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## UNO News April 28, 2016 University of Nebraska Names Teaching, Research and Engagement Awardees

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# University of Nebraska Names Teaching, Research and Engagement Awardees

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Bruce E. Johansen, Jacob J. Isaacson Professor of Communication and Native Languages at UNO



University of Nebraska President Hank Bounds today announced the 2016 winners of the university's most prestigious awards for teaching, research and engagement.

Three University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) faculty members were among the honorees.

The university-wide awards recognize faculty whose work has had a significant impact on students, the university and the state.

“Our talented faculty are some of the University of Nebraska’s greatest assets. Whenever I spend time in their classrooms, labs and fields, I walk away even more excited about what the university is doing to serve students, our state and the world,” Bounds said. “I’m privileged to honor the outstanding work of our faculty members and I thank them for all that they do. Nebraskans can take pride in the work that’s happening across our campuses.”

Awards will be presented during a luncheon this spring. Winners – who are selected by a committee of faculty members and, in the case of the engagement award, community members – receive \$10,000 each, a presidential medallion and an engraved plaque. The winners are:

## Teaching

**Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award (OTICA):** recognizes individual faculty members who have demonstrated meritorious and sustained records of excellence and creativity in teaching.

Neal Grandgenett, Ph.D., Dr. George and Sally Haddix Community Chair of STEM Education in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Grandgenett teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in data-driven decision making, interdisciplinary STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learning and research methods. His efforts at UNO have helped establish dual pathways for P-12 STEM teacher

certification that are collaborative across colleges, and his community efforts have engaged thousands of teachers and other campuses in efforts like learning with educational robotics and wearable technologies. A 27-year veteran of UNO, Grandgenett is a favorite among students, achieving a lifetime instructor average on student evaluations of 4.88 on a five-point scale. His research interests align closely with his teaching and focus on the investigation of technology-based learning in STEM education, a topic on which he has authored more than 130 articles and research papers. Grandgenett has been a principal investigator or co-principal investigator on nearly \$18 million in federal grants, and has been the investigator or co-investigator on 10 National Science Foundation grants, several of which have been shared with other NU campuses.

## Research

**Outstanding Research and Creative Activity (ORCA) Award:** recognizes individual faculty members for outstanding research or creative activity of national or international significance.

Surinder Batra, Ph.D., chair and professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and the Stokes-Shackelford Distinguished Professor in the College of Medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Together with colleagues at UNMC, Batra has helped make the medical center's pancreatic cancer research program one of the best of its kind. After completing graduate studies in biochemistry in India and France, Batra completed a fellowship in biochemistry at North Carolina State University. He went on to receive postdoctoral training at Duke University Medical Center. He previously served as senior associate dean of research and development in the College of Medicine and the Helen Freytag Professor of Cancer Biology at UNMC. Batra's current lab has cloned and patented mucin genes being investigated for the diagnosis and therapy of pancreatic cancer. In a series of papers, his lab has shown the diagnostic potential of the mucin gene MUC4 and implications in the progression and metastasis of pancreatic cancer. His research has been continuously funded by multiple and he has published more than 360 papers in high-impact journals and received several U.S. patents.

Bruce E. Johansen, Jacob J. Isaacson Professor of Communication and Native American Studies at the University of Nebraska at

Omaha. Johansen, who has been teaching and writing at UNO since 1982, has authored 44 published books. He writes frequently about environmental subjects, including Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Issues, a 200,000-word encyclopedia of indigenous peoples' struggles with corporations with a world-wide scope. Johansen's first academic specialty was the influence of Native American political systems on United States political and legal institutions; his best-known books in this area are *Forgotten Founders and Exemplar of Liberty* (with Donald A. Grinde, Jr.). He has described the present-day debate over this issue in *Debating Democracy and Native American Political Systems* and the *Evolution of Democracy: An Annotated Bibliography*. He also writes as journalist in several United States national forums, including the *Washington Post* and *The Progressive*. Johansen was co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of American Indian History*, a 4-volume set, as well as a 2-volume *Praeger Handbook of Contemporary Native American Issues*. He recently also wrote *The Global Warming Combat Manual: Serious Solutions for a Sustainable World*.

## Engagement

**Innovation, Development and Engagement Award (IDEA):** recognizes faculty members who have extended their academic expertise beyond the boundaries of the university in ways that have enriched the broader community.

Elliott Ostler, Ed.D., Paul Kennedy Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Ostler has spent more than two decades researching and applying the most effective non-traditional teaching techniques for students who struggle to learn mathematics and science content. During this time, his unique instructional approaches has attracted the attention of institutions such as NASA, JPL, Texas Instruments and The College Board, all of whom have invited him to consult on projects ranging from curriculum review to product design. The application of his own research led to the development of an innovative mathematics teaching tool, which earned a U.S. Patent and ultimately evolved into a successful business venture called the Initiative for Instructional Inventions and Solutions. Since formalizing this business commitment, he has distributed nearly 11,000 of his unique teaching instruments nationwide and trained more than 1,000 mathematics teachers in its use. Today he continues to pursue his vision of reinventing STEM instruction

through the development of innovative teaching tools.

Matt Waite, professor of practice in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Waite is founder of the Drone Journalism Lab, the first of its kind at a journalism school. Since he joined the faculty in 2011, Waite and his students have used drones to report news in six countries on three continents. He regularly speaks about the legal and ethical complexities of using drones at conferences around the world and is frequently consulted by media organizations about their potential. He also teaches courses in data journalism, web development and the intersection of storytelling and technology. He created an open learning lab for students called Maker Hours, helped develop an interdisciplinary minor in informatics and serves on the Publications Board of the Daily Nebraskan. Waite previously was a hybrid programmer/journalist for the St. Petersburg Times, where he developed PolitiFact, a website that fact checks what politicians say. The site became the first website awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2009. Before becoming a web developer, Waite was an award-winning investigative reporter.

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