

# UNH Alumna Honored with Presidential Award for Outstanding Math and Science Teachers

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Robin Ellwood '85 '93G '13G was among a select group of K-12 teachers nationwide to receive a prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in Washington D.C. earlier this month. Ellwood is an eighth-grade science teacher at Rye Junior High School in N.H.



*Robin Ellwood with Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John P. Holdren and Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Assistant Director, Directorate for Education and Human Resources, National Science Foundation and former faculty member in mathematics at UNH*

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the highest recognition that K-12 mathematics and science teachers may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. The awards went to 213 teachers, representing 2 years of nominations.

Awardees receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States, a trip to Washington D.C. to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

"The recipients of this award are integral to ensuring our students are equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are vital to our Nation's success," President Obama said in a press release. "As the United States continues to lead the way in the innovation that is shaping our future, these excellent teachers are preparing students from all corners of the country with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills that help keep us on the cutting-edge."

Ellwood earned a B.A. in zoology, an M.Ed. in secondary

education and a Ph.D. in education at UNH. She has been teaching science at Rye Junior High School for 24 years. She strives to inspire student learning through inquiry and project-based opportunities that promote authentic application of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) concepts.

Students in Ellwood's classes engage in discussion, hands-on manipulation of materials, transference of classroom skills to field-based investigations, and work with community members and experts to delve into local, regional and global issues. Her students have built an underwater, remotely operated vehicle that was successfully deployed in Antarctica, and are currently installing a remotely operated surveillance camera to study biological, physical and environmental dynamics within a secluded wetland ecosystem. Robin has received numerous grants, totaling in excess of \$45,000 to support innovative projects and opportunities for students.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award and cherish the support from students, colleagues, administrators, community members and family that have made my efforts possible," said Ellwood. "This award epitomizes what is possible when individuals and groups collaborate to provide authentic opportunities for students that inspire intrinsic motivation."

"This wonderful news not only highlights the quality of UNH graduates in education — why UNH is the institution of choice for education — but aligns well with the UNH strategic focus on strengthening education in STEM," said Leslie Couse, chair of the UNH Department of Education.

[Susan Dumais '88 '02G](#)

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