

Exceptional staff earn inaugural award

Chris Skiba, facilities manager for the [School of Earth and Space Exploration](#), has a reputation for being an “ace in the hole.” Cathy Davis, an administrative secretary in the [School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning](#), has impacted an estimated 450,000 Arizona school children. And, Norma Villa, executive assistant in the new [School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies](#), relied on humor and systems expertise to assure a smooth transition of staff in the new school.



Cathy Davis (left), Norma Villa and Chris Skiba received exemplar employee awards from ASU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. (Photo by Tom Story) [Download image](#)

Each of these exceptional ASU employees who work in the [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#) are inaugural recipients of the college's Exemplar Employee Award. Their good works were celebrated Feb. 3 during a breakfast hosted by the deans.

Also in attendance were several recipients of a C.L.A.S. Award – a peer-to-peer recognition program initiated last semester. More than 50 of the college's 600 classified and professional staff received a C.L.A.S. Award, and more than 30 employees were nominated – by faculty and colleagues – for the Exemplar Employee Award.

“We've been so impressed with the college staff,” said Quentin Wheeler, ASU vice president and dean of the college. “Everyone has stepped up. We can't thank our staff enough for keeping the college running so well.”

Also attending the ceremony were Linda Lederman, dean of social sciences; Sid Bacon, dean of natural sciences; and Deborah Losse, dean of humanities.

Skiba, Davis and Villa were selected from the nominees for their high level of dedication and professionalism in their day-to-day work. They distinguished themselves with specific acts that made them stand out as exemplars of excellence in the college, Wheeler noted.

At the breakfast, Professor Kelin Whipple represented nearly two dozen faculty and research professors in the School of Earth and Space Exploration who nominated Skiba for the honor.

“Chris Skiba has a deep and wide-ranging understanding of facilities-related issues and has the personal creativity (including at least one patent) to understand what it takes to empower faculty to do their best work,” Whipple noted.

“Chris is our ace in the hole. He's the guy who lets us attract the best faculty members, once they see the facilities we have. He's pushed us to get modern-age facilities and office spaces,” Whipple said at the award presentation.

“Chris is the guy who understands what scientists need to set up for work,” Whipple added, crediting Skiba for helping set up a number of research facilities on ASU's Tempe campus, including the Mars Space Flight Facility, W.M. Keck Bioimaging Laboratory, and the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera Science Operations Center.

Professor Ronald Dorn in the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning did the math before the ceremony to calculate how many Arizona school children Davis has helped in her role with the Arizona Geographic Alliance.

“More than 450,000 kids in Arizona have been touch by the efforts of Cathy,” said Dorn. The alliance is an organization of more than 3,000 members and more than 100 master teachers who coordinate geography education in Arizona for the K-12 community.

“Cathy Davis runs the workshops (GeoFest and GeoDaytrip conferences),” Dorn said, explaining the workshops are designed to reach out to K-12 teachers, helping them directly, and helping them train their colleagues to teach geography in the schools.

“She does this out of her love for helping teachers promote geographic education,” Dorn noted.

Associate Professor Joel Gereboff, representing several faculty members in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, spoke of Villa's leadership role in the transition of staff from three academic units who came together in the new transformative school.

"Starting last spring, we began talking about how our faculty and staff from the different units would work together in the new school. We knew this was critical and Norma took a lead role in the transition of staff," Gereboff said.

According to those who nominated Villa for the award, "her expertise and good nature in dealing with this complicated new situation (was) essential for establishing this new school."

Dean Losse cited Villa's ability to work with grace under difficult situations as "Norma's fantastic quality."

During the celebration, Wheeler also credited members of the College Connection Committee for creating and implementing this new employee recognition program. Committee members include: Kathleen Given, Melissa Yubeta, Sara Lyness and Gabriel Escontrias. Additional information is on the college's intranet or at 480-965-3391.

Carol Hughes, carol.hughes@asu.edu
480-965-6375
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences