

12th Annual Provost Awards for Excellence in Public Engagement



The 12th Annual Provost Awards for Excellence in Public Engagement was celebrated on Tuesday, November 14th in the Great Hall at the Alumni Center, UConn Storrs Campus. Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Jeremy Teitelbaum and Director of Public Engagement Carol Polifroni hosted the reception and ceremony. Kevin Dieckhaus, M.D. Chief of Infectious Diseases Division at UConn Health and the Director of Global Health and International Studies at UConn's School of Medicine served as Master of Ceremonies.

Since 2006, the Provost's Awards for Excellence have honored faculty, staff, students, alumni, programs and teams that engage the public to address critical societal issues. The criteria for all of the awards include sustained leadership in working with the public and/or with external organizations; innovative ways of working for the well-being of citizens and communities; documented excellence in extending University knowledge; and demonstrated intellectual, professional and/or career growth because of the experience.

Each of the awardees has contributed to strengthening the scholarship of the engagement mission of UConn. These award recipients have demonstrated the spirit and ideals of UConn's Office of Public Engagement's goal to develop scholarship, programs and partnerships that are Relevant, Reciprocal and Responsible.

Emily Keller

ADVANCED DEGREE STUDENT



Emily Keller, an advanced degree student in the School of Dental Medicine, personifies the "UConn Engaged" mission. She has made fundamentally important contributions to advance oral health and the quality of life in local and global communities through her various activities in service, engagement, research, and education.

Emily is an Urban Health Scholar in the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Urban Service Track program. Participants in this program represent a select group of students enrolled in the University of Connecticut Schools of Dental Medicine, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work and Quinnipiac University's Physician Assistant program. The Urban Service Track program is a nationally recognized service-teaching model designed to produce a cadre of well-qualified health care professionals committed to serving Connecticut's urban underserved populations. Emily has been engaged in the training and activities of the Urban Scholars throughout Connecticut from day 1 of dental school.

Quite remarkably, in the midst of being a student fully entrenched in the curriculum of the School of Dental Medicine and as an Urban Health Scholar, she has successfully maintained her role as the Co-Director of Cosechando Felicidad Inc. - Harvesting Happiness 501c3 nonprofit organization. Located in Santa María de Jesús, Guatemala, Emily and her friend Brennan McMillen founded the organization 2014. She has been able to dedicate the time needed to continue to run this program and fundraise while in dental school. The organization has grown from serving a few elderly 3 meals a day, to providing more than 27,000 meals for the elderly in 2016 alone. They continue to expand their feeding program, but now have added many other programs to serve the community including medical assistance, grocery aid for families in need and for single mothers, formula assistance, scholarships for volunteers, and 2 full-time employees. These programs served over 2,000 people in 2016.

Over the past summer, Emily took a major step forward at the intersection of her studies at the University and her nonprofit organization. She designed a research project to evaluate the oral health of young adults in Santa Maria de Jesus, Sacatepequez, Guatemala; the community that is home to her nonprofit organization. With Dr. Dieckhaus as her mentor, Emily executed an observational cross sectional study where 150 young people, ages 18-28, completed the WHO oral health questionnaire. To follow up on the summer research project, Emily plans to bring her findings to local nonprofits and the town mayor of Santa Maria de Jesus to begin planning to apply the knowledge gained to improve the oral health status of the community. Thus, her scholarly work is likely to be the beginning of positive change for good. In addition, Emily has been working with the School of Dental Medicine faculty to include the community that she knows so well into the existing dental service trip for third year students to Guatemala. Emily's data showing the general oral health status and risk of this village community will guide UConn students and dentists in how best to approach the treatment of the population residing in this Guatemalan village.

Jenna Stone

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT



Jenna Stone serves as a Coordinator for the Jumpstart CoP within Community Outreach. Prior to holding the position as Coordinator, she was the Jumpstart Volunteer Coordinator (2016-2017) and as a Jumpstart Team Leader (2015-2016).

Each of these roles is considered a student leadership position within Community Outreach. During her freshman year, she served as a Corps member with Jumpstart. She has consistently proven herself to be a competent, dedicated, and compassionate student and future teacher.

Jumpstart is an early childhood education program that partners college students with local preschoolers for a supplemental language and literacy program. The program is immersive and oftentimes demanding, given the time requirement for student volunteers (300 hours over the course of the academic year). It demands organization, determination and a positive mindset. The role can be challenging and occasionally stressful, though overall rewarding. If one were only to observe Jenna, however, you might only see the reward. Jenna has served approximately 10-12 hours per week with Jumpstart since her freshman year. In the 2015-2016 year, Jenna completed two full terms of service with the program, serving over 600 hours from September 2015 - June 2016. In the 2016-2017, Jenna was able to spearhead a book drive in collaboration with local schools in which Jumpstart received over 500 unique book donations. Jenna was not asked to do this -- she saw an opportunity and responded to a need. Through her efforts, Jenna has helped to build strong relationships in the community and improve the quality of not only the Jumpstart UConn program, but the classrooms with which the program partners with.

Jenna has maintained her poise as a leader even when situations proved more complicated than intended. She was patient with the children in her classroom and the members of her team as a Team Leader and showed exceptional forethought and creativity as a volunteer coordinator and a Community Outreach coordinator. Jenna exudes professionalism that exceeds many of her peers.



Jessica Rubin

FACULTY MEMBER OTHER THEN TENURE TRACK



Professor Jessica Rubin, Director of UConn Law School's Legal Practice Program, has provided profound service to the University's local and global communities through her energy, her initiative, and her ability to cross disciplinary and cultural boundaries. Three areas of her accomplishments in particular include: her leadership of a multi-disciplinary and

multi-national business negotiation project; her cross-cultural teaching of attorneys in and from other nations; and her role in establishing a new Connecticut law and court processes around advocacy in animal cruelty cases, recognizing the often unseen role that animal cruelty plays in undiagnosed mental illness and domestic abuse.

Recognizing the need for stronger negotiation skills among lawyers and business leaders in negotiation, Jessica created a Negotiation and Dispute Resolution Society for students, which in its first year sent UConn Law teams to three national competitions. She then organized and hosted two competitions with 150 participants from the U.S. and Canada. She then conceived, created and now hosts the Annual UConn Business Law Negotiation Competition, joining law students and business students to work together to negotiate business deals. There is no comparable business/law negotiation competition in the United States; therefore, Jessica plans to open the competition to the national market.

Jessica's engagement also reaches the international community. She has taught in Turkey with human rights activists from Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia under the auspices of George Soros' Open Society Foundation. Here at UConn, Jessica works with our international graduate students, engaging and building their connections with the University. She was instrumental in teaching a group of 12 Turkish judges that attended UConn Law's graduate program 4 years ago. Last summer, when 11 of them were imprisoned by the Turkish government, she advocated for them. She researched the conditions relating to their arrests and imprisonment, and that information was used to develop the University's position and its briefing of our federal officials.

Jessica's third major area of engagement relates to animal advocacy. Several years ago legislative and community leaders sought Jessica's assistance addressing Connecticut's history of failing to aggressively prosecute and sentence defendants accused of committing animal cruelty. This longstanding problem was returning offenders to communities, often without any records of their offenses, leaving them at risk for repeating violent behavior towards animals and/or escalating violence to reach human victims. While many prosecutors and judges have wanted to handle these cases aggressively, they struggled under resource and training constraints. Jessica worked tirelessly over several years with state legislators, judges, prosecutors and advocates to create a Connecticut law, Public Act 16-30, which enables judges to appoint law students to advocate in cases of animal cruelty.

Jessica has led the training of state officials to work with the new law, including educational sessions for law enforcement personnel and prosecutors, to improve investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty cases. She has further built an animal advocacy program at UConn Law School by which students appear in court to represent the interests of justice, and the public benefits from students through vigorous prosecution which, in turn, makes communities safer. She has also partnered with the UConn School of Social Work and the State's Attorney's Office to develop a program to diagnose and treat cruelty offenders.



Kenneth Noll

TENURE TRACK FACULTY

Dr. Kenneth Noll is a professor and microbiologist in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology. He has strong records of research accomplishment and external funding and has demonstrated excellence in the classroom. He is able to use his research experience to gather both modern and historic aspects of his subject and presenting them in a comprehensible and engaging manner.

Dr. Noll has developed and offered numerous educational activities presented through the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, the Graduate School, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and his department, MCB. These activities have enriched the public's understandings of the natural world and science as well as showcased UConn's research, scholarship, and teaching. Some of the activities have included: Wild Microscopic World in Your Backyard, Kitchen Germ Safari, The Artificial Termite Gut: A Hi-Tech Exploration of Microbes and Biofuels, Life in The Deep Sea as Seen from Alvin, and UConn's Kids Are Scientists & Engineers Too (K.A.S.E.T.) program.

Dr. Noll is creating new courses to help graduate students develop better communication skills. Now focusing on students in science and engineering, he is branching out to other fields since effective communication with people outside one's field is essential for all disciplines. He has worked for many years with the Graduate School's Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition providing training in distilling a thesis topic to a concise, clear and interesting message. He uses his experience with storytelling to demonstrate how to connect with listeners. Drawing on his 3MT activities and personal experience in improvisational theater, he is working with the Graduate School to develop a broad graduate student professional development program in communication.

Dr. Noll's outreach efforts extend beyond the University. For 10 years he was an instructor and organizing committee planner for the ASM's Kadner Institute, a 5-day intensive professional development program held each summer for advanced graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. The Institute taught participants about employment options and helped them develop professional skills for their careers. The interactions between the Institute faculty and participants were beyond those that typically take place in a graduate program. Faculty members conveyed the human side of their professions along with descriptions of their daily activities.

Collaborating with the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, Dr. Noll has recently developed outreach programs at schools and community events portraying Charles Darwin. He has developed the character of Mr. Darwin to portray the scientific aspects of his work and, importantly, the humanity of the man. He uses storytelling to better connect audiences with Mr. Darwin and to make the topics memorable. In this interpretive presentation, Dr. Noll portrays Charles Darwin sharing his life story on topics that include Darwin's voyage on the HMS Beagle, the importance of his family, his experience in school, and the role religion played in his life.

Dr. Noll is the creator, author and layout artist of the MCB departmental publications MCB News and Expression. These publications highlight the research, teaching and professional training activities of MCB for public audiences. Through interviews of faculty and students and background research, he brings these technical subjects to his audience in comprehensible terms and in a manner that engages their interest.

Patricia Bellamny

FULL TIME STAFF



Patricia Bellamny has worked in the Department of Educational Leadership, in the Neag School of Education, as a full-time staff member with Husky Sport for more than 4 years.

She is an unquestioned, dedicated, caring, and talented leader within Husky Sport's campus-community partnership. Serving as an Assistant Director for

Programs and Partnerships, Patricia leads in the facilitation of school time and out of school time collaborations within the North End Hartford. She works alongside students, families, teachers, staff, and partners to uplift voices and align interests, strengths, and needs to fit with the planning and delivery of all Husky Sport related efforts. Patricia integrates her many leadership skills as an innovator and advocate for diversity and justice through her everyday work to build consistent and positive relationships amongst the many stakeholders within Husky Sport's campus-community partnership.

Patricia is a leader in service-learning and professional development of UConn staff, students, and volunteers. She builds upon theory and scholarship to facilitate experiential learning and community engagement opportunities for UConn personnel while ensuring that the work of Husky Sport still centers community-based stakeholders' experiences and expertise and strengths.

Patricia brings a high level of courtesy, patience, passion, and drive that sets the tone for the hundreds of everyday participants living and working within the settings of Husky Sport. The scope of people in which she leads and supports, as well as programs and partners in which she facilitates, requires such a high level of professional skill, coordination, and cross-organizational alignment. Patricia excels in her full-time staff roles with Husky Sport, and has done so dating back to her time as a student-volunteer since 2009. Her story and her accomplishments are important and impactful, both at UConn and beyond the campus community.



Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Team



Leanne Pundt (greenhouse), Victoria Wallace (school, turf, and landscape), Candace Bartholomew (pesticide safety education), Donna Ellis (IPM Program Coordinator, Invasive Species, Curriculum, Nursery, and School IPM), Jude Boucher (vegetable), Mary Concklin (fruit), Joan Allen (plant diagnostic laboratory) and Ana Legrand (invasive species, turf and landscape). Alejandro Chiriboga (nursery).

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) applies multiple tactics in a variety of settings through the selection of appropriate tools and the education of members of the agricultural industry and Connecticut citizens to provide sustainable, science-based approaches for the management of plant pests (insects, mites, diseases, wildlife, and weeds, including invasive plants). The UConn IPM Program incorporates all possible pest management strategies through knowledgeable decision making, utilizing the most efficient landscape and on-farm resources, and integrating cultural and biological controls. Program objectives include maintaining the economic viability of agricultural and green industry businesses, enhancing and conserving environmental quality and natural resources, educating participants on the effective use of biological control agents, and educating pesticide users about the safe use and handling of pesticide products.

The goal of IPM is to reduce the dependence of agricultural producers and green industry professionals, Connecticut citizens, and schools on pesticides while maintaining or improving productivity, crop quality, and quality of life. Since its inception in 1980, the Connecticut IPM Program has made great strides in developing and implementing more sustainable methods for pest control throughout Connecticut. The IPM Program has educated growers statewide about the judicious use of pesticides and alternative pest control methods.

IPM Program team members conduct intensive on-site educational training for fruit and vegetable producers, garden center owners, greenhouse growers, nursery producers and retailers, and turf and landscape professionals. Growers and green industry professionals receive information on the current status of and recommendations for important plant pests and training via pest messages, email alerts, webinars, newsletters, articles in national trade journals, management guides, websites, social media, consultations and counseling via phone, site visits to their operations, workshops, conferences, exhibits, and short courses. IPM programs are evaluated through pre- and/or post-program surveys and evaluations, needs assessment surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, testimonials, and unsolicited comments.

Broader adoption of IPM practices enhances responsible pest management and reduced management and production costs; minimizes adverse environmental and economic effects from pests; results in improved ecosystem quality and plant performance; and improves plant health, quality, yields, and aesthetics. The use of IPM includes cultural controls, biological control agents, biological fungicides, physical and mechanical controls, chemical controls, the use of resistant cultivars, regulatory controls, and behavioral modification. IPM partners and collaborators include State and Federal agricultural and environmental/non-governmental agencies and organizations; State, New England, and Northeastern fruit, greenhouse, grounds keepers, nursery, turf, landscape, and vegetable associations; industry suppliers/dealers; regional universities; educators; schools and municipalities; individual growers, farmers, and producers; Master Gardeners; and the general public.

The IPM program is a collaboration between UConn Extension and the Department of Plant Science & Landscape Architecture. The IPM program team also has support from the following Federal, State, and private funding sources: Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Connecticut School IPM Coalition, Grower donors and municipal and school grounds research participants throughout Connecticut, Multi-state Hatch Project NE-1032, National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN), New England Grows, New England Vegetable & Berry Growers' Association, Northeastern IPM Center (NEIPMC), Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), UConn, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM), Extension Implementation Program (EIP), Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program, , USDA Northeast Region IR-4 Program, USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Program, USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), and USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) Program.