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Michigan Distinguished Professors of the Year Announced

Lansing, MI – A professor of mathematics who authored a free online calculus textbook, a professor of chemistry dedicated to undergraduate learning, and a professor of journalism who involves her community and local high schools in teaching 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 2016 recipients are Matthew Boelkins, Grand Valley State University; Brian P. Coppola, University of Michigan; and Sue Ellen Christian, Western Michigan University.

“These three professors represent the very best of teaching, innovation and dedication to student success at the state universities of Michigan” said Dr. Daniel J. Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “They symbolize the distinction for excellence in higher education for which Michigan’s public universities are globally renowned.”

The 2016 recipients are introduced below:

Dr. Matthew Boelkins is Professor of Mathematics and the Director of New Student Advising and Registration at Grand Valley State University, where he has developed a national reputation through his innovative, free, open-source calculus textbook, *Active Calculus*, which has been downloaded more than 30,000 times since mid-2014.

Boelkins earned a B.S. in Mathematics from Geneva College in 1991, an M.S. in Mathematics from Western Washington University in 1993, and a Ph.D. in College Teaching of Mathematics from Syracuse University in 1998. In the last three years alone, he has received the Michigan Section of the Mathematical Association of America’s Distinguished Teaching Award, the GVSU Outstanding Academic Advising and Student Services Award, and the GVSU Glenn A. Niemeyer Award.

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

He has been teaching at Grand Valley State University since 1998 and his dedication to undergraduates led to his appointment as Director of New Student Advising and Registration. In this role, Boelkins has modernized GVSU's summer orientation program and served as an ambassador of the faculty to new students and their families.

"I have no doubt that the success we have seen in our freshmen numbers the past two years, and in our retention numbers, has been in part due to Professor Boelkins' efforts in this director role," said Gayle R. Davis, Grand Valley State University Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

He also serves as the First Vice President of the Mathematical Association of America and as co-Editor-in-Chief of *PRIMUS*, a journal dedicated to collegiate mathematics teaching and learning.

Dr. Brian P. Coppola is the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Chemistry and Associate Chair for Educational Development and Practice in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Michigan, through which he directs the department's programs for preparing future faculty, chemistry career professional development and international collaboration.

Coppola has been teaching at the University of Michigan since 1986, and has been instrumental in redesigning the undergraduate chemistry curriculum. His student-centered, peer-led instruction set a high standard years ago for what is now a common teaching strategy in higher education. He consistently receives among the highest student ratings in his department despite teaching "notoriously difficult" organic chemistry to first-year students.

Coppola is also a Fellow of the American Chemical Society and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He earned a B.S. in Chemistry from the University of New Hampshire in 1978 and a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1984.

"Professor Coppola is an extraordinarily effective, energetic, and creative teacher who contributes to education at every level, both at UM and nationally," said Martha Pollock, UM Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Coppola has won numerous national and campus awards for teaching in his career, including the UM Golden Apple Award in 1994, the American Chemical Society's James Flack Norris Award in 2006, and the CASE/Carnegie U.S. Professor of the Year award in 2009.

Sue Ellen Christian is a Professor of Communication with a dual appointment in the School of Communication and Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Western Michigan University. She earned a B.A. in English from Hope College and an M.A. in Journalism from the University of Michigan.

She has received many awards and grants since arriving at WMU in 2001, including the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Achievement in Teaching Award in 2009 and the WMU Distinguished Teaching Award in 2014. She has used many of these grants to support taking her students into local high schools and the community for experiential learning about journalism, multimedia, diversity, and bias, and she advises students through journalism internships and the Student Media Group board.

“Professor Christian demonstrates a commitment to her discipline which extends well beyond the role of instructor and greatly benefits the Kalamazoo community and Western Michigan University,” said Timothy J. Greene, WMU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Her book, “Overcoming Bias: A Journalist’s Guide to Culture and Context” is used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide to addressing implicit biases in news practice. Christian continues to serve as an active journalist, writing news and opinion pieces for outlets locally and nationally. Her previous staff positions as a reporter include The Detroit News, Los Angeles Times, and the Chicago Tribune. She has been vital in updating the undergraduate journalism curriculum at WMU since her arrival in 2001 and has developed a new course titled Global Media Literacy, available to students across campus through the general education program.

The other nominees for Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year were: Jeanneane Wood-Nartker, Central Michigan University; Linda Burilovich, Eastern Michigan University; Jennifer Johnson, Ferris State University; Kendra Cheruvellil, Michigan State University; David Wood, Northern Michigan University; Gregory Cunningham, Oakland University; Tami Sivy, Saginaw Valley State University; Suzanne Bergeron, University of Michigan-Dearborn; Joseph Sucic, University of Michigan-Flint; and Lawrence Lemke, Wayne State University.

The Academic Affairs Officers of the Michigan Association of State Universities will recognize the nominees and recipients on April 15, 2016 during a luncheon held at the Lansing Center in Lansing. This is the tenth 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.