



ACADEMIC CONVOCATION 2025

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER AT ROCKWELL HALL



ACADEMIC CONVOCATION 2025

PROCESSIONAL

MACE BEARER

David R. Henry, Ph.D.
*Associate Professor, Elementary
Education, Literacy, and
Educational Leadership*

WELCOME

Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D.
*Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs*

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

Bonita R. Durand, Ph.D.
Interim President

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Bonita R. Durand, Ph.D.
Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D.
Presenters

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

Atta A. Ceesay, Ph.D.
*Associate Dean, School of Arts
and Sciences*

Natalie A. Szymanski, Ph.D.
Director, Writing Program

Maria C. Garrity, M.S.Ed.
*Senior Systems Programmer,
Information Technology Services*

Brooke L. Capotosto, M.S.
*Instructional Designer, Instructional
Design and Distance Learning*

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Lorna L. Perez, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, English

Amy B. Wilson, Ph.D.
*Chair and Professor, Higher Education
Administration and Adult Education*

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Jikai Du, Ph.D.
*Associate Professor, Engineering
Technology*

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CAREER ACHIEVEMENT FOR FACULTY

Stephen F. Saracino, M.F.A.
Professor, Art and Design

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVITY

Gang "Gary" Hu, Ph.D.
*Assistant Professor, Computer
Information Systems*

Kristen A. Pastore-Capuana, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, English

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Bonita R. Durand, Ph.D.
Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D.
Presenters

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Tao Tang, Ph.D.
Professor, Geosciences

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Brandon F. Kawa, M.S.
*Director, International Graduate
Programs for Educators, International
Graduate Programs*

Tristin J. Salter, M.A.
*Program Coordinator, Continuing
Professional Studies*

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN FACULTY SERVICE

Lisa Marie Anselmi, Ph.D.
*Chair and Associate Professor,
Anthropology*

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Ann Liao, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Communication

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CLASSIFIED SERVICE

Ann P. Delmont
*Administrative Assistant 2, Academic
Affairs Vice President's Office*

CLOSING

Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D.

RECESSIONAL

MARSHALS

UNIVERSITY MARSHAL

Howard M. Reid, Ph.D.
Professor, Psychology

DEPUTY UNIVERSITY MARSHAL

Kimberly J. Jackson, Ed.D.
*Deputy Director of Commencement and
Ceremonial Events, Academic Affairs*

FACULTY MARSHALS

Julian C. Cole, Ph.D.
*Interim Associate Dean, School of
Arts and Sciences*

Raquel J. Schmidt, Ph.D.
*Associate Dean, School of Education
and Applied Professions*

Leah M. Panek-Shirley, Ph.D.
*Interim Associate Dean, School of
Education and Applied Professions*

*Please gather for a reception in the
auditorium lobby of Rockwell Hall.*



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

ATTA A. CEESAY, PH.D.

Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Atta Ceesay is a visionary, proactive, and intelligent leader with an admirable collaborative style. She brings together individuals and groups to solve issues and provide more effective services to students. Representing the School of Arts and Sciences on numerous campus committees and task forces, she goes above and beyond to identify barriers to student success that may be solved by policy changes and then collaborates with colleagues to influence those changes. Her commitment to empowerment is at the core of her ability to lead others to creative solutions and to get things done by working together. She is admired for her flexibility, positive enthusiasm, and dedication to teamwork, always bringing out the best in others.

One of Dr. Ceesay's primary responsibilities is working with the Academic Standards Office on the academic standing review process at the end of each semester. She meets with each student on probation to create a probation contract with them to determine the best path forward to their academic success. When she started in the associate dean role in 2023, she met with about 40 probationary students. Since developing and implementing new probationary student processes, she now meets with about 150 students each semester to plan their academic success. During her time as associate dean, Dr. Ceesay also has continued to teach in the master of public administration program and she remains active in her professional organizations. Her students attest to her excellent disciplinary knowledge, consider her a mentor, and appreciate her ability to develop strong and positive relationships.

Nominator: Kelly M. Frothingham, Ph.D., Dean, School of Arts and Sciences



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

NATALIE A. SZYMANSKI, PH.D.

Director, Writing Program

Dr. Natalie Szymanski oversees a large program that reaches nearly every student on campus, scheduling over a hundred sections of College Writing each year. She also dedicates herself to the mentorship of individual students and has had a transformative effect on their education, well-being, and future as college graduates. In addition, she hires, onboards, and continually mentors about 40 adjunct faculty instructors each year, designing lengthy professional development workshops for them to ensure that they are rigorously meeting the revised learning objectives of the courses. She is a standard-bearer for Buffalo State's mission, and she continually adapts to the university's emerging needs and student demographics. She goes above and beyond what is asked of her to make sure students are at ease in their own identities and that they are succeeding.

Dr. Szymanski has served and assumed leadership roles on more than a dozen campus committees and task forces, including crucial ones for first-year student success and retention. She has been an invaluable member of the Title III Task Force, a subcommittee chair on the General Education Task Force, and the Middle States Accreditation Steering Committee. She was a member of the president's Future Forward Committee, as well as the inaugural Social Justice Cohort. She also finds time to pursue an active research agenda. Since joining Buffalo State in 2019, she has coedited a collection (*Making Administrative Work Visible: Data-Driven Advocacy for Understanding the Labor of Writing Program Administration*), published two articles in peer-reviewed journals, and cowritten a book chapter, as well as a refereed work of creative nonfiction.

Nominator: David N. Ben-Merre, Ph.D., Chair and Professor, English



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

MARIA C. GARRITY, M.S.ED.

Senior Systems Programmer, Information Technology Services

Ms. Maria Garrity has worked as the co-chair of the SEFA/United Way campaign at Buffalo State for 23 years. While this voluntary role is not part of her primary job description, her dedication, managerial acumen, people skills, and responsive communication practices help the campaign run smoothly and efficiently year after year. Through this campaign, she provides superior value to Buffalo State as well as a much broader public service that directly impacts agencies and community members across Western New York. She has helped lead the effort to raise approximately \$2.5 million through SEFA/United Way campaigns since 2002. In addition, Ms. Garrity has a longer list of volunteer service to Buffalo State and the surrounding community that earned her the April 2018 Caring Bengal Award. In January 2024, she was named a Bengal Career Champion after completing training provided by the Career and Professional Education Center. In this student-outreach role, she guides students in staying on track and focusing on their careers.

While many people seek opportunities for leadership that will advance their careers and offer them the recognition of their peers, Ms. Garrity seeks only to assist others. She is a highly productive member of many work groups on campus, and contributes for the sheer joy of accomplishment, offering recognition only for her coworkers and never for herself. Ms. Garrity is an extraordinary university servant whose humble contributions to any team, effort, or idea make her a colleague much in demand by faculty or staff members who need to accomplish difficult and complex tasks.

Nominator: Wendy A. Paterson, Ph.D., Dean, School of Education



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

BROOKE L. CAPOTOSTO, M.S.

Instructional Designer, Instructional Design and Distance Learning

Ms. Brooke Capotosto is a poised individual whose care and commitment to faculty development and instructional design are evident in her actions as a professional and a scholar. At a time when faculty members are asked to do more with less and work efficiently within their workspaces, her dedication and unwavering service to Buffalo State in the face of challenges is admirable. When Ms. Capotosto was hired in 2016, the campus supported 28 course design reviews in any given year. In 2024–2025, there were 80 completed course design reviews and 83 reviews in progress, for a remarkable increase to 163 course design reviews. This productivity and contribution to quality improvements in online offerings is a true testament to her service to the university. Through her involvement and positive attitude, Ms. Capotosto is an ideal role model within the Buffalo State community and other higher education communities.

Ms. Capotosto manages the university's Online Learning Consortium Course Design Review (OSCQR) process, which involves providing faculty with invaluable feedback on the design of online and hybrid courses. Her leadership in this process supports the university's Online and Hybrid Course-Offering policy, ensuring that courses meet ambitious standards of instructional design and student engagement. Contributors have often mentioned how Ms. Capotosto worked behind the scenes to present a process for faculty that was obtainable. She played a key role in helping transition from inperson to remote instruction during the pandemic, and, conversely, faculty members have been able to incorporate what they learned about online instruction from Ms. Capotosto into their in-person courses post-pandemic.

Nominator: Kimberly A. Kline, Ph.D., Professor, Higher Education Administration



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

LORNA L. PEREZ, PH.D.

Associate Professor, English

Dr. Lorna Perez has been a member of the English Department for 16 years and her commitment to students across the university—as a teacher, guide, and mentor—has been unparalleled. She teaches courses at all levels, from her fundamental Introduction to Latinx Literature to her widely popular Zombie Literature and Culture. In each of her classes, she incorporates innovative teaching methods, including student-led discussions, book reflections, and reports that broaden learning experiences. Her student-centered approach is essential, engaging students in crucial discussion about democracy and social justice.

Her incredible array of service commitments are always geared toward student success and accessibility, and her participation in professional activities and scholarly research demonstrates the extent of her involvement in current critical discussions.

Dr. Perez has served as a McNair Program mentor, Honors program faculty leader and mentor, core member of the Women and Gender Studies program, adviser of the English Honors Society, and a SUNY Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Fellow. Over the past decade, she has taught in the EOP Summer Academy program, working with incoming EOP students. She has also mentored graduate students on master's theses, worked with undergraduates on a Small Grant Award project and an honors thesis, and mentored Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship projects. Dr. Perez has given of herself time and again, offering numerous independent studies and courses-by-contract, especially to help students who needed such required courses for a timely graduation. Her outstanding pedagogical record has made countless students' lives better and their futures fuller.

Nominator: David N. Ben-Merre, Ph.D., Chair and Professor, English



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

AMY B. WILSON, PH.D.

Chair and Professor, Higher Education Administration and Adult Education

Dr. Amy Wilson has demonstrated a clear commitment to effective teaching and student mentoring throughout her 25 years in higher education and student affairs. Her pedagogical approach, which emphasizes student-centered learning and a commitment to diverse populations, is commendable. Dr. Wilson helps students build their confidence, professional development, and writing skills, so that they grow and thrive in their graduate program and beyond. She provides just the right amount of challenge and support, which produces thriving students who persist to completion and are successfully placed in profes-

sional positions in higher education. Known for being a steadfast mentor and champion for her students throughout their careers, she has seen many of them rise to leadership positions at both the state and professional level. Dr. Wilson has overseen more than 30 independent studies and master's projects. She has served for more than 11 years as the adviser to the graduate student organization, Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration Collective.

In scholarship and professional development, Dr. Wilson has increased her level of engagement in writing for publication and continues to coauthor with professional colleagues and alumni. Her research agenda includes contemporary higher education and student affairs issues, multicultural competence, multicultural supervision, leadership education and development, inclusive practices and design, professional development and competencies, and women in higher education. She has presented at various national, regional, and local conferences, and is frequently sought out as an invited speaker on her research topics. She is well connected to the professional associations that are central to the department's work.

Nominator: Kimberly A. Kline, Ph.D., Professor, Higher Education Administration



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

JIKAI DU, PH.D.

Associate Professor, Engineering Technology

Dr. Jikai Du embodies the highest standards of academic advisement, consistently demonstrating an unwavering commitment to student success through personalized guidance and mentorship. His approach to advisement is characterized by a genuine and caring attitude towards his advisees. He takes the time to understand each student's unique circumstances, fostering strong relationships built on trust and mutual respect. He ensures that students have frequent opportunities to seek advice by maintaining flexible office hours, responding promptly to emails, and making himself accessible beyond scheduled meetings. He excels in developmental advising, actively monitoring student progress toward academic, career, and life goals. In addition, Dr. Du possesses a thorough mastery of institutional and departmental regulations, policies, and procedures. This deep knowledge enables him to provide accurate and timely advice, ensuring students remain on track with their academic requirements while avoiding unnecessary obstacles. He consistently seeks to refine his advising skills and stay informed of the latest advisement strategies, demonstrating his commitment to continuous improvement.

Dr. Du has supervised 20 senior design students since 2020; many have presented their work at Buffalo State's annual Student Research and Creativity Conference. He connects students to professional organizations in his role as faculty adviser for the Mechanical Contractors Association of America Student Chapter and the BAJA SAE student club, and has supported student clubs with guidance on grants and awards. Dr. Du is also an invaluable resource to his colleagues in the advisement process. He willingly shares his expertise, collaborates on best practices, and contributes to the improvement of advisement strategies within the department.

Nominator: Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CAREER ACHIEVEMENT FOR FACULTY

STEPHEN F. SARACINO, M.F.A.

Professor, Art and Design

Mr. Stephen Saracino's contributions to Buffalo State University and his field of expertise reflect a lifelong commitment to academic excellence, student mentorship, service, and scholarly achievement. His innovative teaching methods, enthusiasm for art and design, commitment to fostering critical thinking, and ability to inspire intellectual curiosity have set a standard of excellence within his department. He is known for going above and beyond to mentor students, guiding them to develop their artistic language and supporting their personal growth. Many of his former students have forged successful careers in metals-jewelry fields.

Beyond the classroom, Mr. Saracino has used jewelry and metalsmithing as a medium for social commentary that transcends its traditional functional context. This has enriched the academic discourse in his field, earning him international recognition and respect from colleagues. His award-winning work is widely published, included in prestigious museum collections, and highly sought after by private collectors. His eloquence as communicator, emphatic insight into human nature, and ability to integrate his own creative work experience into his teaching has provided students with invaluable hands-on learning experiences, bridging the gap between abstract theory, real world issues, and artistic practice. He has served as a longtime chair of the Art and Design Department, institutional representative for accreditation, leader of the Siena study abroad program, member of the College Senate, member of countless committees, and played a pivotal role in curriculum development, faculty mentorship, and departmental initiatives. His collaborative spirit and commitment to institutional growth have left a lasting imprint on his department and the university.

Nominator: Robert L. Wood, M.F.A., Professor, Art and Design



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVITY

GANG "GARY" HU, PH.D.

Assistant Professor, Computer Information Systems

Dr. Gang "Gary" Hu has excelled in a variety of research activities that have benefitted Buffalo State and its students. He was the corresponding author of a machine organization textbook that is currently used at Buffalo State. He also has authored or coauthored 13 journal articles on research in artificial intelligence and image processing topics, including publication in *IEEE Transactions on Instrumentation and Measurement* and *Remote Sensing*, and two papers in the *Journal of Imaging*. One of his papers won the 2022 IEEE Andy

Chi TIM Best Paper award. In addition, he has published five papers in peer-reviewed proceedings of national and international conferences and made eight poster presentations. Dr. Hu has actively involved Buffalo State undergraduate students in his conference work and has included seven students as coauthors in proceedings and poster presentations at national and international conferences.

In addition, Dr. Hu has earned grant-funded research opportunities. Dr. Hu was a co-principal investigator of a two-year grant, "SUNY Buffalo State GENCYBER 2020: Cybersecurity Summer Camp for Western New York Teachers," funded by the National Security Agency and the National Science Foundation. Its goal was to train high school teachers to develop courses in cybersecurity and infuse cybersecurity concepts into existing courses. Dr. Hu has been a presenter at workshops at the GenCyber teacher summer camp, was a judge in student showcases and competitions, and was involved in organizing all grant activities. Dr. Hu also was principal investigator of a team awarded a Buffalo State Research and Creativity Incentive Grant.

Nominator: Neal M. Mazur, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Computer Information Systems



PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVITY

KRISTEN A. PASTORE-CAPUANA, PH.D.

Associate Professor, English

In the past five years, Dr. Kristen Pastore-Capuana has coedited three major books, published five articles/book chapters, presented a keynote at eight national conferences, and coauthored a major position statement that was published on the National Council of Teachers of English website and reproduced in its journal, *English Education*. She has served as co-chair of the Methods Commission of the English Language Arts Teacher Educators organization, the professional home of English educators. Her work with this commission led to two of her

three published books: *Possibilities, Challenges, and Changes in English Teacher Education Today: Exploring Identity and Professionalization* and *Using Tension as a Resource: New Visions in Teaching the English Language Arts Methods Class*. Her third coedited book, *Invested Stayers: How Teachers Thrive in Challenging Times*, explores how and why teachers persevere in their often-challenging careers.

Dr. Pastore-Capuana's scholarly research is inseparable from her teaching and service at Buffalo State and beyond. She is a director of the Western New York Network of English Teachers, the major force behind teacher-driven professional development in Western New York. At Buffalo State, she serves as the associate director for the Center for English Teaching and has volunteered for numerous school and departmental committees. She also contributes to program accreditation work and collaborations on placements and partnerships with local schools. Dr. Pastore-Capuana involves her students—the next generation of scholars and teachers—in her research. Her work is insightful, wide-ranging, rigorous, and conscientious. Her dedication to preparing the next generation of English teachers is apparent in everything that she does.

Nominator: David N. Ben-Merre, Ph.D., Chair and Professor, English



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

TAO TANG, PH.D.

Professor, Geosciences

Dr. Tao Tang's persistent research agenda, scholastic output, and ongoing innovation in the areas of geographic information systems and science (GISc) and remote sensing have brought distinction to Buffalo State. Since joining the university in 1998, he has published 32 peer-reviewed journal publications, with many (24) as the first author. This output in peer-reviewed journals is complemented by multiple book chapters and published abstracts and paper presentations in conferences held locally and globally. His newly published textbook *Fundamentals of Geographic Information Analysis Applying ArcGIS-Pro*, is the first in its kind to combine concepts and theory illustrations and student hands-on tutorials. Throughout his career, Dr. Tang has made important contributions to his field in spatial and temporal analysis of air pollution and its impacts on human health. Fine particulate matter is a persistent environmental risk factor for the more than 4 billion people living in cities across the globe and Dr. Tang's research contributions, leveraging advanced technology and spatiotemporal methodologies, have addressed critical gaps in the understanding of how these exposures affect health.

Dr. Tang has pioneered research in the use of drone or unmanned aerial vehicle remote sensing and digital mapping among the campuses in the State University of New York system since 2012. He and his colleagues, along with graduate students, have published several groundbreaking research papers and advanced the understandings on spatial and temporal scales. In addition, Dr. Tang has been a pioneer in the research area of LiDAR 3D remote sensing and digital data survey of the Earth's surface since 2007.

Nominator: Alan M. Delmerico, Ph.D., Community Health Behavior Scientist, Continuing Professional Studies



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

BRANDON F. KAWA, M.S.

Director, International Graduate Programs for Educators, International Graduate Programs

Mr. Brandon Kawa has put Buffalo State University on the world map through his work with the International Graduate Program for Educators (IGPE). He brings extraordinary talent, managerial prowess, and a "make-it-so" approach to a program with an income that far exceeds its expense. His creative energy has propelled the program to become an essential element of Buffalo State's reputation as a preeminent teacher's college not only in Western New York, but on the global stage. When Mr. Kawa took the reins as program director in 2021, he incorporated IGPE's mission and work into the Michael and Nancy Chicola International Professional Development Schools (IPDS) network at Buffalo State. He has served on the IPDS Executive Advisory Council, has assisted with funding international travel for students, and has elevated the work of his IGPE schools.

As international sites are considered extensions or satellites of the local university, Mr. Kawa needed to arrange complex evaluative visits for four of the IGPE sites. Despite many logistical challenges, he arranged every detail of the visits. The evidence of the excellence of this work was the resounding endorsement that Buffalo State received from Middle States Commission on Higher Education with special commendation for the IGPE sites that were visited. They were considered to be exemplary demonstrations of Buffalo State's mission, vision, and goals. Under Mr. Kawa's leadership, rigorous practices extolled by reviewers were established and implemented. In addition, he continues to actively seek to add resources to expand the international reach of the IGPE program into the whole IPDS network.

Nominator: Wendy A. Paterson, Ph.D., Dean, School of Education



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

TRISTIN J. SALTER, M.A.

Program Coordinator, Continuing Professional Studies

Ms. Tristin Salter has been instrumental in developing new relationships and partnerships between Buffalo State and area high schools. Her current primary responsibility is to create and maintain pathway programs with high schools and she has gone above and beyond her expected duties to ensure the success of these programs. She is noted for having regular contact with and providing academic support for all students who participate in the pipeline programs. Students who graduate from these programs and matriculate into

Buffalo State often seek out Ms. Salter's guidance on a continuing basis. Her creation and utilization of strategies for wholistic advisement ensures that high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors stay on a solid academic track. She conducts necessary classroom visits, keeps the office open late so that college business can be conducted, and challenges students and colleagues to contribute to a positive experience for all.

Ms. Salter is an encourager. Students who are classified as at-risk or non-traditional know that her office is a place to find support and plan academic goals. Described as an attentive and approachable listener, she trains tutors, graduate interns, and peer mentors to be the same. She is best known for the creation of the academic tutoring services used by pathway students, helping all first-generation, honors, academically at risk, special needs, transfer, EAL/ELL, EOP, underrepresented students to succeed. Her personal mission is to do what is best for all students, particularly students from disadvantaged backgrounds. She demonstrates these principles when collaborating with Buffalo public and charter schools, SUNY Erie, and parents.

Nominator: Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN FACULTY SERVICE

LISA MARIE ANSELM, PH.D.

Chair and Associate Professor, Anthropology

Dr. Lisa Marie Anselmi has served as department chair since 2010 and is well respected by her peers for her accomplishments in that role. With a career-long dedication to service and social justice, her commitment to these ideals is interwoven throughout her service to the university, Western New York community, Indigenous community, and her professional discipline. She has helped advance the work of many committees and initiatives, including the Legacy Committee (now the Indigenous Initiatives Caucus), Buffalo State Senate

Faculty and Staff Welfare Committee, Social Justice Learning initiative, Middle States Self-Study, and Anne Frank Project. She played a crucial role in the shaping of General Education 2023 framework, policy, and design. She has served as chair and co-chair of the Commencement Committee and volunteered as a commencement seating marshal since 2013. She also has served as an assembly delegate representing the Buffalo State chapter at state-wide functions of United University Professions since 2013.

Dr. Anselmi tirelessly serves as a community ambassador. Since 2010, she has served as the Buffalo State representative to the Native American SUNY: Western Consortium, an institution created by SUNY to address the higher education needs of Native American students. Since 2013, she has served on the executive board for Native American Community Services. In addition, she served as president of the New York State Archaeological Association from 2018 to 2020 and as vice president from 2012 to 2018. She is a go-to person both on and off campus and her leadership serves as the catalyst for successful outcomes completed in a timely manner.

Nominator: Susan E. Maguire, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Anthropology



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

ANN LIAO, PH.D.

Associate Professor, Communication

Dr. Ann Liao has developed numerous new and forward-thinking courses, introduced students to a variety of skills and methods in current and emerging technologies, and worked tirelessly to provide individual attention to students that has resulted in students becoming competent and confident graduates. She strikes an impressive balance between setting high expectations for her students, while also making sure they feel supported along the way through low-stakes assessments and collaborative activities. Although she maintains a busy schedule, Dr. Liao is always available and quickly responsive to students who need individual time with her. She cares about students and their success as evidenced by their comments, her teaching pedagogy, her research in learning in higher education, and pursuit of professional development in the area of teaching.

All of her courses incorporate applied learning opportunities that allow students to practice what they learn and develop their skills. She schedules assignments in ways that provide students with feedback early and often throughout the semester, which is critical to student success, especially in general education courses. Dr. Liao emphasizes original and secondary research in her courses, and she excels at mentoring student research. She and her students have consistently presented at the Communication Department's Fall Forum and Buffalo State's Student Research and Creativity Conference, and she has facilitated many internships for students. Her commitment to teaching extends outside the classroom as well—she has presented and published on student learning in higher education, and she has sought out professional development opportunities to continue to improve her teaching.

Nominator: Annemarie Franczyk, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Communication



SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CLASSIFIED SERVICE

ANN P. DELMONT

Administrative Assistant 2, Academic Affairs Vice President's Office

Ms. Ann Delmont has made contributions to the campus community that are exemplary, consistently demonstrating efficiency, creativity, and exceptional customer service. She excels in her role by completing tasks promptly and accurately. For example, she independently manages the Critique and Evaluation Process for Academic Affairs, handling complex scheduling conflicts, communicating timelines, and ensuring the campus community stays informed. She also provides crucial support for multiple campus-wide committees and task forces, including Title III, FirstYear Convocation, Honors Convocation, and Commencement. Her ability to prepare agendas, take meeting minutes, and handle communications in a timely manner ensures that the work of these groups is organized and efficient. Her ability to use technology creatively has enhanced Academic Affairs' digital infrastructure, making information easier to access and share.

Ms. Delmont's customer service is outstanding, particularly in high-pressure situations. She handles difficult calls related to the dismissal and appeals process with empathy, diffusing tense situations and providing clear, thoughtful guidance. During peak times, she manages a high volume of inquiries, ensuring that faculty, staff, and students receive the support they need. She processes a variety of personnel actions and keeps up to date with changing rules and procedures. Her proactive communication with other administrative assistants and her attention to detail ensure that personnel transactions are handled smoothly and accurately. With a strong work ethic, Ms. Delmont has proven herself an invaluable asset. Her ability to balance multiple responsibilities with grace and efficiency is a testament to her professionalism and commitment to supporting the success of the university.

Nominator: Amitra A. Wall, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**BUFFALO STATE FACULTY AND STAFF
INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, AND STATE
AWARDS AND HONORS**

Tiffany L. Bromfield

Associate Director of Residence Life and Inclusion,
Residence Life Office

Best Presentation Award, 70th Annual Northeast
Association of College and University Housing
Officers Conference

Lyubov E. Burlakova, Ph.D.

Senior Research Scientist, Great Lakes Center

Alexander Y. Karatayev, Ph.D.

Senior Research Scientist, Great Lakes Center

Chandler-Misener Award for Outstanding Article,
National Atmospheric and Oceanographic
Administration

Jessica M. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.

Chair and Associate Professor, Social Work

SUNY Online Teaching Ambassador

Robin Lazzara

Program Manager, Post Production Diversity Initiative

2025 Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, New York
Small Business Development Center

Deborah A. Silverman, Ph.D.

Chair and Associate Professor, Communication

Silver Excalibur Award for Published Article (Book),
Public Relations Society of America Buffalo Niagara
Chapter

Gary S. Solar, Ph.D.

Chair and Professor, Geosciences

Society Fellow, Geological Society of America

Kevin K. Williams, Ph.D.

Professor, Geosciences

Service Award, Western Division of the Science
Teachers Association of New York State

*Awards listed were announced or awarded
September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025.*

FACULTY AND STAFF GRANTS

Andrew D. Binder, M.S.

Director of Operations, Performing Arts Center

Grant to Support PAC Great Performers Series, Cullen Foundation (\$30,000 total over two years)

Dorothea Braemer, M.E.A.

Associate Professor, Communication

Post Production Diversity Initiative, New York State Entertainment Workforce Diversity Grant (\$217,000)

Kathy R. Doody, Ph.D.

Professor, Exceptional Education

Grant Renewal of Applied Behavior Analysis Graduate Program Scholarships, Children's Guild Foundation (\$210,000)

Kristin E. Fields, M.S.

Associate Vice President of Extended Learning, Continuing Professional Studies

Grant to Support High School Through Continuing Education, Stenclik Family Foundation (\$75,000 total over three years)

Keli A. Garas-York, Ph.D.

Professor, Elementary Education, Literacy and Educational Leadership

Wendy A. Paterson, Ph.D.

Interim Dean, School of Education and Applied Professions

Path Forward Grant Bringing the Science of Reading into Educator Preparation Programs to Transform Literacy Outcomes in New York State, New York State Education Department (\$100,000)

Gang Hu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Computer Information Systems

Maryam Nasri, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Engineering Technology

Johnathan R. Rosten, B.S.EE.

Instructional Support Technician, Engineering Technology

2025–2026 SUNY Innovative Instruction Technology Grant for “AI-Driven Robotics for Solar Energy Maintenance: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Education and Sustainability” (\$30,000)

Gavin M. Leighton, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Biology

SUNY Research Seed Grant (\$25,995)

Susan A. McCartney, Ph.D.

Director, Small Business Development Center

Bank of America Foundation Grant to Support Bengal Entrepreneurship Program (\$25,000)

Community Foundation/Center for Regional Strategies (\$295,000)

New York State Legislature (\$191,000)

U.S. Small Business Administration (\$176,000)

Gliset C. Morales, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Exceptional Education

Clinically-Rich Intensive Teacher Institute in Bilingual Education, New York State Education Department [\$700,000 total (\$140,000 for five years)]

Christina C. Mulé, M.A.

Clinical Supervisor, Speech-Language Hearing Clinic

Dona A. Senthinathan, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Speech-Language Pathology

2025 SPEAK OUT! Clinical Education Grant, Parkinson Voice Project (\$38,000)

Gerard J. Puccio, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor, Creativity and Change
Leadership

William D. Yates, Ed.D.

Lecturer, Creativity and Change Leadership

SUNY Academic Innovation Grant for “AI-Enhanced
Creative Problem-Solving Tools for Higher Education
and the Workforce” (\$49,266)

Natalie A. Szymanski, Ph.D.

Director, Writing Program

2025–2026 SUNY Comprehensive Academic
Innovation IITG/OER Impact Grant (\$55,000)

Rebecca Tate, M.S.Ed.

Lecturer, Hospitality and Tourism

Grant for Hospitality and Tourism Scholarships, Statler
Foundation (\$45,000)

David C. Wilson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Mathematics

Rising Stars Math Camp, Erie County (\$125,000)

*Grants listed were announced or awarded
September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025.*

NEW FACULTY AND LIBRARIANS

Kristy L. Blask, M.S.Ed.

Lecturer, Exceptional Education

Evan E. Drummond, M.M.

Lecturer, Music

Jaclyn M. Ellis, M.S.

Lecturer, Art and Design

NEW STAFF

Tyler H. Billings, A.A.S.

Systems Analyst, Information Technology Exchange Center

Candida L. Davis, B.S.

Success Navigator, Enrollment Management Office

Krzysztof W. Dembinski, B.A.

Associate Director, Financial Aid Office

Janice Dillman

Office Assistant 1, Weigel Wellness Center

Reanne Dressler, B.S.

Assistant Athletic Trainer, Intercollegiate Athletics

Scott Foster, B.S.

Head Coach, Intercollegiate Athletics

Jhada D. Hutchinson

Success Navigator, Enrollment Management Office

Jamie L. Kazmierczak

Payroll Examiner 1, Human Resource Management Office

Kevin M. Lane, B.S.

Campus IT Services, Director of Information Services, Information Technology Exchange Center

Samir A. Lokhat, B.A.

Investigator and Compliance Assistant, Equity and Diversity Office

Jennifer L. McNamara, B.S.

Benefits Associate, Human Resource Management Office

Grace K. O’Leary

Content Accessibility Support Specialist, Student Accessibility Services

Dominique C. Parke, M.S.

Complex Director, Residence Life Office

Justin J. Parker, B.S.

Network Administrator, Information Technology Exchange Center

Martha Price, M.S.

ACE Academic Advisor, Enrollment Management Office

Jonathan M. Rhea, B.A.

Campus Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Exchange Center

Daniel N. Saldana, A.A.S.

System Administrator, Information Technology Exchange Center

Wayne A. Spary, M.B.A.

Interim Assistant Vice President for Facilities and
Maintenance, Finance and Management

Marcus Steel, M.B.A.

Complex Director, Residence Life Office

Kelis T. Swain, M.A.

Academic Advisor, Student Success and Retention

Steven R. Swiatek, B.A.

Assistant to the Chief Diversity Officer, Equity and
Diversity Office

Benjamin Z. Szczygiel, M.A.

Instructional Support Technician, Great Lakes Center

Roman Vinnichuk

Director of Technology Services, Information
Technology Exchange Center

Ted R. Zaoutis, A.S.

Computer Programmer, Information Technology
Exchange Center

*Initial hire September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025,
and not listed previously.*



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