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Michigan Distinguished Professors of the Year Announced

Lansing, MI – A GRAMMY-winning professor of jazz trombone and improvisation, a professor of computer and information science dedicated to bringing greater diversity to his discipline and a nursing professor who is a global leader in linking culture and health care have been selected as Distinguished Professor of the Year Award recipients from Michigan’s 15 public universities.

The Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year award recognizes the outstanding contributions and dedication exhibited by the faculty from Michigan’s 15 public universities to the education of undergraduate students. Each university was invited to nominate a faculty member who has had a significant impact on undergraduate student learning through various activities, particularly classroom instruction, applied research, experiential learning, innovation and mentoring. The 2019 recipients are Michael Dease, Michigan State University; Brahim Medjahed, University of Michigan-Dearborn; and Hiba Wehbe-Alamah, University of Michigan-Flint.

“After 13 years, nominees for the award continue to bring new scholarship and innovation to Michigan’s public universities and surrounding communities,” said Dr. Daniel J. Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “These professors have the highest dedication to student success and produce degree holders who advance Michigan’s prosperity.”

The 2019 recipients are introduced below:

Michael Dease, Associate Professor of Jazz Trombone and Improvisation, Michigan State University

Mr. Michael Dease is Associate Professor of Jazz Trombone and Improvisation at Michigan State University. He was part of the first class of jazz students at The Juilliard School, where he earned his B.Mus. and M.Mus. degrees, both in Jazz Studies. He is also Founding Director of the Jazz Institute at Brevard Music Center in North Carolina and Director of MSU’s Jazz Orchestra III and the international award-winning Spartan Jazz Trombones.

He has taught at MSU since 2011 and is the recipient of the 2018 MSU Teacher-Scholar Award and multiple Trombonist of the Year awards as voted on by music media. Dease’s performance accolades include three GRAMMY Awards: lead trombone on the Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album in 2011 and 2018, and tenor and bass trombone on the Best R&B Single in 2008.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-FLINT
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

THE MICHIGAN FIFTEEN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

His teaching reaches down into high schools and takes place across Michigan and around the world at world-famous venues. Dease motivates by mentoring, recording, publishing, and performing with students, and uses his own production company to teach the latest concepts of technical production and marketing. Students receive customized and individual weekly lessons; many have earned honors in major competitions and produced their own recordings, linking theory and practice.

“Professor Dease has effectively introduced the valuable mentorship of the stage and professional arena into the university classroom, a feat with which jazz educators have long struggled,” said Michigan State University Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs June Pierce Youatt. “He is truly dedicated to the success of his students and more broadly all of those in his area and beyond.”

Brahim Medjahed, Professor of Computer and Information Science, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Dr. Brahim Medjahed is Professor of Computer and Information Science at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, as well as Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives for UM-Dearborn at the Rackham Graduate School of the University of Michigan. He earned his undergraduate degree and M.S. at the University of Science and Technology–Houari Boumediene in Algiers, Algeria, and his Ph.D. at Virginia Tech University, all in computer science.

He has taught at UM-Dearborn since 2004. Last year, he was honored with UM-Dearborn’s Distinguished Teaching Award and the College of Engineering and Computer Science’s Excellence in Teaching award. Within his discipline and industry, Medjahed has also been elevated to Senior Member within the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and was selected as a participant in the Ford Faculty Summer Internship in 2017.

Medjahed has expanded his teaching into high schools and is intentional about bringing greater diversity to computer science studies. He teaches his students to view computer code as art. He designed a summer program that had students develop mobile apps, and involves his students in translational research working with Ford Motor Company. In both cases, students pitched their ideas to peers and to experts, with the mobile apps winning awards and the students researching with Ford to develop new features for Ford’s Sync software. He also helped design UM-Dearborn’s undergraduate program in cybersecurity, and jointly leads a regional collaborative dedicated to increasing student data literacy.

According to University of Michigan-Dearborn Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Catherine A. Davy, “Professor Medjahed is a visionary and passionate educator and scholar, who has dedicated much of his career to building and supporting new opportunities for undergraduate students at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, as well as for teachers and prospective students in the larger community we serve.”

Hiba Wehbe-Alamah, Professor of Nursing, University of Michigan-Flint

Dr. Hiba Wehbe-Alamah is Professor of Nursing at the University of Michigan-Flint. She earned her B.S. and M.S. at Saginaw Valley State University and her Ph.D. at Duquesne University, all in nursing.

She has taught at UM-Flint since 2006, where she is the recipient of many awards, notably the 2017 UM-Flint Scholarly or Creative Achievement Award, 2016 UM-Flint Teaching Excellence Award, the 2015 Provost Innovative Teaching Prize, the 2012 Outstanding Scholar Award, and more than 30 Excellence in Teaching Golden Apple Awards. She was also inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing last year, and performs voluntary and professional service in primary care and women's health services at the Saginaw County Department of Public Health.

Wehbe-Alamah is a global leader in Culture Care Theory and Ethnonursing research, and her undergraduate courses on transcultural health are open to and sought after by students in all majors. Her students include thousands of nurses, faculty, students, and military service members nationally who receive her training at conferences and through her work as a consultant and mentor. She led the development of the first transcultural care computer simulation game, CultureCopia, and two of her recently co-authored textbooks on nursing are being used in 17 countries in addition to the United States.

Wehbe-Alamah's active teaching styles and experiential learning contribute to her popularity with students, and it's not uncommon to have a line out the door of students wishing to take advantage of her pre-class extra tutoring.

"Dr. Wehbe-Alamah is a transformational teacher," says UM-Flint Chancellor Susan Borrego. "Since I have known Hiba, I've seen the inspirational ways she leads her students to be their very best while empowering them with deep knowledge. Within her students, she ignites a love of learning and service to others that's at the core of who she is, and that's crucial on the front lines of global health."

The other nominees for Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year were:

Monaliza Sirbescu, Central Michigan University; Ethan Lowenstein, Eastern Michigan University; Paula Lancaster, Grand Valley State University; Kathy Berchem, Lake Superior State University; Adam Prus, Northern Michigan University; Vijayan Sugumaran, Oakland University; Peter Brian Rose-Barry, Saginaw Valley State University; Jason McCormick, University of Michigan; and Daniel Jacobson, Western Michigan University.

The Academic Affairs Officers of the Michigan Association of State Universities recognized the nominees and recipients on May 13, 2019 during a luncheon in Lansing. This is the 13th year of the awards program.

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The Michigan Association of State Universities serves as the coordinating board for Michigan's 15 public universities, providing advocacy and fostering policy to maximize the collective value these institutions provide in serving the public interest and the State of Michigan.