farmers and ranchers throughout Montana. He has played a lead role in developing the nationally acclaimed "Ag in Uncertain Times" Webinar-based Extension program. Griffith has also received the Distinguished Service Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi in 2002.

Stein is lead faculty adviser for the MSU student chapter of Engineers Without Borders. As such, he has led the group to national and international prominence, empowering the students to be global thinkers and actors, while simultaneously overseeing an infrastructural revolution in the Khwisero region of rural western Kenya. In the past four years, EWB has raised more than \$300,000 to support its work in Kenya and sent 10 teams of MSU students to Khwisero to work on water and sanitation projects. Directly

benefiting an estimated 3,000 Kenyans, the students have drilled wells, installed hand water pumps, built composting and bio-gas latrines, implemented hand-washing programs, established a community advisory board and are currently designing a water distribution pipeline.

### **The Meritorious Technology/Science Award**

**Allen Harmsen**, professor in the Department of Veterinary Molecular Biology, **Mark Jutila**, professor in the Department of Veterinary Molecular Biology and interim department head for the Department of microbiology, **Mark Young**, professor of microbiology and plant sciences and **Trevor Douglas**, professor of chemistry and biochemistry; jointly received MSU's Meritorious Technology/Science Award, as did **David Singel**, professor of chemistry and head of the MSU Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. It carries a \$2,500 honorarium and recognizes an MSU faculty member who has made at least one significant technological or scientific contribution that could be transferred or already has been transferred to the private sector.

Singel is an international leader in electron paramagnetic resonance spectroscopy, the role of nitric oxide in biological regulation, and the interface between these disciplines. He has defined and provided important insights into the role of hemoglobin as a carrier and activator of nitric oxide that controls blood pressure and oxygen delivery to tissues through a complex series of reactions. Singel's insights have revolutionized understanding of vascular physiology and blood pressure control, which is central to maintaining good health. He has been issued five American and six European patents for his work, with a large number of patent applications pending.

Young and Douglas have been the driving forces in development of protein cage nanoparticles and Harmsen and Jutila have provided a unique and significant application of this technology that could have worldwide medical importance. Significantly, the group discovered that protein cage nanoparticles could be used to protect test animals from lung damage due to a variety of viruses and bacteria. This research has implications for preventing lung damage in humans.

### **Wiley Awards for Meritorious Research and Creativity**

**Matthew Fields**, microbiology, **Bern Kohler**, chemistry, **Brent Peyton**, chemical and biological engineering, and **Robert Walker**, chemistry, have won this year's Charles and Nora L. Wiley Faculty Awards for Meritorious Research and Creativity. Each will receive \$2,000. Sponsored by the MSU Foundation, the prizes are given in honor of the Wileys, who were pioneer ranchers in eastern Montana.

Fields has made comprehensive contributions to the understanding of bioremediation of metals, radionuclides and organic contaminants found in U.S. Department of Energy facilities throughout the country. His work has also defined links between communities of microbes - the tiny organisms that have inhabited virtually every square inch of the earth's surface for the past 3.5 billion years. He has published 46 peer-reviewed papers and has been invited to present at multiple national meetings and at other universities.

Kohler is recognized as a creative scientist with the skill of a great craftsman. The leader of his generation in ultrafast spectroscopy, he uses the most advanced technology to study high-impact problems that address human health and advance understanding about the origins of life. An example is Kohler's illuminating work regarding the ultrafast photo-dynamics of nucleic acids. In addition to conducting widely cited research, he has mentored 16 undergraduate students and 12 graduate students.

Peyton is known as a tremendous catalyst for biofuel research at MSU. He is in the upper echelon of MSU researchers in terms of publication rate and competitive grants, with more than 80 peer-reviewed publications and multimillion dollar grant support. Peyton is also recognized for collaborative interdisciplinary research and as being a role model for junior and senior faculty, as well as MSU students.

Walker has distinguished himself for his innovative work using optical methods to study chemical structure, organization and reactivity at surfaces, with the goal of understanding how bulk chemical properties are altered by these unique, asymmetric boundaries. Specific areas of focus include the invention of "molecular rulers" to measure microscopic widths of liquid interfaces and the development of tools that can explore chemical reactions occurring on very high temperature surfaces. His work has led to more than 50 publications in scientific, peer-reviewed journals, and his interdisciplinary research group reflects his unwavering commitment to both graduate and undergraduate education.

### **Excellence in Online Teaching Award**

**Kathleen Schachman**, professor of nursing, has received MSU's inaugural Excellence in Online Teaching Award. She will receive

a \$2,000 cash award.

Schachman has reorganized and updated content to fully adopt the online format in several graduate-level nursing courses. To assist her online instruction, Schachman uses creative online tools, such as Web cams, which allow her to observe and provide feedback to students as they perform advanced nursing skills. Schachman's interest in the online environment has extended to her research, which focuses on postpartum depression in military wives. With the help of a grant from the College of Nursing, Schachman is developing an online intervention to prevent and treat postpartum depression in this at-risk population. Students from both the graduate and undergraduate nursing programs have contributed to this effort.

### **Betty Coffey Award**

**Leah Schmalzbauer**, professor of sociology, received the Betty Coffey Award. The award was established in memory of Betty Coffey, an engineering professor from 1977-1984 who was noted for her teaching excellence and her championing of women's equity and minority issues in the curriculum. It comes with a \$500 honorarium.

Schmalzbauer's research and teaching and considerable community service has mirrored Coffey's interest in "invisible populations." She has developed courses on the sociology of globalization, gender and Latino migration, which have opened the eyes of her students to the struggles of those who are socially and economically marginalized around the world. Her skill as a teacher has inspired students to work to improve the lives of Latino immigrants in the area. As a result of her mentoring and teaching, many of her students have continued their work in sociology through graduate programs, research and careers in community organizing and public policy.

### **Women's Faculty Caucus Distinguished Mentor Award**

**Cathy Zabinski**, associate professor in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Science, received the 2011 Women's Faculty Caucus Distinguished Mentor Award. It carries a \$250 honorarium. The award recognizes an MSU faculty member for mentoring junior women faculty members by helping them negotiate the promotion and tenure process, encouraging their research and teaching activities, and providing "whole woman" role models.

Zabinski was nominated for this award by Rebecca Bunn, who completed her Ph.D. in Cathy's lab in 2004. Zabinski has mentored Bunn for more than a decade and has recently been instrumental in helping Bunn transition from her role as stay-at-home mom of three boys to her role as a newly hired assistant professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences at Western Washington University.

### **Phi Kappa Phi Award**

**Kevin Repasky**, an electrical and computer engineering professor in the Department of Engineering, won the Anna K. Fridley Distinguished Teaching Award given by the Phi Kappa Phi honorary. Repasky will receive a \$1,500 cash award.

Repasky has created a record of superior lecture skills, instructional materials and course assessment methods. He has an instinctive "student radar" that enables him to detect when his class is losing track of key points and he can get them back on track with interactive exercises or meaningful and compelling examples. Repasky was awarded an Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award in 1992, the Outstanding Instructor in Electrical and Computer Engineering Award in 2003 and the Provost's Award for Undergraduate Research/Creativity Mentoring in 2006.

### **Phi Kappa Phi Distinguished Membership Award**

**Joseph Fedock**, MSU interim provost, has won the Phi Kappa Phi Distinguished Membership Award in recognition of his decades of dedicated service to MSU.

Fedock has served MSU for more than 20 years in a variety of positions that include faculty member in the Department of Civil Engineering, associate dean of the College of Engineering, interim dean of the College of Graduate Studies, vice provost for academic affairs, and, most recently, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. The experiences and opportunities provided to undergraduates witnessed tremendous enrichment through Fedock's support of the Undergraduate Scholars, Honors and University Studies programs and key initiatives in support of student recruitment and retention.

He has played an integral role in the development of MSU's research prowess and worked diligently to provide faculty and students with the necessary opportunities and resources to excel in their academic fields. His leadership in MSU's academic mission also played a major role in student successes that have included 51 Goldwater Awards, as well as multiple Rhodes, Phi Kappa Phi,

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Truman, Jack Kent Cooke, Mitchell and Boren awards.

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