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Presidents Council Awards Recipients of the 5th Annual Distinguished Professor Award

Lansing, Mich. — The common thread of "student engagement" wound through the acceptance speeches of four winners of the Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year awards on Thursday, May 12, sponsored by the Presidents Council State Universities of Michigan.

The Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year recognition program recognizes the outstanding contributions made by the faculty from Michigan's public universities to the education of undergraduate students. The 2011 recipients were **Dr. Robert S. Winning (Eastern Michigan University)**, **Dr. Paul Kelso (Lake Superior State University)**, **Dr. Robert LaDuca, Jr. (Michigan State University)**, and **Dr. Gopalan Srinivasan (Oakland University)**.

Dr. Winning, Department of Biology, prizes his work with undergraduates around student engagement. His approach: "Making concepts more real and relevant to students and explaining those concepts in such a way as to make them easier to understand while stimulating curiosity and the desire to learn more." Winning said he considered "technological solutions, devising analogies, compiling examples case studies, and stories to use in class" to keep students learning. "I became a better teacher in everything I did as a result of that one moment when I accepted that challenge of taking on an introductory class and learned never to be satisfied" in engaging students.

Dr. Kelso, Department of Geology and Physics, said Lake Superior State University provides an "intimate setting to work with students and focus on undergraduate education." The university's newly renovated curriculum, focusing on project- and field-centered approaches, affords greater opportunities for student learning, retention, and motivation, Kelso said. "I take my students out in the field regularly, local areas in Michigan in particular, and we try to take at least one trip a year with my students to go out and see other things and other places to see things we don't get to see in our area." Finding opportunities to have students apply their knowledge in the field, "allow students to bring in lots of different aspects of geology to the learning," he said.

Dr. LaDuca, Lyman Briggs College and Department of Chemistry, has co-authored over 90 peer-reviewed articles with undergraduates during his tenure at Michigan State University. "I really try to tie the material in with everyday life," said Dr. LaDuca. "It's been a pleasure working with students in the research lab, discovering new science where they do all the work."

Dr. Srinivasan, Department of Physics, noted that he always has "the intention of involving undergraduates in research. I invited students to tour my lab, show them what kind of research we do, because it's really important to tap the young minds of people who are new to the field because they make the best contributions."

Each of Michigan's 15 public universities were invited by the Presidents Council to nominate a faculty member who has had a significant impact on student learning through various mediums,

including work in the classroom and student advising. A luncheon was held at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing, MI in order to recognize both the nominees and recipients for their achievements.

“The Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year recognition marks a highlight in the professional lives of our faculty among the fifteen Michigan public universities,” said Dr. Virinder Moudgil, Chair of the Presidents Council Academic Affairs Officers Committee and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Oakland University. “Those who teach and work in academia have dedicated their talents and energies to student learning and success, and to be recognized by one’s peers as having excelled in this endeavor is indeed a laudable achievement.”

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