

## ***News Release***

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For More Information Contact:  
Michael Boulus at (517) 482-1563

### **Presidents Council Announces Recipients of the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Distinguished Professor Award**

Lansing, Mich. —The fourth annual Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year Award recipients have been selected and three professors from Michigan's 15 public universities have earned this honor.

"Higher education is one of the few good investments in these hard economic times," said Michael Boulus, Executive Director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan, "We need to honor those who continue to contribute to its success and produce well prepared and intelligent graduates of Michigan's 15 public universities. These outstanding professors are actively involved in developing the minds of Michigan's future, and deserve recognition for their work."

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. 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. The 2010 winners are:

- **Dr. Karen Libman—Grand Valley State University (GVSU)**, Theatre, School of Communications. Dr. Libman is known for making the study of theatre arts relevant to a liberal education and is constantly exploring new ways of using the discipline to broaden the horizons of her students in the areas of aesthetics, multicultural awareness, and social justice.

Dr. Libman received the 2007 Barbara Jordan Award at GVSU for her work with women and gender studies. Working with colleagues, she developed a touring theatre class called Bard To Go to promote cultural and educational dialogue with international audiences, which brought about profound transformation for the students. Bard To Go is also used in west Michigan to introduce Shakespeare into the secondary schools. For her innovative work with Bard To Go, Dr. Libman received national recognition from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. At GVSU she has directed frequently for the Grand

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Valley Shakespeare Festival, as well as other mainstage productions including *Big Love*, *Mother Courage and Children*, and the award-winning *Angels in America, Part 1*.

- **Dr. Marcia Aldrich—Michigan State University**, Department of English. Dr. Aldrich has received many accolades for her teaching and leadership. In 1995, Dr. Aldrich received the Excellence in Teaching Award and MSU Alumni Club of Mid-Michigan Quality in Undergraduate Teaching Award. Then in the late 1990s, she took over as the faculty mentor to *The Red Cedar Review*, the nationally-known undergraduate-published literary journal, and reinvigorated the journal. In addition, she crafted a concentration in undergraduate creative writing and directed the Creative Writing program from 1999 to 2004.

Dr. Aldrich is nationally known for her work in the field of creative non-fiction. She has received multiple nominations for the Pushcart Award and is currently leading *The Fourth Genre*, a journal of creative non-fiction. Through her work with *The Red Cedar Review* and *The Fourth Genre*, she has mentored an entire generation of students about the practicalities of publishing, preparing them for careers as writers, editors, and publishers. This semester, Dr. Aldrich received a special honor by being selected as the Mary Routt Chair of Writing at Scripps College and is currently on unpaid leave from MSU to fulfill this role.

- **Dr. Perry J. Samson—University of Michigan-Ann Arbor**, Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Space Sciences. Dr. Samson has been acknowledged over the years as one of the University of Michigan's finest teachers. In 1995, Dr. Samson was named Thurnau Professor for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education and last year, he received the new Teaching Innovation Prize for his work with instructional technology.

Dr. Samson has found creative ways to engage students in and out of the classroom even in classes of several hundred students. In the classroom Professor Samson has seen the presence of student computers as an opportunity to connect with students. He has developed a software package called "Lecture Tools" for students to use on their computers for immediate hands-on learning. Students can take notes on his slides, communicate with him during the lecture, mark areas that are confusing, and even complete exercises that involve manipulation of data and maps. Outside of the classroom he uses field experiences providing students opportunities to measure climate changes in Greenland or chase down thunderstorms in the plains of the United States.

The Presidents Council will host an awards luncheon on May 13, 2010 at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing, Mich.

