



**2021 STATE OF
THE COLLEGE**

AWARDS & SERVICE RECOGNITION



**COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE &
NATURAL RESOURCES**



We embody the University's land-grant mission with a commitment to eliminate hunger and malnutrition, preserve our natural resources, improve quality of life, and empower the next generation through world-class education.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021 | 10:00 AM
HELD VIRTUALLY

THANKS to the 2021 Excellence Awards Committee

Frank Coale, Chair
Liz Laher
Paul Leisnham
Brad Paleg
Victoria Pearlman
Abani Pradhan

Becky Ridgeway
Amanda Rockler
Adel Shirmohammadi
Nathaniel Tablante
Nicole Walker



Off-campus Staff Excellence Award

Bonnie Boyden began her career at UME in 1990 with the local 4-H program. Now she serves as a program management specialist in Charles County where she provides leadership, support, innovative programming, and guidance to the 4-H program, administration, faculty, and staff.

Throughout this past year in response to COVID-19, Boyden adapted wonderfully to the circumstances, using virtual formats to provide delivery of programs and projects such as “Skill-a-thon” and the National Veterinary Science Program. Boyden designed an in-person 4-H livestock weigh-in activity that was approved by the state 4-H office and used as an example for other local programs seeking to do the same. She worked closely with her AED to reopen the office after the COVID shutdown, which included acquiring PPE supplies and working with the county to assure the UME office building was cleaned and safe for occupancy.

Boyden has worked hard to provide visibility and local support for the 4-H program in Charles and willingly lends her knowledge, skills, and expertise toward multiple efforts whenever requested or needed. This includes contributions to the Maryland 4-H Leaders Guide Book, updating the 2020 Charles County 4-H Handbook, numerous flyers, PowerPoint presentations, and brochures for marketing 4-H, and much more. She is a recipient of numerous awards including the Meritorious Service Award from NAE4-HA in 2018.



Off-campus Staff Excellence Award

Susan Barnes has been part of UME since 2008 and provides administrative and clerical assistance to agriculture and natural resource programs on a statewide basis. Her expertise in online technology has been an essential asset to UME over the years including graphic design, web design, and web-based software programs, where she also serves as a consultant on their use and management.

This past year, her knowledge and expertise has been elevated due to the move to telework and online programming. The need to provide information and Extension programs online created a number of projects that Barnes quickly stepped up to assist with. She developed an Agriculture and Food Systems logo and website in order for the program to brand itself and reach farmers and landowners statewide.

Now that the UME site has migrated to an upgraded Drupal platform, most web pages were reformatted and recreated. Barnes was instrumental in this process, with management of 11 websites where she has translated information created by faculty into meaningful online content for clientele. As education programs require more technology, Barnes’s abilities will provide a valuable resource to UME programs now and beyond.



On-campus Staff Excellence Award

As AGNR's coordinator of Program Development Evaluation, **Dr. Chenzi Wang** leads the college's program evaluation and research responsibilities. She has worked across all UME program areas to support faculty with program development and evaluation, research design and methods, data analysis, and writing reports and publications. Wang serves as UME's Institutional Review Board (IRB) representative to ensure research designs and protocols meet the IRB policies and requirements. Her productivity has been extraordinary, working on 55 new IRB application submissions and 70+ IRB renewal or amendment packages since 2020. On behalf of UME, Wang quickly jumped into work on the 2020 federal report submission with UMES and the college, resulting in successful approval.

She has done outstanding work in supporting UME and AGNR faculty with evaluation and applied research projects. She has co-facilitated on-boarding trainings in program evaluation and research such as Qualtrics, Impact Statement, UMERS, and IRB net. Dr. Wang offered 39 trainings in program evaluation, data analysis, and reporting, and served 979 faculty and staff. Her service to our faculty and staff has been unparalleled. Since she assumed leadership in program evaluation, she has been tirelessly working to meet the deadlines for reports and projects. She is always positive and enthusiastic about supporting faculty and staff.



On-campus Staff Excellence Award

Trish Moore joined the Maryland State 4-H Team in 2019 as the graphic designer and IT coordinator after working for the Baltimore County Extension Office for 12 years. In this role, Moore works to elevate the visibility of Maryland 4-H through branding, social media storytelling, advertising, website development, direct marketing, and multimedia designs. She also creates information through online educational mediums and best practices and supports everyone through rigorous IT solutions. The impact of Moore's role can be seen on every flyer, newsletter, social media or website post, curriculum, or letterhead that leaves the State 4-H Office.

Moore is an excellent ambassador for UMD by making a consistent effort to connect Extension with AGNR and the university. She is also a person with a gift for people. Every relationship, conversation, or connection in which she is engaged is done while keeping AGNR's mission of "nurturing the next generation" in mind. Moore has mentored many youth, volunteers, families, faculty, and staff. People are drawn to her because she sees the world in a positive way and challenges others to do the same.



On-campus Professional Track Faculty Excellence Award

As director of the Maryland Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), **Dr. Mira Mehta** has secured and managed approximately \$23 million in capacity grants and other grant budgets. Applying nationally validated cost-benefit data, it is estimated that the \$4.5 million investment to EFNEP education during these five years may lead to future health care savings to Marylanders that approximate \$48 million.

As Director of EFNEP, Mehta is responsible for all aspects of the mission, vision, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program while promoting the social justice goals of AGNR. EFNEP strives to help reduce health disparities, advance social justice, and create diverse and inclusive communities where underserved families could learn and thrive. From 2015-2020 alone, EFNEP facilitated improvements in diet and physical activity for approximately 5,000 food-insecure adult participants, as well as their children and communities through a minimum of 8-12 hours of education per program participant and about 20,000 youth. In 2006, Mehta created the Minority Initiative for EFNEP to better serve the fast-changing demographics of Maryland.

Even though her appointment does not have any teaching, she contributes her own time for students. She chaired 3 Master's theses and served on 8 thesis committees, and advised 2 Master's special projects. In recognition of her outstanding professional work, Mehta received national recognitions for Leadership in Creating an EFNEP Repository and Database at the National Agriculture Library and 20 Years of Leadership and Service to EFNEP during the 50th Anniversary Celebration at the National EFNEP Conference.



Off-campus Professional Track Faculty Excellence Award

Hired in 2012, **Andrew Kling** has proven himself an invaluable asset to the Woodland Stewardship Program. Andrew was initially hired in 2012 to convert an older UME forestry program website to the new Drupal format adapted by AGNR, as well as revamp an online forest stewardship newsletter.

In 2015, he created one of the first noncredit online Extension courses, known as the "The Woods In Your Backyard", by converting an existing printed book and face-to-face workshop to online. The Woods In Your Backyard online course is offered in spring and fall to 25 participants, and was key to the recognition of the Woods In Your Backyard program as the first Signature UME Program of Excellence.

Andrew came to UME with editorial and people skills, and he continually applies them, serving as content and contributing editor to three high-quality publications produced by a multi-state Woods In Your Backyard Partnership, as well as producing three UME peer-reviewed fact sheets that required extensive survey work to develop. Andrew has taken the initiative to learn how to produce short videos for the online class, develop a Facebook page, and create content for a YouTube Channel to highlight forest and wildlife Extension resources.

Perhaps most noteworthy, Kling is a true professional, always willing to help his colleagues, be a team player, and share his knowledge in a most hospitable and kind way. He is a person with a caring heart to help others solve problems, and a true asset to UME.



Off-campus Junior Faculty Award

As an urban agriculture Extension Educator, **Neith Little's** role is to help urban farmers learn what they need to better achieve their goals through one-on-one technical assistance, workshops, field days, written resources, and applied research. She spearheads Extension educational programs for Maryland urban communities and residents, providing leadership and programming related to urban agriculture and food systems including production, harvesting, packaging, marketing, food safety, and more.

Little facilitates partnerships with a wide range of communities, officials, and groups to develop economically viable urban farming opportunities, while protecting and advocating for a science-based and responsible approach to handling the state's natural resources. To develop this new program and new audience, Little has worked to (1) develop new Extension programming specific to urban farmers, (2) bring existing Extension programs to an urban farmer audience, and (3) reach a diverse audience of new and beginning farmers.

As Maryland urbanizes, Little's applied research and educational programs will provide a valuable resource to current and aspiring farmers. Her knowledge and ability to translate research will be critical as urban farmers make decisions on soil health, food safety, and growing practices. Little has a passion for Extension and agriculture, and it shows in her everyday work with colleagues and clientele.



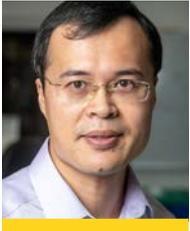
On-Campus Junior Faculty Award

Since joining as assistant professor, **Dr. Masoud Negahban-Azar** has demonstrated well-balanced success in research, teaching, and service. His expertise and contributions blend influences from water resources management, water reuse, and decision support systems to innovate the framing and solution of water resources system problems.

Negahban-Azar has established himself as a young research leader within the field of water reuse and water resources management by co-organizing thematic papers, workshops, and symposiums, maintaining high levels of research productivity, and establishing an impressive research funding portfolio. Less than one year since joining UMD, he played an instrumental role in the proposal development and establishment of CONSERVE: Center of Excellence for Water Reuse in Agriculture (a \$10M program), and has successfully served as one of the core leaders of the Center. His leadership resulted in the creation of the first GIS database of alternative water sources in the U.S.

He has developed and taught two new undergraduate and graduate courses, and has constantly received excellent course reviews from students and his peers. He has received departmental awards for excellence in teaching and research in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Negahban-Azar has made significant contributions that aided bridging theory and practice in the field of water resources management by helping to establish the Maryland Interagency Water Consortium. He also serves on the Maryland Graywater Advisory Board, helping to revise the state regulation for graywater reuse. He is also helping the Maryland Department of Transportation to explore alternative water sources to conserve potable water in their winter operations.



Faculty Research Award

Dr. Yiping Qi has emerged as a pioneer and leader in the rapidly expanding field of plant genome engineering using CRISPR technology. Apart from developing CRISPR-based platforms for the plant science community, he has actively applied the technologies to understanding fundamental mechanisms related to plant defense and development. This year, Qi won the university's Life Sciences Invention of the Year award for his new CRISPR-Cas12a proteins and gene editing system.

Not only did he pioneer the CRISPR-Cas tool development for plant science, he has also widely disseminated the methods and resources to the research community, which has already facilitated and will continue to accelerate the progress of plant biology. In addition to his cutting-edge and innovative research, Qi is also an excellent colleague, collaborator, advisor, and mentor.

Since 2015, Qi has published over 30 peer-reviewed research articles on plant genome engineering using the 3 CRISPR-Cas systems. These include 4 in *Nature Plants*, 5 in *Molecular Plant*, and 5 in *Plant Biotechnology Journal*. Recently, he was named a Web of Science Highly Cited Researcher for 2020. Currently, Qi has 12 active grants totaling \$5.15M, 9 of which (totaling \$2.6M) were obtained in 2020.



Poffenberger Excellence in Teaching & Advising Award

An associate professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics with a research/teaching appointment, **Dr. Kenneth Leonard** has proven himself outstanding as an undergraduate instructor, an innovator in teaching, and as a doctoral advisor.

In his large lecture class on world hunger, Leonard draws on his own experiences of living in Africa to help students understand the lives of the poor. He also draws on the wealth of experiences of students enrolled in the class—many of whom are well-traveled or from first- and second-generation immigrant families with stories to share—to give students a deeper, more immediate understanding of, and empathy for, the lived human experiences of the poor. Leonard has also developed innovative ways of handling questions that are essential for understanding hunger and poverty, but that also can raise the specter of ethnic and racial prejudice.

Drawing on his own experiences and on his research into gender, Leonard developed a new I-Series course, The Science of Gender in Economics and Development, debuting in Fall 2021. His efforts as director of the Global Poverty Minor ensure that both curriculum and student experience remain first-rate.

Leonard's training and mentoring of graduate students is exceptional. He got his advisees involved in field work long before it became standard in development economics, and guided them through the process of implementing field experiments. The quality of his training can be seen in his strong record of placement, and his advisees attribute their ability to manage their careers while maintaining a healthy work-life balance to his mentoring and example.



Extension Excellence Award

Jennifer Rhodes is a Principal Agent with UME, with an overall goal to help farmers succeed in producing and marketing agricultural products in a manner that results in economic, family, community, and environmental sustainability. Throughout her career as an Extension educator and poultry grower/grain farmer, Rhodes has proven to be an effective educator and specialist with demonstrated results in innovative program development.

Rhodes has excelled in the following major program areas: Agriculture Profitability, with sub-programs that include an annual agronomy day, nutrient management planning and voucher training, pesticide training and recertification, organic grain, vegetable, forage, livestock and poultry workshops, and much more; Women in Agriculture, with sub-programs that include Annie's project classes, agriculture computer classes, Wednesday webinars, and conservation learning circles; and Poultry Programs, with sub-programs that include poultry farm management training and certification for new growers, quarterly commercial poultry discussion groups, reducing poultry farm energy consumption, a non-English speaking poultry grower program, biosecurity, poultry health, electrical farm safety, and a website. Rhodes' stellar record and statewide reputation make her a wonderful ambassador for this award.



Dean Gordon Cairns Award for Distinguished Creative Work and Teaching in Agriculture

As a professor and Extension specialist, and director of the Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center, **Dr. Reginal Harrell** is known throughout the fisheries community, first for his pioneering work in striped bass research, and most recently for his work in aquaculture. He has brought in over \$20M in contracts and grants over his career, with many honors that include election as a fellow in the American Fisheries Society, as a Fellow in the American Institute of Fisheries Research Biologists, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Xi, and many other notable honors.

Harrell's coupled research-Extension program focuses on aquatic vegetation management and control, farm pond management, and most recently, the use of the Open Standards process in the practice of conservation in Africa. He brought his expertise in both research and Extension to the "Saving Africa's Vultures" project, and was a valued leader in the project that brought U.S. and African scientists and policy makers together to work on actionable vulture conservation. His recent work has progressed to the field of conservation ethics, and he was instrumental in ensuring that the ENST graduate curriculum met the NSF criteria for instruction in the ethical conduct of research.

Harrell is a true renaissance man, mixing both science and ethics. He brings a new perspective to natural and philosophical problems, which leads to new ways of coming together, in respect, to solve conservation problems. He is extremely well regarded in his professional societies and has a well grounded community life, even serving as an ordained minister of his faith.



Integrated Research and Extension Excellence Award

Dr. Amy Burk has been a dedicated faculty member in the Department of Animal and Avian Sciences and State Extension Horse Specialist with UME for the past 20 years. As the state's Extension Horse Specialist, Burk serves as a leading voice on matters related to horse care and management to the citizens of Maryland, having given 86 invited presentations. She has developed two long-term integrated applied research and Extension programs to help address two critical issues in the horse industry. The first program is focused on reducing the negative environmental impact of horse farms through improved pasture management. The second program is aimed at reducing equine obesity and other costly nutritional disorders through improved feeding and grazing management practices. Both of Burk's integrated research and Extension programs have filled knowledge gaps that are critical to improving the health and well-being of the horse, as well as protecting the land.

In addition, she effectively communicates her findings within her Extension programs that have led to measurable and documentable changes in learning and behavior. She is adept at utilizing a variety of approaches to Extension education, including creating print and online resources, coordinating in-person seminars and online webinars, creating a pasture demonstration site, giving engaging presentations, and using social media and online video platforms to reach an international audience. While her main outreach and research focus has centered on Maryland, her Extension resources, in particular her online videos, and her research findings have reached audiences across the U.S., Australia, Mexico, and Canada.



Dean's DEIR Standard of Excellence Award, Faculty

Michael Elonge serves as a Family and Consumer Science (FCS) educator in Baltimore City with a mission to address the financial priorities outlined in the City Master Plan and a community assessment conducted by the UME-Baltimore City office. He has demonstrated an outstanding ability to meet the needs and interests of diverse community members, stakeholders, and partnerships through a community development framework. He has created, implemented, and evaluated innovative programs such as Housing Eviction Prevention Education, Inmates, and Ex-Offenders Small Business Ownership, Youth Financial Education, and Financial Education for Human and Social Service Frontline Workers. His programs have been highly effective in increasing confidence and changing underserved participants' financial behaviors toward economic mobility.

In 2020, Elonge successfully adapted programming in a virtual platform to meet the unique local and statewide financial needs. The program reached 99 low-income housing tenants, 910 staff from 17 professional development sessions, and 15 African American young adults from 12 sessions of introduction to financial management and farm risk management. It is estimated that the 910 staff who attended professional development will serve 9,100 additional tenants at risk of eviction.

Elonge has expanded the delivery of research-based programming beyond traditional constituencies to foster multi-disciplinary partnerships to maintain its relevance and meet changing needs. His key partners include the Maryland Department of Labor, Department of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Maryland Department of Health, Minority Health and Health Disparities, Maryland Department of Human Services, and many more. These stakeholders have recognized his dedication to serving underrepresented and socially disadvantaged audiences.



Dean's DEIR Standard of Excellence Award, Staff

Along with Dr. Nia Imani Fields, **Dr. Evelyn Cooper** is Co-chair of Dean Beyrouy's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Respect (DEIR) Working Group, a collective of approximately 30 staff, faculty, postdocs, and students who are working to fulfill UMD President Pines' TerrapinSTRONG (TS) and Dean Beyrouy's DEIR initiatives. Cooper is widely recognized throughout the college community for her outstanding service regarding DEIR initiatives within AGNR, as well as for the university at-large.

Cooper has created a safe space, even on Zoom, where staff, postdocs, students, and faculty can discuss issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect and work towards making our college and the university a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all. These are not always comfortable conversations, so creating a safe space is crucial.

Among other initiatives, Dr. Cooper has been instrumental in successfully introducing TS to UNIV100 classes, and is working on an ELMS module for onboarding orientation and internal student major change workshops. She also developed a DEIR survey for the college which will be used for actionable data collection.

THE 2021 CORNERSTONE AWARDS



Healthy Food Systems

External Award

University of Maryland Campus Pantry

Internal Award

Cafeteria Connections: Relying on School Meals for Increased Food Access in Low Income Populations During Pandemic Times



Clean and Healthy Chesapeake Bay

External Award

Anacostia Watershed Society

Internal Award

Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology



Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems

External Award

Maryland Agricultural & Resource Based-Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO)

Internal Award

UMD Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP)



Human, Animal, and Environmental Health

Internal Award

Dr. Meiqing Shi



Optimize Urban Environments

Internal Award

Vernelle Mitchell-Hawkins and the Summer of STEM Program

INAUGURAL DEAN'S GRANTSMANSHIP AWARDS

Dr. Nicole Fiorellino

Dr. Li Ma

Dr. Utpal Pal

Dr. Yiping Qi

Dr. Nidhi Rawat

Dr. Chad Stahl

Dr. Nishanth Sunny

Dr. Kate Tully

Dr. Xiaoping Zhu

YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION 2021

5 YEARS

Craig Beyrouthy
Matthias Jurgen Corrott
Kathleen Jo Anne Decker
John W. Draper Jr
Jeryl Martin-Hannibal
Kirsten M. McCree
Ryan Vernon McDonald

10 YEARS

Crystal Caldwell
Johanna Lavigne
Angela Mazur-Gray
Andrew S Muir
Karen D. Reddersen
Amy Simmons
Teri Leigh Zillmer

15 YEARS

George Michael Brady
Roni A Cline
Marcina Estelle Garner
Wanda Marie Guard

20 YEARS

David K. Armentrout
Wendy M. Dilworth
Jaclyn A. Marsh
Michael W Mobley
Ricardo M. Morales
Skorobatsch, Nicole
Brian Scott Spielman
Daphne G. Ramirez
Stanley
Sydney F. Wallace
Linda N. Waters

25 YEARS

Joseph W. De Rico
Lynne W. DiBastiani
Christie K. Germuth
Cheryl L. Hill
Suzanne Klick
Liesl J. Koch

30 YEARS

David W. Bowman

35 YEARS

Vivian Ann Calder
Stanley Paul Schlosnagle
David L. Wyand, Jr

40 YEARS

Daniel E. Poet

