

Outstanding Mentorship In Anthropology Award -2020

Committee: Dr. Natalie Langley, Ms. Rebecca George, Dr. Paul Emanovsky

Chair: Dr. MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant

This new award is designed to honor mentors who exemplify extraordinary selflessness as they support and contribute to the career development and advancement of students, colleagues, and the discipline of forensic anthropology. **This award recognizes an individual who has excelled at mentoring others in achieving their career objectives through moral, social, and intellectual support.**

The call for nominations was sent to the Anthropology section members via email. On behalf of the committee, we would like to thank all of those who submitted nominations for this award. This year we received 13 nominations that met the requirements. Three of the submissions nominated the same person, therefore there were a total of 10 different individuals nominated for this award. The committee judged the quality and content of each 500-word nomination and assessed the perceived impact of the nominee on the future of the field of anthropology. Each committee member then submitted their vote for the awardee. This year's awardee was chosen unanimously by the committee.

This year's awardee had three separate submissions with a total of 11 separate mentees supporting these letters. While the number of submissions had no bearing on the outcome, it was clear from each of the three submission that our awardee exemplifies an Outstanding Mentor in Anthropology. I am told that he is a good man and thorough, but if you are not into the whole brevity thing, I took the liberty of paraphrasing examples from the nomination letters to illustrate why our awardee was chosen as the Outstanding Mentor in Anthropology.

His biggest influence on the field is undeniably through education. Over his career, he has mentored an estimated 100-120 graduate and 400-500 undergraduate students and countless others during his summer short courses.

A core tenant of his mentoring style is to treat students as professionals in-training and include them in all aspects of casework. The importance of this experience cannot be understated as it generates practical skills and critical thinking abilities.

The mantra conveyed is always "question everything" - to learn from the past, but to challenge outdated practices in order to lay the groundwork for new thought.

He's there through the strikes and gutters, ups and downs

His door is always open and he is always willing ... to do whatever it takes to aid in his students' success. The success of this approach is evident in the number of students who have remained in the field and are board certified (or are on track to be certified). His commitment to his students, as well as to the advancement of the field, has inspired his students to research, publish, and train the next generation of forensic professionals. You can find his students in all corners of the discipline: the DPAA, medical examiner offices, human rights organizations, law enforcement agencies, universities, etc.

Behind the scenes, He works hard to ensure his students are treated fairly. He has battled with university administration for more fellowships within the department, more paid positions in other departments, and lower tuition costs, not wanting his students to be haunted by student debt. He has refused to make his graduate program larger (despite pressure from administration), trying to maximize funding opportunities for his students while not flooding the field with unemployed graduates. He selflessly has put his job on the line for some of these arguments. He legitimately cares for the well-being and future of his students, supporting traditional and non-traditional students alike (he's even babysat for students' children as necessary during courses).

*Through his mentorship, he created professionals at the forefront of forensic anthropology, AND a **family** of trained anthropologists. Outside the [school] community, his compassionate side may not be as visible, but if you approach any of his current or former students you will see we all share this perception. Without his mentorship we would not be where we are today. He deserves recognition for the years of support he has dedicated to us, his students...*

From these examples, I think that it is clear that this year's awardee has been an outstanding mentor to his students and deserves this recognition. I don't know about you, but I take comfort in that. It's good knowin' he's out there.

It is my great privilege to present the first ever AAFS Outstanding Mentorship in Anthropology Award to The Dude Himself, Dr. Dennis C. Dirkmaat.