



# 2018

ALLIANT ENERGY  
FOUNDATION AWARD  
CEREMONY

**Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr.**  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Alliant Energy/Underkofler**  
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

*Friday, October 26, 2018*  
*Pyle Center, AT&T Lounge, 2 - 4 p.m.*  
*702 Langdon St, Madison, Wisconsin*



# Program Highlights

Ceremony will be held from 2 – 4 p.m.

Award presentation commences at 2:30 p.m.

## **WELCOME**

Ray Cross, President, UW System

## **REMARKS**

Karen Schmitt, Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs,  
UW System

## **ALLIANT ENERGY/ERROLL B. DAVIS, JR. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD PRESENTATION**

### AWARD HISTORY

Robert Durian, Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, Alliant Energy

### AWARD PRESENTATION WITH REMARKS BY RECIPIENTS

Karen Schmitt, Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs,  
UW System

### STUDENT RECIPIENTS

Alli Abolarin, Senior, College of Engineering, UW-Madison

Kolbi Lackey, Senior, Mechanical Engineering, UW-Platteville

Coty Weathersby, Senior, College of Engineering, UW-Madison

Jonathan Yancy, Senior, College of Business, Industry, Life Science and  
Agriculture, UW-Platteville

## **ALLIANT ENERGY/UNDERKOFER EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD PRESENTATION**

### AWARD HISTORY

Robert Durian, Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, Alliant Energy

### AWARD PRESENTATION WITH REMARKS BY RECIPIENTS

Karen Schmitt, Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs,  
UW System

### FACULTY RECIPIENTS

Dr. Paul Hooker, Senior Lecturer, Chemistry, UW-Madison

Dr. Valerie Murrenus Pilmaier, Associate Professor of English, UW-Green Bay,  
Sheboygan Campus

Dr. Muthu Venkateshwaran, Assistant Professor of Crop Physiology and  
Molecular Biology, School of Agriculture, UW-Platteville

## **ALLIANT ENERGY/ERROLL B. DAVIS, JR. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

In 2006, the Alliant Energy Foundation established an endowed fund, the Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr. Academic Achievement Award. This award annually honors outstanding scholarship and community service of undergraduate students from traditionally underrepresented minority groups pursuing a degree in Business or Engineering at UW-Madison and UW-Platteville. The award is presented annually to up to four students who are nominated by their home institutions during the fall of their final year. The students receive the award upon graduation.

Alliant Energy established the award to recognize and honor Erroll B. Davis, Jr., former CEO of the Alliant Corporation. Mr. Davis was the first African American to head a "Business Week 1000" company. He was also named one of the "50 Most Powerful Black Executives in America" by Fortune magazine in 2002.

From 1987 to 1994, Mr. Davis served as a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Wisconsin System.

## **ALLIANT ENERGY/UNDERKOFLE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD**

In 1990, the Wisconsin Power and Light Foundation (Alliant Energy's Wisconsin Utility) established an endowed fund, the Alliant Energy/Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Award. This award honors outstanding faculty and academic staff whose dedication to teaching and ability to inspire students exemplify the best values of the University of Wisconsin (UW) System. The award is presented annually to up to four recipients who teach at UW System institutions within the company's service area. Candidates are nominated by their home institutions.

This award was established to recognize and honor James R. Underkofler (1923–2015), who served Wisconsin Power and Light for more than 48 years, retiring as CEO and Chairman of the Board in 1990.

Mr. Underkofler was a staunch supporter of teaching excellence and believed in the importance of connecting public and private educational systems to enhance learning and motivate young minds. The Underkofler Award reflects Alliant Energy's strong historical dedication to education and supports UW System's longstanding commitment to excellence in teaching and providing high-quality education to people from throughout Wisconsin and the world.

**2018**

Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr.  
Academic Achievement Award



RECIPIENT BIOGRAPHIES



## ALLI ABOLARIN

Alli Abolarin is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Engineering at UW-Madison. He plans to graduate in May 2019 with a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering and a certificate in international engineering.

His fascination with the field of medicine began when he was growing up in Nigeria, where he witnessed the impact medicine can have on the quality of life in a developing country. His undergraduate research investigates neurodegenerative disorders, including Alzheimer's disease. In summer 2017, Alli participated in the nine-week Amgen Scholars Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he helped optimize the lab's drug delivery system to treat bone defects.

Alli volunteers as a Leaders in Engineering Excellence and Diversity (LEED) Scholar to help recruit and retain underrepresented students in the field of engineering. He also volunteers for UW-Madison's Admitted Students Preview Day, Engineering EXPO Week, and the National Society of Black Engineers Pre-Collegiate Initiative. Alli, who studied abroad in Denmark, was selected as a Scan|Design Foundation Fellow to promote Danish-American relations. He speaks on student panels to promote study abroad experiences and is currently studying abroad in Singapore.

Alli's goal is to earn his PhD in chemical and biological engineering and work in the pharmaceutical industry, focusing on drug discovery and development to treat prominent diseases in both developed and developing countries.



## KOLBI LACKEY

Kolbi Lackey is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Engineering, Mathematics and Science at UW-Platteville. She plans to graduate in May 2019 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Kolbi has two demanding positions on campus as a research assistant and student draftsman. As part of a team studying a wind tunnel on campus, she contributes research on fluid dynamics and coupled oscillators. She is a member of the Campus Planning and Facilities Management team for UW-Platteville, including the Baraboo and Richland branch campuses. She scans original architectural hand drawings and then uses the drafting software program AutoCAD to update building floorplans.

An avid rock climber, Kolbi was the manager of the local rock climbing wall in high school, as well as a team leader for other employees who worked there. She regularly attended seminars and trainings about safety techniques, emergency rescue situations, and new equipment and gear, passing along this information to her students who looked to her for advice and training. When she was a college sophomore, she was accepted into the United States Marine Corps Officer Candidates School, which evaluates potential candidates for leading U.S. Marines. She took part in the local office's training before shipping out to Quantico, Virginia, for the summer.

Kolbi grew up in a military family and wishes to pursue a master's degree in aerospace engineering. She would like to design, re-engineer, and improve aircraft in all sectors, including private, commercial, and military.



## COTY WEATHERSBY

Coty Weathersby is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Engineering at UW-Madison. She plans to graduate in May 2019 with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering.

As a high school student, Coty participated in UW-Madison's Engineering Summer Program, an experience that introduced her to waste water treatment research. After joining UW-Madison's Leaders in Engineering Excellence and Diversity (LEED) Scholars program, she led an outreach visit to her alma mater, Rufus King High School, where she and fellow students spoke to more than 200 high schoolers about engineering opportunities.

A founding member of the Wisconsin chapter of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers, she coordinates outreach days through the Madison-area Boys and Girls Club. As academic excellence chair of the Wisconsin chapter for the National Society of Black Engineers, she organizes biweekly group study sessions where members have access to skilled tutors and space to collaborate on engineering problems. She helps members succeed professionally by working with her local chapter to organize seminars and workshops on writing résumés and interviewing.

Coty aspires to use her chemical engineering degree to work in potable water reuse, with a focus on water quality issues that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. She would like to help prevent water crises like the one that occurred in Flint, Michigan, and the Cryptosporidium outbreak in her hometown of Milwaukee.





## JONATHAN YANCY

Jonathan Yancy is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Business, Industry, Life Science and Agriculture at UW-Platteville. He plans to graduate in December 2018 with a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance/management.

Jonathan earned his associate degree from UW-Richland in spring 2017. He volunteered there for two years as a residential advisor, assisting incoming freshmen transition to college life, and as a campus ambassador, giving campus tours to prospective students and discussing potential majors.

Jonathan is a member of UW-Platteville's DRIVEN Scholars Program, which uses a comprehensive advising model for academic progress and degree completion. As an active leader on and off campus, Jonathan volunteers for UW-Platteville's Multicultural Office, the Dubuque Black Men Coalition, where he spoke with high school students about his college experiences for the 2018 Manhood Project, and Deere & Co., which invited a dozen disadvantaged children to campus to learn about career opportunities and the benefits of a college education. He seeks to be an advocate and positive role model for minority youth.

Jonathan has worked as an assistant manager for Abercrombie & Fitch at the Mall of America in Minnesota and as a summer intern at Target Corporation in Dubuque, Iowa. He aspires to be a district manager for a retail company.

**2018**

Alliant Energy/Underkofler  
Excellence in Teaching Award



RECIPIENT BIOGRAPHIES



## PAUL HOOKER

Dr. Paul Hooker joined UW-Madison as a senior lecturer in chemistry in 2014. Previously, he was a professor and science division chair at Westminster College in Utah. He earned his PhD in inorganic chemistry from Bristol University in England.

At UW-Madison, Dr. Hooker has played a pivotal role in the Department of Chemistry's REACH initiative, which promotes active learning in high-enrollment general chemistry courses. For several years, he has worked with a team of faculty and instructors to identify key learning objectives for a sequence of general chemistry courses. The new materials affect about 3,000 UW-Madison students each year. As an instructor for these courses, he can also help evaluate the effectiveness of the changes in promoting student-centered, active learning.

Dr. Hooker's goal for his general chemistry classes is to enable students to construct their own understanding of the world around them from a chemistry perspective – the world of atoms, molecules, and thermodynamics. He structures his courses to draw on higher-order learning skills, such as critically assessing data and drawing appropriate conclusions. He employs many types of teaching and learning strategies, including lecturing, group peer instruction, and the “flipped” classroom, in which lectures are pre-recorded and class time is used to apply concepts. He helps guide and mentor first-generation students and is an advocate for undergraduate research.



## VALERIE MURRENUS PILMAIER

Dr. Valerie Murrenus Pilmaier is an associate professor of English at the UW-Green Bay, Sheboygan Campus. She earned a bachelor's degree in English and international studies from UW-Oshkosh and a Ph.D. in English from Marquette University.

Dr. Pilmaier is strongly committed to teaching, service to students, and the teacher-scholar model. She has developed and taught a wide variety of literature, gender, sexuality, and women's studies courses, teaching both face-to-face and online. Using evidence-based teaching strategies such as portfolios and personal reflections to help students engage with the course material, she strives to create an environment that respects differing opinions and challenges students to travel beyond their usual comfort zones. She has served in two coordinator capacities, for institutional assessment and engaging students in the first year, both focused on enhancing the student experience. One of her goals is to help her students gain the skill-set they need to propel their message and thoughts forward. For example, each semester she asks students to send versions of their papers to journals, newspapers, magazines, legislators, the governor, the president of the United States, and others.

Dr. Pilmaier has received numerous awards since joining the Sheboygan campus in 2009, including Teacher of the Year and a Distinguished Service Award. She has twice been named a Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Scholars participant, for the 2012-13 and 2017-18 academic years.



## MUTHU VENKATESHWARAN

Dr. Muthu Venkateshwaran joined the School of Agriculture at UW-Platteville in 2013 as an assistant professor of crop physiology and molecular biology. He earned his doctoral degree in plant pathology from UW-Madison, where he worked as a postdoctoral research associate at the Biotechnology Center.

Dr. Venkateshwaran wishes to inspire students with the curiosity and enthusiasm he feels for scientific knowledge. He incorporates hands-on laboratories, simulations, team projects, instructional videos, field trips, and other teaching methods into his courses on plant breeding and pathology, pest identification and management, crop science, and others. He encourages undergraduate research as an inquiry-based, active learning experience, and students assist him with his primary research area of plant-microbe symbioses. He co-advises the Agronomy-Soil and Water Conservation Club and is a respected mentor and advisor for students. Many of his students have gone on to pursue graduate studies or conduct industry research. He has recently served as an organizer for Pioneer Talks, campus-wide discussions designed to stimulate and engage the university community.

Dr. Venkateshwaran has received several distinguished fellowships and awards, including UW-Platteville's Outstanding Faculty Award and the D.C. Smith Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship. He is a member of the American Phytopathological Society, the American Society of Plant Biologists, and the International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions.