

AASCU ANNOUNCES THE

2018 EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION *Award Winners*



↑ Savannah State University's Making of Global Citizens project recruited international students and established and promoted programs that enhanced students' global awareness.
CREDIT: Litus Marshall

Now in its fifth year, the Excellence and Innovation Awards honor AASCU member institutions for excellence and innovation in several major areas of campus life and leadership: regional and economic development, student success and college completion, sustainability and sustainable development, teacher education, international education, and leadership development and diversity.

"These institutions demonstrate the commitment of America's state colleges and universities to Deliver America's Promise by championing innovation, prioritizing student success, and providing critical contributions to the economic and civic progress of their communities," said AASCU President Dr. Mildred García.

"We are privileged to honor programs that can serve as an inspiration to all of higher education."

The awards were presented Oct. 28 at the opening session of AASCU's Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. Read more about the winners:

Christa McAuliffe Excellence in Teacher Education Award: **Northwest Missouri State University**

Northwest Missouri State University faculty completely overhauled its Northwest School of Education. The Education Redesign increased students' access to diverse clinical practice (now more than 600 total hours) in urban, rural and suburban settings and with all

learner ability levels, and has students engage in this practice earlier—by the third week of their freshman year. Additionally, students participate in a Professional Learning Community to learn from their experiences, and the curriculum focuses on improving students' instructional practice, lesson plans and classroom management strategies.

"We take great pride in this national recognition as it recognizes an amazing and dedicated faculty and staff committed to a never-ending journey of continuously improving what we do," Northwest President Dr. John Jasinski said. "We are humbled and honored to receive this award, and these continuing national recognitions solidify Northwest as an innovative leader focused on student success."

Civic Learning and Community Engagement Award: **Western Carolina University (N.C.)**

The Student Democracy Coalition (SDC) demonstrates Western Carolina University's (WCU) sustained record of promoting and prioritizing civic activity. Led by students, SDC engages faculty, staff and organizations across campus interested in increasing student civic engagement in a non-partisan capacity. SDC has registered 3,127 students to vote, organized 60 educational programs and 25 marketing campaigns, established a campus early voting poll that raised WCU's voter turnout rate by 16



↑ At the State University of New York College at Oneonta Biological Field Station near Cooperstown, N.Y., undergraduate summer interns collect fish samples each week to study the water quality and largemouth bass in Moe Pond—part of an ongoing environmental study the university has been doing since the 1980s.



↑ Students gain experience with sustainable business practices through Grand Valley State University's Sustainable Agriculture Project, and the campus community gets access to the farm's produce.



↑ Buffalo State College's Emerging College Leaders program graduates say the program increases their self-awareness, which helps them define the skills they need to develop to be more effective leaders.



↑ From left: John Barthell, Ph.D., University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) provost, congratulates UCO graduate Miguel Elizalde with Camille Farrell, the Student Transformative Learning Record's assistant director, at the cording ceremony for students who achieve "transformation" in one or more transformative learning tenets.

percent, and held an election watch program with nearly 500 attendees.

"Simply stated, the SDC is changing the way WCU students think about civic engagement and the way the community and candidates view students," said Dr. Lane Perry, director of WCU's Center for Service Learning. "From the students, I have seen a new level of recognition and appreciation of the freedom, of the right, of this responsibility to be informed, to vote and to care."

International Education Award:
Savannah State University (Ga.)

Savannah State University's (SSU) Making of Global Citizens project advanced curriculum development, fostered international opportunities and creatively integrated international students into the university community. The project added international dimensions into SSU courses and the Chatham County Public School System, revitalized study abroad and exchange programs, diversified the campus community by recruiting international students, developed a Peace Corps Prep program, promoted existing international programs, and established programs to enhance the global awareness and knowledge of SSU students.

"Our international education team has done a remarkable job both in bringing SSU to the world and hosting international Tigers on our campus," said Dr. Emmanuel Naniuzeyi, associate vice president for international education at SSU. "The enrichment that comes with cultural exchange is invaluable to any college education."

Leadership Development and Diversity Award:
Buffalo State College, State University of New York (SUNY)

Through its Emerging College Leaders (ECL) program, SUNY Buffalo State College enhances the leadership capacities of high-potential staff and faculty at all levels of the institution. Each cohort is purposefully created to ensure diversity in age, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, as a means of improving equity, inclusion and innovation across campus. From the 2011, 2013 and 2015 cohorts, 52 percent of program alumni have advanced in rank or position after graduating from the program.

"Feedback from the alumni of our Emerging College Leaders program demonstrates how well it works," said Buffalo State President Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner. "So many of them report advancing in fulfilling positions that make the most of their skills and experience. This program is another positive way to celebrate the amazing diversity that makes up the Buffalo State campus."

Regional and Economic Development Award:
University of Memphis

The University of Memphis (UofM) is based in one of the poorest metropolitan areas in the nation. Many students are financially challenged, which has impacted UofM's graduation rates. UofM founded UMRF (University of Memphis Research Foundation) Ventures, Inc. to provide third-party IT service and support to corporations by hiring full-time undergraduate and graduate students. UofM hopes the program will not only improve its graduation rate but will also create a talent pool to address employment gaps within Memphis. In 2017, the program's first year, 40 students were employed. By the end of 2018, over 300 were employed.

"These students can give you superior work performance while they graduate on time, more professionally prepared for the workplace, and with minimal student debt," said Dr. Jasbir Dhaliwal, UofM executive vice president for Research & Innovation. "It is also imperative for modern universities to develop innovative partnership capabilities that bring meaningful work to campus for students."

Student Success and College Completion Award:
California State University, Sacramento

Finish in Four, Sacramento State's plan for student success, is a university-wide strategy to increase graduation rates and eliminate the achievement gap. It includes prioritizing budgets to allow for more course sections and faculty, enhancing support services for low-income or single/multiple ethnic student groups, and encouraging collaboration with K-12 schools and community colleges to prepare future students. For the Fall 2009 to 2013 cohorts, the four-year graduation rate for native freshmen rose over 5 percent, and from Fall 2009 to 2011, the achievement gap dropped over 8 percent for African-American students and nearly 7 percent for Hispanic students.

"This recognition by AASCU for our Finish in Four and Through in Two campaigns is an incredible honor for Sacramento State," said Sacramento State's President Dr. Robert S. Nelsen. "This award belongs to all of the faculty and staff who have worked diligently over the past three years to change the culture of student success on our campus. I am tremendously proud of everyone who is helping our students to graduate on time."

University of Central Oklahoma

The Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) provides transformative learning experiences for students, including developing students' workplace readiness and their relationships with themselves, others, the community and the environment. University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) has implemented STLR in over 567 courses across academic disciplines; funded 393 student/faculty-proposed paid projects and internships; supported 47 student groups; hosted 465 co-curricular campus events aimed at increasing student engagement outside the classroom; and trained 316 full-time faculty, 188 staff and 117 adjuncts. For a target cohort of first-time, first-year students who were low-income, first-generation and/or underrepresented starting in Fall 2015, retention increased 13 percent, and grade point average increased on average by 0.56 points.

"We are honored by AASCU's recognition

of UCO's sustained commitment to transformative learning and the encouraging success of the Student Transformative Learning Record," said UCO President Dr. Don Betz. "Dr. Jeff King and the STLR team's dedication has impacted faculty development and student persistence across the university, and Central's STLR approach to student success has attracted robust interest from institutions in the USA and beyond."

Sustainability and Sustainable Development Award:
Comprehensive Award: SUNY Oneonta

To integrate sustainability within and across its curriculum, SUNY Oneonta designated sustainability-focused courses and sections; began hosting an annual workshop to help instructors infuse sustainability into syllabi; created an interdisciplinary major in Environmental Sustainability to prepare students to develop solutions to pressing environmental challenges; and promoted and encouraged faculty and student participation in sustainability research through an annual student research and creativity day. The program fosters environmental sustainability that is useful to graduates regardless of their chosen career path.

"This honor has been earned through the work of many. We continually seek ways to best prepare students as they face pressing environmental challenges now and in the future," said SUNY Oneonta President Dr. Barbara Morris. "We are also committed to seeking ways in which we can integrate new technologies to lessen our campus's impact on the environment. Sustainability is a fundamental value that students, faculty and staff hold dear at SUNY Oneonta."

Innovative Project Award:
Grand Valley State University (Mich.)

Founded in 2008, the Sustainable Agriculture Project (SAP) is an interdisciplinary,

campus-wide living laboratory where students learn academic content, develop intellectual and practical skills and practice community engagement. At its core is a five-acre, student-operated farm site that prioritizes biological soil building, biodiversity, companion and successional plantings, and food safety. The campus community also benefits from SAP, as produce is sold, in part to campus dining, at the on-campus farmers market and in farm shares.

"Grand Valley is honored to accept an award for its innovative efforts in the area of sustainable agriculture education," said Dr. Anne Hiskes, dean of the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies. "Students often tell us how working at the Sustainable Agriculture Project has changed their lives, enabling them to grow academically, socially and spiritually. 'The farm' is a space where our students come together from all different majors, from art and design and biomedical sciences to writing and geology." **P**



↕ Western Carolina University's Student Democracy Coalition allows students to lead activities that increase student civic engagement in a non-partisan capacity.

