

NEWS RELEASE

Dads Association
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Dads Association Recognizes Certificate of Merit Recipients

URBANA –The Dads Association at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign recognizes the achievements of three individuals and one student organization at their annual banquet held during Dads Weekend. The Certificate of Merit Award recognizes a student, a faculty member, a staff member and a registered student organization for their contributions to the improvement of the University and the community. Recipients receive a framed certificate, an engraved mantle clock and a cash award. Recipients recognized at this year’s banquet held on Friday, Oct. 5, 2007 were:

Outstanding Staff

Andrea Ray has been with the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) since January 2006. Upon her arrival, Andrea quickly learned her way around to determine the urgent needs of the department. She provides secretarial and technical support to the faculty and students of the ICR, the ICR Director, and the Media Studies program. Her calm, cheerful attitude makes her an indispensable member of her department.

Andrea’s extensive knowledge of campus policies, procedures, structure, facilities, administrative and service units allow her to assist students and faculty in need. She approaches her job using innovative processes and streamlining procedures in order to make information more accessible. She has reorganized operations, established constructive practices and created new ways of handling information, people, and questions that have made the unit far more productive. One nominee states, “She can identify and fix matters on her own before they become problems. She has made changes in our system that has dramatically

increased our efficiency and ease of ² operations”.

Outstanding Student Organization

Student Advancement Group for Education (SAGE) works to advance the mission of the College of Education here at U of I by assisting with activities and events that bring together students, faculty, alumni, donors, and friends of the College. Since its inception, SAGE has maintained a small group membership of 20 in order to ensure that every member stays busy and to encourage group interaction. This year, SAGE plans to add 15 new members, who will undergo a competitive interview process.

SAGE has selflessly utilized award money to donate books to schools through a program called the Library Book Drive. This program’s members raise money to buy books for local, in need library programs. As a result of the efforts over this last year, SAGE was able to donate books to more than 30 deserving schools in Illinois.

SAGE members also volunteer for other activities throughout the school year, including the College of Education’s Thank-a-Thon, the Student Recognition Banquet, and the Distinguished Alumni Award Weekend activities, and more. One nominator states, “SAGE is visible wherever and whenever our office needs their assistance, and always with a smile on their faces. As a consequence, they have interacted positively with individuals who range in age from 4 to 94”.

Outstanding Faculty (co-recipient—2 winners this year)

Professor Nancy Benson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism. Since joining the University, she has taught every course required for broadcast journalism majors. She is the recipient of many awards/honors including: being invited by Chancellor

Richard Herman and Provost Linda Katehi to attend the 2006-07 International Achievement Awards Banquet, Knight Internal Press Fellow – Central/Eastern Europe in 2000, Freedom Forum Professors Publishing Grant of \$5,000 in 1999, Benton Fellow – University of Chicago in 1984-85, Who’s Who in the Media and Communications in 1997, numerous Associated Press and United Press International spot news awards through 1975 and 1994, and more.

It was Benson’s single-handed creation of an international reporting class that took students to Peru and China that has won her the greatest praise and recognition. Benson took ten students to China in 2007 and to Peru in 2005 to train them as international correspondents. The participating students were given topics to research while in China while they traveled the country, made contacts and conducted interviews. Professor Benson provided leadership, instruction, support and guidance to the students. The student’s final products were aired on a two-hour radio news documentary that was broadcast on WILL-AM 580. Professor Benson also arranged for a “Destination China” weblog site where students made daily posts about China, The weblog was viewable from anywhere in the world, allowing the students’ journalistic abilities to grow even more.

One nominator states, “Professor Benson motivates her students to strive for excellence as professional broadcasters. She makes them bolder and, therefore, better journalists. She gives them a glimpse of what is possible and moves them out of the realm of the mundane. She gives our department important credibility that we could not get anywhere else.”

Outstanding Faculty (co-recipient—2 winners this year)

Dean Wayne Banwart is an Associate Dean of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) Academic Program. He is known across the ACES campus for his dedication to students, leadership and administrative oversight. He serves as the College’s liaison to the Graduate College on matters of academic policy and programs; represents the College on academic policy at the campus, state, regional, national, and international levels; supervises personnel and administers budgetary and fiscal matters in the

Office of Academic Programs; leads programs that recognize excellence in teaching and provides teaching improvement opportunities for faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants such as the ACES Teaching College, Teaching Academy, and teaching improvement workshops.

His awards/honors include: President of the North American College Teachers of America (NACTA), Regional Outstanding Teacher Award (NACTA), George D. Scarseth Award from the American Society of Agronomy, Outstanding Instructor from the Department of Agronomy, Who's Who in Technology Today, Who's Who in Frontier Science and Technology, Who's Who in Science, and many more. He also introduced the James Scholar Honors program to ACES and strongly supports undergraduate research and diverse leadership opportunities.

One nominator states, "I truly admire Dean Banwart and give him my utmost respect. It is my absolute privilege to present this nomination of a man who deserves only the best, because it is the very least I can do for a man who has given his absolute best to me, the University of Illinois, and the world."

Outstanding Student

Emily Ward is senior seeking a dual degree in Advertising and Speech Communications with a minor in African-American Studies. Emily's involvement in numerous extracurricular programs, student organizations, and her community service shows how much she enjoys serving those with whom she works. She has been involved in the Illini Media Center for the Illio Yearbook and WPGU, Junior Main Street project, St. John's Lutheran Church Sunday School, Orange Krush, and the American Advertising Federation; worked at the Illini Media Center, currently works at the Campus Visitor's Center during the school year and was an I-Start guide throughout the summer. Her efforts have not gone unrecognized as she was awarded the most enthusiastic tour guide by the Campus Visitor's Center and was on the Dean's List for fall 2006 and spring 2007.

Emily has remained active in two colleges pursuing her dual degrees, maintaining an excellent GPA, staying involved in her extracurricular activities, and will graduate in May

2008 with over 150 credit hours.

One nominator states, “In all my interactions with Emily, several aspects of her personality have consistently shined through. She clearly cares about the students and parents coming to Illinois as well as the quality of programs and services that she helps to provide. Emily is a reliable and dependable individual who behaves with a great deal of integrity.”

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