



# 2020 ALLIANT ENERGY FOUNDATION AWARD CEREMONY

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

**Alliant Energy James R. Underkofler**  
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

*Friday, November 6, 2020*  
*Webex Virtual Ceremony, 3 - 4 p.m.*  
*Madison, Wisconsin*





# Program Highlights

Virtual Awards Ceremony 3 – 4 p.m.

Acknowledgment: Julie Bauer, Executive Director, Alliant Energy Foundation

## **WELCOME**

Tommy G. Thompson    President, UW System

## **ALLIANT ENERGY/ERROLL B. DAVIS, JR.**

### **ACHIEVEMENT AWARD PRESENTATION**

#### AWARD HISTORY

Benjamin Bilitz                      Chief Accounting Officer/Controller, Alliant Energy

#### AWARD PRESENTATION

Carleen Vande Zande    Associate Vice President, UW System

#### STUDENT RECIPIENTS

Dalila Ricci                      College of Engineering, UW-Madison

RkiaTalbi                      College of Engineering, Mathematics and Science,  
UW-Platteville

## **ALLIANT ENERGY JAMES R. UNDERKOFER**

### **EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD PRESENTATION**

#### AWARD HISTORY

Benjamin Bilitz                      Chief Accounting Officer/Controller, Alliant Energy

#### AWARD PRESENTATION

Carleen Vande Zande    Associate Vice President, UW System

#### FACULTY RECIPIENTS

Ken Brosky, MFA                      Associate Professor  
College of Integrated Studies  
UW-Whitewater at Rock County

Kristina Fields, PhD                      Professor  
Department of Civil and Environmental  
Engineering  
UW-Platteville

Sharon Thoma, PhD                      Faculty Associate  
Department of Integrative Biology  
UW-Madison

Kristi Wilkum, PhD                      Associate Professor  
Department of Communication Studies  
UW Oshkosh, Fond du Lac Campus

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

In 2006, the Alliant Energy Foundation established an endowed fund, the Alliant Energy/Erroll B. Davis, Jr. 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 or 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 JAMES R. UNDERKOFLER EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD**

In 1990, the Wisconsin Power and Light Foundation (Alliant Energy's Wisconsin Utility) established an endowed fund, the Alliant Energy James R. 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 James R. 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.

**2020**

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

# RECIPIENT BIOGRAPHIES



## DALILA RICCI

Dalila Ricci is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Engineering at UW-Madison. She plans to graduate in May 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

Dalila was a construction intern this past summer for the Gilbane Building Company in New York City, where she helped generate subcontractor completion lists and surveyed the site with the superintendent. Previously, she participated in a project engineer co-op with the Madison-based general contracting firm J.H. Findorff & Son Inc. working on construction project management and served as a construction review technician for Ruckert & Mielke, Inc. in Waukesha, working on a road reconstruction effort.

Dalila is a Chancellor Merit Scholar and LEED (Leaders in Engineering Excellence and Diversity) Scholar. She is the associate director for Global Connections at the Wisconsin Union and the events director for the UW-Madison Senior Class Office. Since 2017, she has tutored calculus for the Undergraduate Learning Center. She has held various office positions for the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and is currently Vice President Internal. She is bilingual, fluent in Spanish and English.

Dalila wishes to build better global communities, starting with infrastructure. She is considering an adjunct teaching position as she pursues her civil engineering career so that she can continue to inspire the next generation of engineers in the classroom as well as in the field. She plans to enroll in an MBA program to fulfill her dream of one day leading her own company.





## RKIA TALBI

Rkia Talbi is an undergraduate student enrolled in the College of Engineering, Mathematics and Science at UW-Platteville. She plans to graduate in December 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in French.

Rkia loves a challenge, setting her mind to a problem and finding the right solution. She first became excited about the prospect of a career as an engineer when her high school calculus teacher explained how engineers solve some of humanity's largest problems using calculus and physics.

At UW-Platteville, Rkia is a Chancellor Scholar, a highly competitive scholarship program based on leadership. As part of the Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program at UW-Platteville, she mentors young women studying STEM fields. She is involved in Pi Tau Sigma, an international honor society for mechanical engineers, where she enjoys working with classmates to design and manufacture a technically challenging engineering product each year.

Rkia is past president of the Society of Women Engineers, a not-for-profit educational and service organization. She assisted the new executive board with planning a year of activities. Her involvement with the Society of Women Engineers enabled her to attend their national conference, where she met a manager for Boeing who hired her as an intern this past summer. She hopes to work at Boeing full-time after graduation.

**2020**

Alliant Energy  
James R. Underkofler  
Excellence in Teaching  
Award

## RECIPIENT BIOGRAPHIES



## KEN BROSKY

Ken Brosky is an associate professor in the College of Integrated Studies at UW-Whitewater at Rock County. He earned his Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and his Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from UW-Eau Claire.

Prof. Brosky uses pedagogical research to hone his teaching skills, adjusting his courses to encourage his students to develop crucial research and informational literacy skills to become better writers. He encourages first-semester students to enter what he calls “teacher mode” – thinking about audience and purpose in a more critical way.

Prof. Brosky demonstrates deep care for his students, whether designing a class, revising materials, meeting one-on-one with students, or doing service work. That commitment shows up in student evaluations, peer reviews, and his own intense and productive reflection on his teaching. He treats failures and mistakes as a valuable learning opportunity for both himself and his students. Former students tell him how they have used what they learned in his class to address real-world topics such as online shaming. His students have gone on to appear on the Dean’s List for their accomplishments and to win awards and essay contests.

Prof. Brosky recently helped write a grant funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities to infuse the humanities into water-related science courses at UW-Whitewater campuses, emphasizing freshwater issues affecting southern Wisconsin. Prof. Brosky’s recent fiction has appeared in *The Portland Review* and *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. He was named the Beloit Rotary Teacher of the Month in the 2018-19 academic year and received the Gil Sedor Campus Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2016.



## KRISTINA FIELDS

Kristina Fields is a professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UW-Platteville. She earned her PhD, Master of Science, and Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Michigan Technological University. Dr. Fields teaches courses in civil and environmental engineering with an emphasis in transportation, advises and mentors students, and conducts STEM outreach. She created a popular

short-term study abroad civil engineering course with a university in the Netherlands focusing on cycling infrastructure. She teaches undergraduates how to use the roadway design software of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, which has helped students attain jobs there after graduation.

Dr. Fields is passionate about pre-college engineering outreach. She was the curriculum manager for UW-Platteville's Sky's the Limit pre-college outreach program for young women, offering hands-on STEM exposure through projects with faculty, students, and industry professionals.

As a faculty associate with the UW-Platteville Teaching and Technology Center, Dr. Fields started a collaborative project called Construction Confidence to create a more inclusive climate on construction sites. This fall, she is leading a wellness program to provide stress relief from teaching changes due to COVID-19. She is the faculty advisor for the Institute of Transportation Engineers UW-Platteville chapter and has chaired the City of Platteville Community Safe Routes Committee. She is an active member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the Center for Infrastructure Transformation and Education, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. She has earned campus awards in teaching, service learning, and advising, including the Excellence in International Advising Award in 2019.



## SHARON THOMA

Sharon Thoma is a faculty associate in the Department of Integrative Biology at UW-Madison. She earned her PhD in Botany and Plant Pathology from Michigan State University and her Bachelor of Science in Biology with honors from Iowa State University. Each course she teaches is unique in its content and audience, and she strives to gear her teaching towards the needs of the students without sacrificing rigor or content.

Since arriving at UW-Madison in 2004, Dr. Thoma's primary focus has been on teaching Biology 101, a large introductory biology course with 700 to 900 students per semester with a mix of majors and non-majors (many who fear science). She works hard to engage the students' intellect, understanding they will not always remember a biological fact but teaching them how to reason their way to a well-thought out answer. She transformed the class, shifting from only lecture and high-stakes exams to including additional assessment that builds on students' knowledge, using a variety of pedagogical tools. She works to make the classroom feel small by getting to know students, walking around the lecture hall to facilitate student interactions, and bringing natural items, such as plants and insects, for students to pass around during class. She encourages critical thinking and relates science to matters outside the classroom. Some students have decided to major in the biological sciences because of her enthusiasm for the field, personalized approach, and caring mentorship.

Dr. Thoma earned the Chancellor's Hilldale Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2016, among other awards and honors. A student remarked that she makes a point to remind them of the importance of stepping away from the textbooks to enjoy what nature has to offer.



## KRISTI WILKUM

Kristi Wilkum is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the UW Oshkosh, Fond du Lac Campus. She earned a PhD in Interpersonal and Supportive Communication from Purdue University, as well as master's and bachelor's degrees, respectively, from UW-Milwaukee and St. Cloud State University, both in communication. Grounded in servant-leadership principles, her teaching philosophy

is to build on the strengths of each individual to enrich the community. She teaches writing-intensive classes, uses collaborative learning and new technologies, incorporates undergraduate research and community-based learning, and supervises internships. For the past five years, she has led an interdisciplinary research team developing a taxonomy of high-impact practices to help implement and assess their use. The team's work has been widely shared at national and regional peer-reviewed conferences.

As a first-generation college student herself, Dr. Wilkum is committed to working with first-generation and underrepresented students to nurture their success. She mentored one of her students, now applying to graduate school, through the yearlong McNair Scholars program, which helps prepare low-income and underrepresented students for PhD-level programs.

In response to the pandemic, Dr. Wilkum adjusted her public speaking course to encourage students to try virtual presentations on a variety of platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Collaborate Ultra, and Flipgrid. She mentors Phi Theta Kappa honor society chapter members on campus. In the community, she serves as a coach for TEDx Fond du Lac speakers and conducts leadership workshops. She is passionate about teaching because making higher education accessible to all students can disrupt cycles of poverty and transform communities.

