



MASU.ORG 101 S. WASHINGTON SQUARE, STE 600  
517.482.1563 LANSING, MI 48933

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For More Information:  
Daniel Hurley 517-243-2520

## Michigan Distinguished Professors of the Year Announced

**Lansing, MI** – Three Michigan professors who are leaders in their field and passionately dedicated to student success have been selected as Distinguished Professor of the Year Award recipients from Michigan’s 15 public universities. The award will be presented by the Academic Affairs Officers of the Michigan Association of State Universities at the 2023 Distinguished Professor of the Year Awards program at the Lansing Center on Friday, April 14.

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 2023 recipients are: Dr. Anna Spagnuolo of Oakland University, Dr. Arthur L. Martin of Saginaw Valley State University and Dr. Amy Cohn of University of Michigan.

“Nominees for the award continue to demonstrate the innovation and leadership in higher education for which Michigan’s public universities are globally renowned,” said Dr. Daniel J. Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “These professors have shown their extraordinary commitment to student success and to bringing new experiential learning opportunities to their students, inspiring students, peers and their community.”

The 2023 recipients are introduced below:

### **Anna Spagnuolo, professor of mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Oakland University**

Dr. Anna Spagnuolo is professor of mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Oakland University, where she has taught since 2000. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mathematics from Oakland University and her doctorate in applied mathematics from Purdue University.

Dr. Spagnuolo teaches mathematics courses at all levels, from undergraduate courses in calculus to doctoral courses in continuous mathematics. She also learns from her former undergraduates in addition to teaching them: she took student feedback on what was difficult for them in classes and partnered with students and faculty to create a device that could create three-dimensional shapes to help students visualize mathematics concepts. She also conducts research that aids in simulations of physical phenomena like hurricanes or diseases such as Chagas disease and cholera. As chair of the department, she undertook a restructuring of lower-level mathematics education at OU to enhance student learning outcomes, as well as shared her instructional innovations. She also formally instituted a departmental Math Help Center for students to receive additional support and group learning. Dr. Spagnuolo's commitment to educational equity and her deep understanding of the importance of diverse representation guide her transformative leadership in rapidly diversifying the OU Department of Mathematics and Statistics faculty.

Her dedication to teaching extends beyond the Oakland University classroom. She is an undergraduate mentor on research projects for OU students as well as students at the University of Michigan and across the country, leading to published student research. Dr. Spagnuolo spearheaded the development and serves as the Executive Director of the OU Math Corps Summer Program, a program that teaches children the intricacies of mathematics and the values of kindness and integrity. Dr. Spagnuolo hosted the program online for two years before bringing it to campus last year. The OU Math Corps has had a tremendous impact on its middle school student participants, who previously performed poorly in math and are now gaining confidence in math with hopes of careers as architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, business owners, and mathematicians.

### **Arthur L. Martin, professor of biology, Saginaw Valley State University**

Dr. Arthur L. Martin is a biology professor at Saginaw Valley State University. He earned his Bachelor of Science in biology from Siena Heights University and his doctorate in biological sciences from Bowling Green State University. He has been teaching at SVSU since 2008.

Dr. Martin truly incorporates experiential learning in his teaching by taking the SVSU mobile lab into underserved communities to work with youth or taking undergraduate students to the Cayman Islands to learn about reef biology. Each year, he takes undergraduate students to national and international academic conferences and has received many grants supporting undergraduate research. Dr. Martin took the lead on a six-year process of curriculum development that led to major improvements to the biology curriculum for all students, and as department chair, instituted a new assessment system that obtains annual data on

undergraduate learning. He also developed a required seminar course titled “Developing Professionals in Biology” when he saw gaps in student preparation for post-graduation employment. He has also created several other lower division undergraduate courses that promote writing and presentation skills development.

In addition to his award-winning teaching in the classroom, Dr. Martin has mentored 30 undergraduate students in his career at SVSU so far. Five of these students are professionals in the field with five doctorates, four master’s degrees, four medical degrees, three degrees in veterinary medicine and biology-related careers, and the rest are in post-bachelor’s programs. As a mentor, he’s helped the students develop, implement, and analyze biological research and the presentation of their research at national conferences such as the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology and regional conferences such as the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters. He has also co-lead the development of student gathering events that promote student interactions.

Dr. Martin received SVSU’s most prestigious teaching award, the Franc A. Landee Teaching Excellence Award in 2021 and received grant funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Bay Watershed Education and Training Program, the Kawkawlin River Watershed Association and a subgrant from the National Science Foundation. Within the community, he has shown leadership and dedication through the Saginaw Bay Environmental Science Institute that has engaged undergraduate students, high school teachers and students, and community members in important scientific research.

### **Amy Cohn, professor of industrial and operations engineering, University of Michigan**

Dr. Amy Cohn is professor of industrial and operations engineering at the University of Michigan. She holds an Arthur F. Thurnau Professorship, the university’s highest honor for career contributions to undergraduate education and has earned numerous teaching awards, including winning her departmental Professor of the Year award nine times as voted upon by students. She earned her bachelor’s degree in applied mathematics from Harvard University, where she graduated *magna cum laude*, and earned her doctorate in operations research from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Stellar ratings from students reflect Dr. Cohn’s sustained excellence in classroom teaching, thanks to her ability to create community in settings of any size. Her deep involvement with students’ academic, professional, and personal growth has taken many forms, including serving as faculty advisor to at least five different student organizations. In both the classroom and research projects, she fosters environments that develop trust among participants and a willing



eagerness to learn from and with each other as they apply technical knowledge to open-ended and messy, real-world problems. She treats undergraduates as co-authors and co-presenters, takes them to conferences, and helps them build networks that endure after graduation.

Dr. Cohn's signature contribution over the last decade has been the experiential learning opportunities created for more than 300 students through the Center for Healthcare Engineering and Patient Safety (CHEPS). Established in 2011, the program brings together interdisciplinary teams of students, faculty, and healthcare professionals to address operational problems in healthcare delivery. In the process they learn to adapt systems-based engineering tools and techniques to the specific needs of clients, a key skill for future engineers. The projects that students pursued alleviated at least some of the unprecedented pressure experienced by healthcare professionals during the peak of the COVID pandemic.

Dr. Cohn is a frequent presenter at her discipline's major professional conference (INFORMS), serving on panels about undergraduate education and research opportunities. She still teaches the first undergraduate course she began teaching back in 2002, estimating she's taught over 1,500 undergraduates in this upper division course alone.

The other nominees for the Distinguished Professor of the Year Award were: Christine Phelps-Gregory, Central Michigan University; Carmen McCallum, Eastern Michigan University; Eric Warner, Ferris State University; Wendy Reffeor, Grand Valley State University; Divya Victor, Michigan State University; Amy Marcarelli, Michigan Technological University; Paul Mann, Northern Michigan University; Amanda Esquivel, University of Michigan – Dearborn; Christopher Molnar, University of Michigan – Flint; Kevin Deegan-Krause, Wayne State University; and Kristina Lemmer, Western Michigan University.

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### **About MASU**

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.