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## Michigan Distinguished Professors of the Year Announced

Lansing, MI – A professor who incorporates inclusive teaching strategies and centers equity into her physics classes, a professor who advises future teachers to create their own culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms that center on their students’ strengths and diversity, and a professor who has made substantial contributions to the teaching of statistics, developing statistics programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, have been selected as Distinguished Professor of the Year Award recipients from Michigan’s 15 public universities. The award is presented by the Academic Affairs Officers Committee on behalf of the Michigan Association of State 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 2022 recipients are: Dr. Carl Lee of Central Michigan University, Dr. Vashti Sawtelle of Michigan State University and Dr. Sandra M. Gonzales of Wayne State University.

“These nominees continue to bring new scholarship and innovation in teaching and learning to Michigan’s public universities,” said Dr. Daniel J. Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “These professors have the highest dedication to their students, ensuring that they are well prepared to make a meaningful impact in their careers and in their communities.”

All nominees for the 2022 Professor of the Year awards program are listed below:

Carmen McCallum of Eastern Michigan University, Patrick Bishop of Ferris State University, Médar Serrata of Grand Valley State University, Derek Wright of Lake Superior State University, Gordon Parker of Michigan Technological University, Kia Jane Richmond of Northern Michigan University, Tanya Christ of Oakland University, Elizabeth Rich of Saginaw Valley State University, Amy M. Cohn of University of Michigan, Amanda Esquivel of University of Michigan-Dearborn, Murali Mani of University of Michigan-Flint and James A. Eckert of Western Michigan University.

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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**

## **Carl Lee, Founding Chair and Professor of the Department of Statistics, Actuarial and Data Sciences, Central Michigan University**

Dr. Carl Lee is Founding Chair and Professor of the Department of Statistics, Actuarial and Data Sciences at Central Michigan University, where he has taught for more than 38 years and developed undergraduate and graduate programs and taught courses ranging from introductory to Ph.D. level courses. Dr. Lee earned his B.S. in agronomy from National Taiwan University, his M.A. in mathematics at West Florida State University and his Ph.D. in statistics at Iowa State University. He is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA) and a recipient of the Haimo Distinguished Teaching of Mathematics Award from the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), the Distinguished Teaching Award from the Michigan Section of the MAA, CMU's University Distinguished Service Award, and numerous other honors.

Dr. Lee's dedication to undergraduate education goes beyond his classroom rapport with students. He has consistently been innovative in his approach to pedagogy, emphasizing projects, hands-on activities, cooperative learning, and exercises, or what he calls a PACE model. He has authored an extensive array of scholarly papers on the topic of teaching and learning in the field of statistics. Since statistics is considered by many students to be among the most difficult subjects, this motivates Dr. Lee's interest in conducting research to investigate how students learn quantitative concepts, the misconceptions and difficulties encountered, as well as the effect of technology on learning. Among his 150 publications, 42 papers are associated with teaching and student learning.

Dr. Lee has also made substantial contributions to the teaching of statistics at CMU, developing statistics programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels and nationally through his involvement with ASA's Undergraduate Statistics Education Initiatives, and the National Consortium for the Advancement of Undergraduate Statistics Education. At CMU, he helped design the undergraduate statistics and actuarial science program and also initiated and developed a graduate certificate program in data mining, the MS in Applied Statistics and Analytics, and completely revised the doctoral curriculum. For the past two years, Dr. Lee has worked tirelessly with colleagues from across the university to create the most interdisciplinary program on campus in data science. The monumental task has involved coordinating a new degree and major with colleagues from four colleges and nine academic departments, continuing to inspire fellow faculty and administrators at CMU.

"Throughout his career, Dr. Carl Lee has consistently demonstrated his devotion to students and high-quality undergraduate education through his engaging classroom approach, innovative use of pedagogy, high quality scholarship in teaching and learning of statistics, and his contributions to program development and curricular reform at CMU and in his professional field," said Richard Rothaus, Central Michigan University Interim Executive Vice President and Provost.

## **Vashti Sawtelle, Associate Professor of Physics, Michigan State University**

Dr. Vashti Sawtelle is Associate Professor of Physics at Michigan State University where she's been teaching and conducting research since 2014. She's co-director of the Physics Education Research Lab in the Department of Physics and Astronomy in the College of Natural Sciences at MSU. Dr. Sawtelle is known by students and peers for her inclusive teaching practices and student engagement in the Lyman Briggs College (LBC or Briggs), MSU's residential college for studying STEM in societal and

global contexts. She earned her B.A. in physics from Grinnell College and her Ph.D. in Physics from Florida International University. She is the recipient of MSU's Teacher Scholar Award and MSU's STEM Gateway Fellows Award. Her research into inclusive education has also earned her MSU's Spirit of Mobility Award.

Dr. Sawtelle's research and teaching combine to focus on improving the teaching of physics to students, regardless of identity. She earned the opportunity early in her career to redesign introductory physics with calculus classes and has focused on improving the teaching to students who are not majoring in these areas. She actively incorporates inclusive teaching strategies and is increasingly centering equity into her physics classes. In 2017, she co-wrote a lesson plan for teaching about racial equity in physics that was subsequently published in *The Physics Teacher*. Her research of physics education provides new understanding of inclusivity to make sure all students can succeed in the sciences.

One of Dr. Sawtelle's primary achievements is the creation of the Briggs Life Science Studio (BLISS) Physics course. This is an experimentally driven studio class that engages students in learning by doing. It allows students to gain understanding of core physics concepts by hands-on exploration followed by group discussion guided by Dr. Sawtelle. Her successes in LBC have shaped the transformation of the Department of Physics' introductory physics curriculum as they are adopting a similar studio model. Furthermore, Dr. Sawtelle has become a sought-after speaker by departments that want to change instruction to better meet their own student needs.

Dr. Sawtelle's efforts to improve the outcomes for students goes well beyond MSU and the broader Physics Education community. Her research on the experiences of junior college transfer students to four-year institutions is helping break down barriers for these students is another example of her positive impact. Over the past five years, Dr. Sawtelle has conducted workshops on race, ethnicity, and equity in physics at the American Association of Physics Teachers national meetings. This allows her to actively share many of the resources that she has developed with physics instructors in both high school and college settings.

"Her innovative approach to teaching physics in MSU's Lyman Briggs College is grounded in engaging experiential learning opportunities that include a deliberate focus on foregrounding the relevance of physics across a broad range of bioscience contexts," said Teresa K. Woodruff, Michigan State University Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Her contributions and expertise are assets to MSU, to the field of physics and physics education, and to higher education writ large."

### **Sandra M. Gonzales, Associate Professor of Bilingual/Bicultural Education, Wayne State University**

Dr. Sandra M. Gonzales is Associate Professor of Bilingual/Bicultural Education at Wayne State University where she has worked since 2011. Her research interests include the intersection of Bilingual/Bicultural and Family and Community Education with Indigenous and Latino Studies and she's known for her engagement in educational access initiatives on campus and beyond. She received her B.S. in psychology from Michigan State University, her M.A. in mental health counseling from Antioch University, and her M.Ed. and Ed.D., both in international education, from Columbia University. She is a 2021 recipient of WSU's highest teaching honor, the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching. She received the 2017 Kathleen Reilly Koory endowed Faculty Development

Award, and in 2016 was awarded the Wayne State University College of Education Scholarship Award. In 2014, Eastern Michigan University created the Sandra M. Gonzales Trailblazer Award in her honor, and she was the first recipient.

Professor Gonzales' pedagogical style flips the traditional "teacher as expert" model, allowing her students to center their own cultural experiences for academic success. When her students become certified teachers themselves, they then take this pedagogical style and create their own culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms that center on their students' strengths and diversity. She has developed and revamped courses to align with certification and teacher preparation standards. She has also led summer study abroad opportunities in Spain and global virtual learning initiatives in Italy and the United Arab Emirates. She is a highly productive scholar, advisor and mentor.

Committed to Latinx and first-generation student advancement, Dr. Gonzales coordinates the Native Development Network and Learning Community, a student success initiative for Native American students and allies. She provides faculty mentored research experiences for Learning Community undergraduates who present annually at national conferences. She is also the faculty advisor for the Native American Student Organization, where she works with students to develop campus programming that inspires engagement and interest in issues of significance to the Native American community.

She has served on the Michigan Department of Education English Learners Advisory Committee and The Detroit Latino Agenda Education Committee. Dr. Gonzales has been awarded several federal grants including a five-year, \$1.3 million Upward Bound pre-college program grant from the U.S. Department of Education for low-income, first-generation college students from Detroit; and a Department of Defense grant to boost STEM career engagement in underrepresented communities.

"As a campus leader, Dr. Gonzales is committed to creating inclusive learning experiences and increasing student success at Wayne State University," said Mark Kornbluh, Wayne State University Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Her students note a strong sense of belonging and inclusivity in her classroom and speak of her ability to model authenticity and caring while uplifting student voices. Wayne State is extremely fortunate to count Dr. Sandra M. Gonzales among our faculty."

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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.