

2019 Staff Presidential Award of Excellence

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

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The 2019 Staff Presidential Award of Excellence recipients were recognized by UNH President James W. Dean Jr. on May 10 as part of the annual staff recognition program. Nominated by members of the UNH community and selected by a joint review committee, here are this year's awardees.



KRISTEN BUTTERFIELD
Kristen Butterfield (PAT), educational program coordinator, University Honors Program

Warm. Approachable. Responsive. Dedicated. Fun.

These are just a few of the adjectives students and colleagues use to describe Kristen Butterfield, who has served as program coordinator for UNH's honors program since 2017, providing guidance, advice, perspective and mentorship to some of the university's most accomplished students.

A UNH alumna and an honors program graduate herself, Kristen understands well the path many of her advisees walk. She is dedicated to student success, brings extraordinary empathy to her relationships with students across the university and is especially cognizant of the situations of multicultural, first-generation, low-income and LGBTQ+ students.

After earning a graduate degree elsewhere, Kristen returned to her alma mater in 2013, working first in the admissions office. As program coordinator for the honors program, she puts in countless hours helping high-achieving students find their unique potential, ambition and commitment to excellence. An engaged citizen of the larger university community, she has served as a core facilitator for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs' annual Martin Luther King Jr. leadership summit and as an ally for the Diversity Support Coalition. She is a social justice educator and serves on the board of directors for the Waysmeet Center.

There are more titles and accomplishments we could add to Kristen's list, including her work helping to launch the College of Liberal Arts Navigators Program for transfer students and her the yearlong commitment she made to provide diversity training for members of the UNH Psychological and Counseling Services staff. But it's her impact on individual students, including students who were uncertain about attending UNH or who were considering leaving the university, that best speaks to her contributions to our community. Throughout the many nominations Kristen received, it was a recurring theme: *I chose UNH because of Kristen. I stayed at UNH because of Kristen. Kristen has helped me face and overcome challenges that were both academic and personal.*

One student nominator put it this way: "Kristen Butterfield is one of the best parts of the UNH community and the University Honors Program. What she does for students is exactly what our university should celebrate." Today, we are pleased to recognize Kristen's dedication with the Presidential Award of Excellence.



LEILA PAJE-MANALO

Leila Paje-Manalo (PAT), director, Office of International Students and Scholars

Leila Paje-Manalo came to UNH as a molecular biology post-doctoral student, with a PhD in plant pathology-virology in hand. When she accepted a role with the Office of International Students and Scholars in 1991 as an international student advisor, was intended to be a stop-gap until an academic or research position became available. Instead, it became her career, and a key administrative position that has opened the door to UNH for students from all around the world.

Leila was appointed assistant director of OISS in 1994 and promoted to director in 1996. During her two and a half decades there, the office has grown from a one-person operation to a team of 11 professionals overseeing a vast array of complex logistics related to bringing international students and scholars to the university. Where many

other universities contract out their immigration work, UNH has in Leila an extraordinary in-house resource. Among other things, she's written all of the university's policies for hiring international employees and single-handedly developed processes for sponsoring international faculty members and visiting scholars. Current and former students credit her with guiding them through the often long and confusing process of securing visas.

UNH's international student and scholar presence has also increased significantly over the course of Leila's tenure. An office that once served roughly 50 students a year today supports 1,200 students and 195 faculty and staff members from more than 70 countries. Leila in particular played a key role in the development of two partnerships that have enhanced the university's global reach —the Confucius Institute and the Navitas pathways program.

But Leila's work doesn't end when international students arrive in Durham. She's been a leader in educating campus partners regarding the unique needs of students from other cultures, from mental health to academic expectations, and developed a successful program called Buddies without Borders to build relationships between domestic and international students. As considerable as her gifts for bringing international students here are, her talents for keeping them here are perhaps even greater.

Leila, for all you have done for UNH's international community, it is our pleasure to recognize you with the Presidential Award of Excellence.



LAURA SIMARD

Laura Simard (OS), academic/student services assistant, history department, College of Liberal Arts

Laura Simard is often the first person students, faculty members, staff and visitors encounter when they visit the UNH history department. She is friendly and welcoming — as one nominator put it, “like a sun spreading warmth and light; and like the sun, an irreplaceable font of energy.”

Laura joined the department in 2010, stepping into the role of a longtime assistant whose retirement left many faculty members anxious about the future of the office. That she proved herself a more than worthy successor is evident in the praise the same faculty members offer now for her powers of organization, her institutional memory and her ability to juggle multiple tasks and individuals' needs simultaneously, all with a smile on her face.

As student services assistant, Laura coordinates student advising, course selection and student enrollment and helps students understand the academic requirements of their major. Multiple nominations from faculty members noted that she often knows the department's students — particularly early in their academic careers — better than some professors do. Students themselves have been known to note that Laura is at least in part the reason they chose to study history, thanks to the warm environment she creates in the history office. She handles a vast array of personalities and temperaments with calm and grace.

In addition to advising students, Laura capably juggles a range of tasks that keep the office running smoothly and efficiently. She's overseen not one but two wholesale department moves, first down to the first floor of Horton Hall during a renovation, and then back up to the fourth floor when those renovations were finished. Tapping into her previous role as an event planner with the New England Center, she coordinates department banquets and conferences as well as visits from job candidates and guest lecturers — and even manages the department's communal chocolate supply. A number of her paintings hang on history department office walls.

It's rare to find someone so competent in her job that she makes it look easy, but that is precisely what Laura Simard does. It is our pleasure to recognize her with the Presidential Award of Excellence.



OLIVIA SAUNDERS

Olivia Saunders (EE) Extension field specialist, Carroll County, Cooperative Extension

As an extension field specialist for UNH Cooperative Extension, embracing the people, land and businesses of New Hampshire is ingrained in Olivia Saunders' work.

Since joining the Extension team in 2012, Olivia has initiated a number of programs and activities that contribute to meaningful experiences for students, strengthen UNH's research programs and connect communities and individuals around the state with their flagship research university. She's the champion behind a new student internship within Extension's soil testing program that provides important educational and skill-building experiences for undergraduates interested in agricultural sciences. She mentors volunteers through the NH Master Gardener program and the NH Honeybee Diagnostic network. She's been known to spend nights and weekends giving presentations,

participating in community events and serving on committees and boards that connect the public with Extension's services.

As a field specialist focused on food and agriculture, Olivia works with the state's agricultural producers, building personal relationships with Carroll County farmers and sharing knowledge and information that helps their operations thrive. She can often be found sitting at a farmer's table discussing crop schedules or walking through a grower's fields identifying pests. Last year alone, Olivia worked with some 500 New Hampshire residents and 50 businesses through workshops and on-farm visits.

A natural researcher, Olivia's on-farm work extends to exploring solutions to the challenges that face the state's fruit and vegetable producers, and thanks to her relationships with area growers, she's able to prioritize work that makes a real difference to local businesses. Her passion for knowledge and scholarly exchange is so great that she recently initiated a peer-to-peer journal club. Through this monthly gathering of colleagues, she fosters robust discussions around cutting-edge research and application of that research to work being done at UNH.

Thank you, Olivia Saunders, for your tireless work on behalf of our state, New Hampshire's fields and farms, its current and future generations of farmers and growers. We are pleased to honor you with the Presidential Award of Excellence in recognition of your many contributions.

Janine Wilks (OS) academic/student services assistant, English department, College of Liberal Arts



JANINE WILKS

Perhaps the only thing that needs to be said about Janine Wilks is that her nomination for this year's Presidential Award of Excellence received an unprecedented 38 letters of support. *Forty eight.* Those letters came from faculty and staff members, from undergrads and from graduate students — the last of whom, almost to a person, referred to her as “Queen Janine.” While the particulars varied, the central message of all 38 letters was the same: Janine is an indispensable member of the UNH English department and the backbone of its graduate programs.

A UNH alumna from the class of 2003, Janine returned to her alma mater in 2004 to take a role in the English department main office. When she moved to the graduate office, she quickly proved her proficiency — so much so, in fact, that the current director

of the graduate program turned to her to learn many of the ins and outs of the department. In similar fashion, the students in UNH's six graduate English programs rely on her for aspects of their experience as diverse as the application process, finding housing, course registration issues, financial aid and graduation requirements. The first point of contact for prospective students and a consistently warm, welcoming and competent presence, Janine is credited by a number of faculty members for playing a material role in the recent uptick in graduate English applications.

And she doesn't just support the graduate office — 20 percent of Janine's time is devoted to helping students in the first-year writing program. It's a delicate balance to bridge the extreme ends of the student experience, but Janine has served as an exceptional ambassador to both groups. Thanks to her undergraduate background in computer information technology, she's also recently taken on responsibility for promoting these different programs, working on the English department's website and designing electronic and print posters for various events.

In the words of her many and various nominators, Janine is wise beyond her years, a joy to work with, a steady and calming presence, the stable rock on which the UNH graduate English program is built. We are delighted to honor her today with a Presidential Award of Excellence.

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University of New Hampshire

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