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College of Science Honors 2019

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Award Winners

Nov 11, 2019

(<https://science.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FacStaffMt.jpg>)

COLLEGE STATION --

Twelve faculty, staff and students within the Texas A&M University College of Science were recognized for recent outstanding accomplishments by Dean Valen E. Johnson at the college's annual Faculty-Staff Meeting and Awards Presentation Wednesday (Nov. 6).

The ceremony, which honors college award recipients and serves as a forum for new faculty and staff introductions, was held in the Stephen W. Hawking Auditorium inside the [George P. and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics and Astronomy](http://mitchell.tamu.edu/) (<http://mitchell.tamu.edu/>).

[Jennifer Marshall](https://physics.tamu.edu/directory/jennifer-marshall/) (<https://physics.tamu.edu/directory/jennifer-marshall/>) (physics and astronomy), Asha Rao (biology), Amber Schaefer (chemistry) and [Anne Shiu](https://www.math.tamu.edu/~annejls/) (<https://www.math.tamu.edu/~annejls/>) (mathematics) were honored as recipients of The Association of Former Students Distinguished Achievement College-Level Awards in Teaching for 2019 for their commitment to education and contributions to their respective disciplines.

Each honoree was awarded a framed certificate commemorating the occasion and a \$2,000 check from [The Association of Former Students](http://aggienetwork.com) (<http://aggienetwork.com>).

Sarbajit Banerjee (<https://www.chem.tamu.edu/faculty/sarbajit-banerjee/>)

(chemistry) and Nida Obatake (mathematics) were honored with the college's Undergraduate Research Mentoring Awards. Established in 2014, the award recognizes faculty members and graduate students, respectively, for their dedication, enthusiasm, accomplishments and contributions in mentoring undergraduate researchers. Each received a \$500 check and a plaque of appreciation.

Coran Watanabe (<https://www.chem.tamu.edu/faculty/coran-watanabe/>)

(chemistry), Sharon Jeske (Cyclotron Institute) and Tan Nguyen (chemistry) were honored with the college's Leadership in Equity and Diversity (LEAD) Awards. Established in 2016, the award recognizes faculty members, staff members and postdoctoral research associates/students who have displayed commitment to enhancing the college's environment of mutual respect and diversity. Each received a \$500 check and a plaque of appreciation.

Staff members Evamarie Capareda (chemistry), Jane Ondrasek (mathematics) and Joseph Reibenspies (chemistry) were presented with 2019 Outstanding Staff Achievement Awards. Established in 1995, the award commends the dedication, enthusiasm and accomplishments of staff throughout the college. Each received a plaque and a \$500 check, also funded by The Association.

Capareda, a program coordinator in the Department of Chemistry, has 14 years of service to the College of Science. She originally joined Chemistry in 2005 as the editorial assistant for the *Journal of Organic Chemistry* office at Texas A&M, which she ran for seven years, organizing and managing the workflow for hundreds of manuscripts and more than a thousand refereed reports each year. "Dr. Capareda is the best proofreader I have ever met, and I still have her look at every one of my papers and proposal," says one of her nomination supporters. "She invariably finds the subtle mistakes that no one else can see, and she does so with the efficiency of a *New York Times* copy editor." Since 2012, Capareda has provided primary administrative support

for three research groups in Texas A&M Chemistry while assisting with at least four others and many special events. In addition to managing day-to-day group activities and ordering, she oversees budgets, interacts with students, orients new members, and provides assistance with graphics and

students, orients new members, and provides assistance with graphics and proofreading for papers and grant applications. She also assists in training other administrative assistants in the department. Because Capareda holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry and has previous experience as a faculty member and graduate school dean, her professors agree that her extensive scientific knowledge and background establish her as a unique asset. One describes her as “the ideal assistant – talented, dedicated and efficient and always willing to help out.” Another puts a finer point on his appreciation, saying, “I can state without reservation that Dr. Capareda’s contributions to my teaching, research and service exceed that of any other individual who has been involved with my research group.”

Ondrasek, an executive assistant II in the Department of Mathematics, has more than seven years of service to the College of Science. She initially joined Mathematics in 2012 and has served since September 2015 as assistant to the department head. In addition to keeping the department head on track and on schedule, Ondrasek is responsible for myriad tasks, including handling visa processing, faculty hiring and visitor paperwork, completing national surveys, researching rules and policies, and, as of this past year, preparing promotion and tenure packets. “What some might see as more work, Jane sees as an opportunity to help the team, improve and build her skills, and do something new,” her nominator says. In 2018 when the department underwent an external review, Ondrasek proved instrumental in its success, helping to prepare the self-study document, coordinating the review team’s travel, and handling logistics for all related meetings during their stay. During an extremely busy past hiring season, Mathematics also interviewed 22 tenure track job candidates, resulting in six eventual hires. “Ms. Ondrasek managed to keep everyone on schedule *and* happy, most importantly the candidates, who were suitably pleased,” says one nomination supporter. Perhaps the best evaluation and endorsement of Ondrasek’s abilities, aptitude, and attitude is the fact that each of her letter-writers mentions her rapport with people outside her department and college, from colleagues in other campus units to visiting professors and external reviewers. One math professor notes he has

brought in more than a dozen international visitors in the past few years. “Each mentioned how delightful it was to work with Jane,” he says. “She exemplifies excellence and dedication.”

Reibenspies, a senior research instrumentation specialist in the Department of Chemistry, has more than 31 years of service to the College of Science. He joined Chemistry in 1987, founding the X-Ray Diffraction Laboratory (<https://xray.chem.tamu.edu/>) and using his scientific expertise and leadership abilities to establish it as one of the best facilities of its kind across the nation and world. At present, he directs a large, in-demand laboratory used by more than 40 research groups in Chemistry, another 40 groups campus-wide and 20 industrial users. Each year, he also trains 100-plus students in practical and theoretical aspects while guiding them in hands-on use, proper laboratory protocols and radiation safety. He is lauded for his dedication to training and advising researchers at all skill levels throughout the college and university. During the past three decades, Reibenspies has installed 12 major X-ray instruments and led four major facility upgrades. He also has co-written four major proposals for X-ray instrumentation, resulting in four successful awards. Moreover, he has published more than 460 peer-reviewed papers and is arguably one of the world's preeminent experts in X-ray diffraction. "Consistent with this high level of praise, we have had to repeatedly fend off offers from major universities and industries for his services, as his operation here has been adopted as their model," says one nomination supporter. "From making good decisions for an enormous queue of data-hungry researchers, to sitting down with an individual faculty member and discussing the implications of the results, Joe's integrity and intelligence rules." Reibenspies is an editor and co-author of one of the leading textbooks in the area of powder diffraction. He also assists in teaching the department's courses on X-ray crystallography and recently co-initiated modular teaching laboratories for undergraduate students that are customizable by specific research area and need. Service-wise, he is a past chairman of the American Crystallographic Association Data Standards Committee and a former member of the U.S. National Committee for Crystallography that advises the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering on guidelines for crystallographic standards. Regardless of role, Reibenspies is regarded in Aggieland and across the globe as nothing short of exemplary, empathetic and

inspirational. "Joe greatly enhances the quality of our work and makes us a better department," says another colleague. "He is a scholar, teacher, mentor and innovator, and his selfless services is part of the magic of Aggieland!"

In addition to Dean Johnson and Texas A&M Science associate deans recognizing all award winners, Johnson delivered a State of the College Address, preceded by the heads of each of the college's five departments (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, and Statistics) introducing their respective new faculty. A reception honoring all award winners and new faculty and staff held in the foyer of the Mitchell Institute concluded the afternoon's festivities.

See [high-resolution photographs \(https://flic.kr/s/aHsmJdRbqp\)](https://flic.kr/s/aHsmJdRbqp) from the event within the Texas A&M Science Flickr archive.

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