



2026 OUTSTANDING STAFF AWARDS

CATEGORIES & DESCRIPTIONS

STAFF AWARD CATEGORIES

Outstanding Contribution to Student Success

An unwavering commitment to student success is at the core of Sacramento State's mission to support the academic, social, emotional, and ethical development of our students. University staff play a vital role in shaping effective learning environments and providing support services that empower students to thrive both inside and outside of the classroom.

This award recognizes a staff member who consistently goes above and beyond in their professional role, personal approach, and collaborative efforts to champion student progress, persistence, and achievement of academic and personal aspirations. The ideal recipient demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to student success in one or more of the following ways:

- Fostering a student-centric culture by developing innovative programs, policies, or practices that break down barriers and create an inclusive, supportive learning community.
- Providing exemplary mentorship, advising, or instruction that empowers students to overcome challenges, build self-efficacy, and reach their full potential.
- Cultivating meaningful connections with students through proactive outreach, advocacy, and direct support services that boost persistence and success.
- Promoting holistic student development by creating opportunities for growth in areas like social responsibility, cultural awareness, leadership, and career readiness.
- Strengthening students' sense of belonging and engagement at Sacramento State through efforts that help them feel welcomed, represented, and an integral part of the Hornet Family.

The Outstanding Contribution to Student Success award celebrates staff who embody Sac State's core value of putting students first. Through their inspirational dedication, these unsung heroes directly impact the lives of students and drive institutional success.

Outstanding Contribution to Teaching, Research, and/or Creative Activity

Teaching, research, scholarship, and creative exploration are core drivers of student success and productive partnerships that create positive societal impact. University staff play an instrumental role in ensuring Sacramento State's academic offerings remain innovative, relevant, and aligned with technological advances and evolving trends.

This award recognizes a staff member whose exceptional dedication and skills directly contribute to fostering a vibrant environment that prioritizes student learning, groundbreaking research, and robust creative activity. The recipient goes above and beyond in their job performance, personal approach, and collaborative efforts to enable Sac State's investment in research, scholarship, and creativity, which strengthens teaching, drives innovation, and powers economic development.

Honorees make remarkable contributions that advance teaching, research and/or creative pursuits in one or more of the following ways:

- Providing extraordinary support for professional development, training, or other programs that elevate teaching effectiveness, research capabilities, and creative outputs.
- Delivering exemplary operational support for the development and implementation of new academic programs that meet regional workforce needs and create exceptional learning experiences.
- Offering outstanding advocacy and resources to ensure instructional practices, research activities, and creative endeavors are equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all.
- Demonstrating exceptional collaboration, ingenuity, and initiative to support the growth and evolution of Sac State's graduate education enterprise.
- Providing indispensable guidance and assistance to faculty and staff in identifying, securing, and managing external funding for research projects, scholarship activities, and creative works.

The Outstanding Contribution to Teaching, Research, and Creative Activity award celebrates staff who power Sacramento State's mission by creating an environment where inspired teaching, transformative research, and innovative creative activities can flourish.

Outstanding Contribution to Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Sacramento State aspires to be an inclusive, just, and equitable community where everyone experiences a genuine sense of belonging. University staff play a vital role in fulfilling this vision and ensuring Sac State cultivates an environment of respect, representation, and shared responsibility for advancing JEDI principles.

This award honors a staff member who goes above and beyond their job duties to help the University strengthen its commitment to justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging on campus and throughout the greater Sacramento region. The recipient demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to JEDI through their exceptional work performance, personal approach, and collaborative leadership.

Honorees make exemplary contributions that tangibly promote justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or belonging in one or more of the following ways:

- Serving as an inspirational model by consistently centering JEDI principles in all aspects of their work and interactions through thoughtful attention, diplomacy, and people-first values.
- Exhibiting a deep understanding of how their JEDI efforts connect across the organization and propel Sacramento State's inclusive excellence mission.
- Championing outstanding initiatives that remove accessibility barriers and create a more equitable, welcoming environment for all.
- Taking impactful action that makes individuals feel genuinely valued, heard, accepted, and like they belong, whether through personalized support, bias interruption, policy changes, or community advocacy.

The Outstanding Contribution to JEDI award celebrates staff who put justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging into transformative practice every day. Through their inspirational dedication, these leaders uplift Sacramento State as an inclusive, anti-racist, and socially-just institution.

Outstanding Contribution to Campus Beautification and Sustainability

Sacramento State recognizes that a beautiful, sustainable campus environment is vital to our community's physical, mental, and collective well-being. This award honors staff members who have made exceptional efforts to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the University's grounds and facilities and/or champion environmental sustainability practices.

Recipients go above and beyond their normal job duties through exemplary work performance, personal commitment, and collaborative leadership to strengthen Sacramento State's commitment to campus beautification and sustainability. Honorees demonstrate an extraordinary dedication in one or more of the following ways:

- Conceiving or implementing innovative projects, programs, or initiatives that visibly elevate the aesthetic vibrancy of campus landscapes, buildings, quads, and common spaces.
- Spearheading impactful sustainability initiatives that measurably reduce the University's environmental footprint through energy/resource conservation, waste reduction, green transportation, or other eco-friendly solutions.
- Conducting educational outreach or developing policies/practices that promote environmental awareness and drive sustainable behavior change across the campus community.
- Fostering partnerships or identifying external resources that provide vital funding, volunteer support, or other means to expand campus beautification and sustainability efforts.

The Outstanding Contribution to Campus Beautification and Sustainability award celebrates staff members who uplift Sacramento State as a beautiful, eco-conscious institution. Through their inspirational work, these recipients create an enriching physical environment that instills community pride and prioritizes environmental stewardship for current and future generations.

Outstanding Contribution to Philanthropy and Resource Development

This award recognizes a staff member whose exceptional dedication enriches Sacramento State's philanthropic culture and sustainable resource development efforts. The recipient goes above and beyond to increase donations, identify funding sources, optimize operational efficiencies, and promote environmental sustainability, generating vital resources that combat inequities and expand opportunities for the campus community.

Honorees make exemplary contributions that tangibly advance the University's priorities in one or more of the following areas:

Philanthropic Culture

- Providing outstanding donor stewardship, participating in fundraising campaigns, or developing innovative fundraising strategies that inspire philanthropic support.
- Fostering relationships and partnerships that generate new streams of charitable giving to enhance student success initiatives, academic programs, capital projects, and other funding needs.

Resource Optimization

- Championing sustainability practices that reduce energy/resource consumption, minimize waste, and shrink Sacramento State's environmental footprint.
- Streamlining processes, systems, or space utilization to maximize operational efficiencies and ensure coordinated use of financial, physical, and human capital resources.

Inclusive Development

- Securing funding sources or implementing initiatives that directly combat structural inequities and create more equitable opportunities for underserved/underrepresented students.
- Spearheading efforts to evolve campus facilities, technologies, and support services to be more accessible, welcoming, and responsive to Sacramento State's diverse needs.
- Providing exemplary leadership development, mentorship, or policy reform to remove barriers and ensure equitable pathways for staff/faculty advancement.

The Outstanding Contribution to Philanthropy and Resource Development award celebrates staff who philanthropically fuel Sacramento State's ability to deliver a world-class educational experience. Through their commitment, these exceptional individuals generate sustainable resources that create an enriching, inclusive, and supportive environment.

Outstanding Contribution to Community Engagement

Sacramento State is deeply rooted in the regional community, cultivating reciprocal relationships that drive long-term collaborations and partnerships to address local needs and challenges. University staff play a crucial role in supporting and expanding the University's positive community impact.

This award honors a staff member who goes above and beyond to advance Sac State's engagement with the greater Sacramento region through exceptional job performance and collaborative leadership. The recipient demonstrates an extraordinary commitment that allows us to foster a "Beyond J Street" culture that prioritizes community connections.

Honorees make exemplary contributions that strengthen our community-engaged efforts in one or more of the following ways:

- Creating or promoting opportunities for Sacramento State to align its resources with community partners to confront systemic inequities, transform students' lives, and uplift local neighborhoods through purposeful, mutually-beneficial programming and initiatives.
- Championing partnerships, clearing administrative barriers, or providing vital support to enable the University's collaborative work with regional entities across its strategic anchor commitment areas like PreK-12 education, arts/culture, health/well-being, housing/homelessness, economic mobility/workforce development, and environmental sustainability.
- Facilitating opportunities for students, faculty and staff to directly engage with community-based experiential learning, applied research, service, internships or other enriching civic experiences that create shared value.

The Outstanding Community Engagement award celebrates staff who embody Sacramento State's role as an anchor institution through their inspired community-focused efforts. These ambassadors leverage the University's knowledge and resources to drive positive societal impact across the region.

Outstanding Contribution to Wellness and/or Safety Award

Sacramento State recognizes that the wellness of students, faculty, and staff is foundational to fulfilling our mission of preparing ethical leaders, engaged citizens, and career-ready graduates. University staff play a vital role in cultivating a safe, healthy, and supportive environment where the basic needs of the campus community are prioritized and addressed holistically.

This award honors a staff member who demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to promoting wellness across Sacramento State. The recipient goes above and beyond normal expectations through exceptional work performance, personal outreach, and collaborative leadership focused on overall well-being – including physical and mental

health, financial stability, food and housing security – and fostering a safe, inclusive climate.

Honorees make exemplary contributions that uplift campus wellness in one or more of the following ways:

- Developing or supporting the implementation of innovative wellness programs, services, or initiatives that showcase creativity and an understanding of diverse needs.
- Taking proactive steps to ensure access to basic needs like food, shelter, financial resources, and physical/psychological safety for students and employees.
- Providing outstanding leadership or support that promotes a campus culture centered on overall health, balance, and well-being across all aspects of the University experience.
- Facilitating meaningful opportunities for students, staff, faculty, and community members to directly engage in wellness education, activities, and resources.
- Serving as a consistently compassionate, knowledgeable, and effective source of wellness-focused guidance and care.

The Outstanding Contribution to Wellness award celebrates staff who work to ensure that Sacramento State is a beacon of holistic health and well-being. Through their inspirational commitment, they make all types of wellness a top priority and uplift the entire Hornet Family.

STAFF OR MPP AWARD CATEGORIES

The Patricia Holmes Outstanding Mentor Award

Named in honor of former staff member Patricia Holmes, whose legacy was defined by an unwavering commitment to mentorship, leadership, and advocacy, this award celebrates exceptional mentors at Sacramento State. These individuals dedicate themselves to nurturing the holistic growth of their mentees, echoing Patricia's profound and lasting impact on generations of Hornets.

Recipients of the Patricia Holmes Outstanding Mentor Award demonstrate a remarkable commitment to mentorship within the campus community in one or more of the following ways:

- Demonstrating exceptional ability to guide mentees with valuable advice, resources, and support that empowers them to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.
- Actively advocates for mentees' needs and interests, facilitating their access to academic and/or professional opportunities, and offering steadfast support in their personal development and well-being.

- Serving as inspirational role models through their actions, ethics, and commitment to excellence, inspiring mentees to pursue their goals with determination and integrity.
- Making significant contributions to fostering diversity and inclusion within the mentorship context, ensuring that all mentees, regardless of their background, feel valued, supported, and included.

The Patricia Holmes Outstanding Mentor Award celebrates those who uplift others through their selfless investment of time, wisdom, and spirit. Honoring Patricia's altruism, these exceptional individuals shape brighter futures by being a guiding light on their mentees' journeys of growth and achievement.

Behind the Scenes Champion Award

The Behind the Scenes Champion Award recognizes a staff member whose exceptional work often goes unnoticed because they operate diligently behind the scenes. The Behind the Scenes Champion is someone who consistently goes above and beyond their job duties, overcomes challenges, and makes vital contributions that allow the University to run smoothly and successfully.

The nominee is an unsung hero – a hardworking and dedicated individual who may not be in a high-profile role, but whose efforts are critical to supporting Sacramento State's mission. Though they may prefer to stay out of the limelight, their impact is pivotal and deserving of special recognition. The nominee shines in one or more of the following areas:

- Operating with humility, diligence, and perseverance day in and day out.
- Demonstrating an outstanding commitment to service, great pride in their work, and an incredible work ethic.
- Proactively identifying areas for improvement while also working to identify creative solutions.
- Bringing a positive and collaborative attitude to building strong working relationships across divisions, departments, and units to get things done effectively.
- Providing crucial operational and logistical support that empowers students, faculty, staff, and/or administrators and the broader campus community to achieve their goals.

The Behind the Scenes Champion award celebrates staff who allow Sacramento State to shine through their inspirational commitment.

*** MPP AWARD CATEGORIES ***

MPP MVP Award

The MPP MVP Award recognizes managers who inspire others to work collaboratively and creatively, promoting a positive work environment that is respectful, collegial, and supportive.

Nominees for the MPP MVP Award have a proven track record of collaborating with faculty, staff, and/or students to drive positive change; productively and creatively solving problems; leading with compassion, courage, and enthusiasm; and providing visionary leadership that inspires growth in individuals and at the University. Nominees for this award demonstrate the following qualities:

- Fostering an atmosphere of collaboration within and across divisions.
- Demonstrating leadership by effectively managing staff with compassion, courage, and enthusiasm.
- Leading change and identifying areas for improvement with creative problem-solving, resilience, respect, and self-awareness.
- Inspiring and motivating others to pursue opportunities that enhance their professional or personal growth.
- Empowering others to go above and beyond in support of the University's mission.

To be chosen by selection committee out of all nominations (staff, MPP eligible)

Jody Nelsen MVP Award (comes with a \$1,000 monetary bonus)

We all know that one person who everyone turns to when they need a quick answer, have to find a solution to a rising challenge and/or to make the University shine. The person who demonstrates excellence and consistently goes above and beyond their call of duty.

The Selection Committee will choose one Outstanding Staff Awards nominee from all of the award categories to be given the Jody Nelsen Staff MVP Award.

The MVP promotes the campus strategic imperatives and can be described as:

- Reliable
- Consistent
- Knowledgeable
- Always willing to take on something extra
- Supportive of their peers
- Making sound decisions on behalf of our students
- Taking pride in their work
- Soliciting feedback and always looking for ways to improve
- A model for other employees