

**Profile of
Laura Monahan**

**Associate Director and Curator of Osteology, Zoological Museum, Department of Integrative Biology
University of Wisconsin–Madison
2023 Regents Academic Staff Excellence Award Individual Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- Ph.D. dissertator, Archaeology/Zooarchaeology, UW-Milwaukee; M.S., Anthropology, UW-Milwaukee; B.A., Anthropology, UW-Madison.
- Served as de facto director for past 16 years, responsible for museum administration and supervision, including fundraising and budgeting; under her leadership, museum has survived and flourished.
- Creates and cultivates relationships with donors and successfully applied for grants resulting in more than \$800,000 to support museum operations, particularly notable since state funding has not increased since 1980.
- Oversees participation in outreach opportunities, including exhibition development, presentations, tours and events; serves as curator for the Osteology collection; works tirelessly to increase awareness of museum.
- Secured funding to create modern museum quality storage and upgrade space to further enhance collections.
- Initiated collaborations that encourage and facilitate use of the collections for research and teaching.
- Supervises four paid staff, several short-term staff members, student employees, as well as adjunct curators and volunteers, many of whom return as volunteers following retirement because of the positive community.
- Fostered existing relationships with specimen donors and established new relationships with outside institutions that resulted in a major increase in the number of specimens to nearly 750,000 specimens.
- Developed the course Zoology 405, Introduction to Museum Studies in the Natural Sciences, which she has taught for over 15 years to introduce students to natural history museums; also oversees the museum internship program, which has provided 200+ students hands-on experience in the museum field.
- Enhanced supervisory skills through training/certificates related to leadership, communication, and management; currently pursuing Ph.D. in Anthropology with focus on Zooarchaeology to enhance expertise.
- Addressed challenges of a research museum without exhibit space by revamping the Museum website to make information more accessible and generated revenue through the addition of a web store.
- Museum collections are internationally known and accessed by researchers at UW-Madison, other UW System institutions, and universities across the country and provide research support to federal and state agencies.
- Worked to create specimen databases to improve global access to the collections.
- Fosters the Wisconsin Idea by enhancing research, teaching, and outreach offerings of UW-Madison Zoological Museum; engages in efforts to enhance the department and broader community through creating/chairing staff awards committee, service on committees and boards, presentations, and publications.
- Recipient of the Academic Staff Excellence Mid-Career Award (2018) and Early Career Award (2013).

In Laura Monahan’s own words:

- “Although there was something magical about field work, I realized I loved the artifacts and specimens more....[A] position opened at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Zoological Museum (UWZM). I had high hopes that I would get the position, and this is where I have worked for the past 17 years.”

In the words of colleagues:

- “[Laura] persistently and creatively pursues funding and equipment to maintain a top-notch museum and has assembled an amazing team of staff, students and volunteers that run a modern museum on a shoestring budget.”—*John Karl Scholz, then-Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UW-Madison*
- “[Laura] shows genuine interest in what you do, and she will find a way to offer ideas that would involve support from the museum for anything you want to accomplish whether you want to teach, conduct research, or simply learn.”—*Nazan Gillie, Academic Program Director/Lecturer, Department of Integrative Biology, UW-Madison*