

DAILY LOBO.COM

(<https://www.dailylobo.com/>)

UNM recognizes most outstanding teachers of 2018

By Catherine Stringam (<https://www.dailylobo.com/staff/catherine-stringam>) Published 05/08/18 6:06am

The 2018 Teaching Excellence Awards were presented to faculty on May 3, in the Student Union Building Ballroom to recognize those who went above and beyond in educating students at the University of New Mexico.

The awards were put on by the Center for Teaching and Learning, Faculty Senate for Teaching Enhancement Committee, UNM Graduate Studies and the New Mexico Graduates of Color.

"I think it's important to celebrate teachers who have gone above and beyond and had a real impact on their students," said Aeron Haynie, executive director of the Center for Teaching and Learning. "We spend a lot of time talking about the amazing research that happens here, but we also need to talk about the amazing teachers."

According to Haynie, a teacher must first be nominated for an award. Nominations can be made by students, past or present, or other faculty. The nominees then have to fill out a lengthy application, submit letters of recommendation, teaching statements and course materials. There are several committees and subcommittees with representatives from across the University who then review the application packets and make the final decisions.

The awards were as follows:

- Presidential Teaching Fellow — Christopher Butler
- Outstanding Teacher of the Year — Heather Canavan and Finnie Coleman
- New Teacher of the Year — Jason Moore, Jaimi Nunez and Kate Cartwright
- Lecturer of the Year — Asal Naseri, Regina Chavez Puccetti and Peter Lisignoli
- Teaching Assistant of the Year — Kelly Cardoso da Silva, Sarah Worland, Mary Hershberger, Benjamin Burnett and Kellin Rumsey
- Mentor of the Year — Thomas Chavez
- Ally of the Year — Ricky Allen

There were also over 25 Golden Paw awards given out to faculty from various departments who taught exemplary online courses.

Kelly Cardoso da Silva, a graduate student in the department of Spanish and Portuguese, said receiving the award for Teaching Assistant of the Year meant that her hard work was finally starting to pay off.

"It was my first time teaching Portuguese for Spanish speakers in a university in the United States," Cardoso da Silva said. "It's three languages at the same time, so I was freaking out and didn't know what to do."

But over the last two years of teaching the course, she said she has learned a lot and proved to herself that it is possible.

Presidential Teaching Fellow Christopher Butler is an associate professor in the department of political science at UNM. He said that in this day and age, teaching is getting both harder and easier — harder because professors have to keep up with all the technological advancements and new information and easier because they can use these new tools to engage students in learning.

"I made it my goal to go above and beyond the curriculum of statistics and teach the students to take better advantage of technology to do research," Butler said.

Meanwhile, Outstanding Teachers of the Year Heather Canavan had a different story to share.

Canavan is an associate professor in the biomedical engineering department. She had breast cancer surgery earlier this year and was in recovery while applying for the award.

"It was really nice to look back on the last 10 years of my teaching career and put it all together," Canavan said. "It made things manageable and it helped me focus on moving forward."

After turning in the application, she received letters from her students to read. She said she did not even remember some of the stories they shared. Students wrote about the positive impact she had on them in the classroom, in both big and small ways, and both recently and many years ago.

"Most times you only get feedback when it's bad, so it's amazing to read these letters and get an award like this," Canavan said.

Catherine Stringam is a freelance reporter with the Daily Lobo. She can be contacted at news@dailylobo.com or on Twitter @cathey_stringam.