Edward L. Bliss Award for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education (2020) Goes to Dr. Max Utsler of the University of Kansas

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News Release

SUB: The Bliss Award Committee of the Electronic News Division announces Dr. Max Utsler, former Assoc. Professor with the University of Kansas William Allen White School of Journalism, is this year's winner of the Edward L. Bliss Award for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education.

Tempe, AZ –(June 8, 2020) – Professor Max Utsler, recently retired from the University of Kansas, is this year's recipient of broadcast journalism education's highest honor, the Edward L. Bliss Award. In nominating Utsler, Assoc. Dean of Journalism and Mass Communication Scott Reinardy called him "a giant not only on our faculty, but also in our profession." He has taught thousands, mentored many, and continues to support his former students in their careers as journalists and media representatives, said Reinardy.

In recognizing his impressive career, Electronic News Division Head Dr. Karen McIntyre (Virginia Commonwealth) said his legacy lives on in the students he taught and continues to support. Prof. Mary Rogus (Ohio), 2014 Bliss Award winner, reached the same conclusion after reviewing Professor Utsler's credentials. "It became crystal clear that nearly everything he does is focused on education and training. From his pedagogy research, to his regular work back in the profession, Max Utsler is all about producing the next generation of excellent broadcast journalists," said Rogus. It is his dedication to helping at-risk students achieve their dreams that former Electronic News Division Head Laura Smith (South Carolina) found impressive, in addition to his leadership in international associations for journalism and mass communication.

Professor Utsler is a founder of the BEA Sports Division, which he has supported along with the growth of the Broadcast Education Association's Best of Festival showcase. Dr. Utsler's contributions to news and sports coverage, curriculum development, and extensive service to the professional organizations of journalism and mass communication, including the division's roots, make him the best candidate for this year's award, said Bliss Award committee members. The four 2020 Bliss Award committee members were McIntyre, Rogus, Smith and 2017 Bliss winner Ken Fischer (Oklahoma).

Prior to joining the faculty in Lawrence, Utsler served as assistant news director at KOMU-TV (NBC) and Asst. Professor for the School of Journalism at Missouri. He joined the KU faculty in 1984 and served in both teaching and administrative positions. After serving as assistant news director at KSDK-TV (NBC) in St. Louis, he updated his professional vita as a reporter, producer, and freelance writer with major media outlets like MLB.com, MLB-TV, CBS Sports,

NBC Sports, Fox Sports, and ESPN. He spent half a year at KPNX-TV covering sports in Phoenix, Arizona.

The 2013 Bliss Award winner, Bill Davie (Louisiana), said Max stood out by renewing his professional credentials throughout his academic career. He even worked as a part-time scorekeeper for the Kansas City Royals. "Max not only loves going to bat for his students," Davie said, "but he quite literally loves going to bat himself for his softball team in Kansas."

Longtime television news director and general manager Brian Brocco put it simply, “I knew and spent time with Ed [Bliss]. I'm sure Ed would be proud if you (Electronic News Division) would bestow this honor on Dr. Max Utsler." Ed Bliss was a writer and editor for CBS News, who worked with Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite before he founded the broadcast journalism program at American University in Washington, D.C., where a plaque listing the Bliss honorees is on display.

Past winners of the Bliss Award (formerly Distinguished Broadcast Educator Award) are: Jack Shelly, Iowa State (1983); Ed Bliss, American (1984); Dick Yoakam, Indiana (1985); Henry Lippold, Wisconsin-Eau Claire (1986); Rod Gelatt, Missouri (1987); Mitchell Charnley, Minnesota (1988); Don Brown, Arizona State (1989); Irving Fang, Minnesota (1990); Ernest F. Andrews, Syracuse (1991); Al Anderson, Texas-Austin (1992); Michael Murray, Missouri-St. Louis (1993); Joseph R. Dominick, Georgia (1994); Joan Konner, Columbia (1995); Gordon Greb, San Jose State (1996); Travis Linn, Nevada-Reno (1997); Vernon Stone, Missouri (1998); Elmer Lower, ABC, NBC (1999); Ken Keller, SIU-Carbondale (2000); Lincoln Furber, American (2001); James Hoyt, Wisconsin (2002); Phillip O. Keirstead, Florida A&M (2003); Thomas Griffiths, Brigham Young (2004); Peter Mayeux, Nebraska (2005); Bill Knowles, Montana (2006); Jim Upshaw, Oregon (2007); Glenn Johnson, Washington State (2008); Sam Swan, Tennessee (2009); Phillip Jeter, Winston Salem State (2010); C.A. “Charlie” Tuggle, North Carolina (2011); Robert Papper, Hofstra (2012); William Davie, Louisiana at Lafayette (2013); Mary Rogus, Ohio (2014); Mark Harmon, Tennessee (2015); Gary Hanson, Kent State (2016); Ken Fischer, Oklahoma (2017); Lee Hood, Loyola Chicago (2018); Kent Collins, Missouri (2019).