

Background

Each year, the Distinguished Employee and Leadership Team Award (DELTA) selection committee, comprised of UA leaders along with four of the award winners from the previous year, meet to select new recipients.

This award is designed to recognize individual employees and teams for their exceptional accomplishments, service and dedication to the University. Awards for this year will be given to seven individuals and one team. Since the 2008 inauguration of the UA Distinguished Employee Leadership and Team Award (DELTA), **153** UA employees have been recognized as DELTA award recipients. Executives from University Administration make the presentations at the awards ceremony.



Ellie Burnette

Ellie is a self-starter who takes the initiative. For example, she helped organize and coordinate an office move not only for herself, but for others in the department as well. The new offices were different sizes/layouts, and so all of the existing furniture had to be reconfigured. She took it upon herself to grab a tape measure, measure her furniture and cut out sticky notes to scale that represented each piece. She then placed them in the configuration of her new office and taped this diagram to her office door. Finally, she labeled each piece of actual furniture to correspond to the drawing. Her supervisor thought this was a great idea since many of the staff were swapping individual furniture pieces to make it all

work in the new space. Ellie and a couple of others helped draw new office layouts for the rest of their colleagues. This saved time and money because the department didn't have to order any new furniture and it saved time during the re-installation. The F&S movers subsequently commented how easy these drawings made the move for them.

Ellie takes it upon herself to further her education by taking free online training offered by Stanford on databases and XML. She taught herself HTML5 and updated the I-card website. The updated website was identified as one of the most accessible on campus. She was invited by Business Information Systems to give a presentation on incorporating HTML5 coding standards into web applications.

Ellie always has an up-beat attitude and it is infectious! Nothing is impossible to her and that's a refreshing attribute about her. Ellie keeps a calm manner about her at all times and never gets upset. She always seeks input from her colleagues to make sure she understands their needs and so that everyone feels that they are a part of the team.

Ellie never hesitates to jump in and say "how can I help?" She can always be counted on to give 100% to whatever project she is working on and she can be trusted implicitly. She can be given any task and she will approach it with critical thinking. There's nothing she can't tackle.



Kelsey McCoy

Kelsey is the Coordinator of Communications and Media at the Institute of Government and Public Affairs where she is responsible for internal and external communications. Kelsey has a proven track record of taking initiative in projects, coming up with creative solutions, and stepping up to leadership positions. To say that Kelsey has excelled in everything she has done here at IGPA is putting it mildly.

Kelsey has led a number of projects that received wide notoriety. For example, in the fall of 2012, she led a project called “On the Issues” that was based on nonpartisan research provided to public outlets across the state. The Chicago Sun Times included the written and video component of these communications for ten weeks leading up to the fall election.

In another example, Kelsey took on three critical roles to make the NEW Leadership Illinois Program a success. This program is focused on 20 college women from across the state to attend training, meet with female leaders and work on a policy project. Kelsey publicized the event, taught public speaking and media to the students, staffed the program and stepped in when the co-director of the program left on maternity leave just before the event.

These two examples show Kelsey’s dedication and initiative. She grows on the job and through opportunities that she seeks out. She is also a driving force in helping others to grow professionally. Tim Knudsen, former Wolff intern and university law student said of Kelsey, she is “amazing; Kelsey allowed me to take on responsibility and always provided guidance. The confidence I gained working with Kelsey proved to be very beneficial in preparing me for my summer interning in DC for the Senate Judiciary Committee.”

Kelsey has and continues to provide exemplary services to the University of Illinois. She is a valuable member of the IGPA team. Her work has impressed many in the past year and for that matter, all of the years she has been at the University.



William Seemann

William Seemann is a Software Engineer for Administrative Information Technology Services (AITS). His drive to produce the best possible product for customers, his passion for advancing his own knowledge, and his willingness to share that knowledge with others, are just a few of the characteristics that make him an excellent candidate for this award.

William developed the Android version of the UI Dining mobile application for University Housing at Urbana-Champaign. Since its launch in November 2012, it has been downloaded to over 14,500 users, most of whom are students. Kirsten Ruby, the marketing director at University Housing and the project client, received many positive comments from the students.

In 2013, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education awarded UI Dining the ‘Circle of Excellence’ silver medal (the highest level possible), for best mobile design. The CASE website states that the award “...acknowledges superior accomplishments that have lasting impact, demonstrate the highest level of professionalism and deliver exceptional results.” Also in 2013, the Association of Marketing and Communications Professionals awarded UI Dining a gold medal in the Hermes Creative Award competition, for excellence in emerging media creative design. The Hermes website states the award was established to “honor the messengers and creators of traditional and emerging media.”

William is an ongoing learner, both formally and informally. In 2013, he received a master’s degree in computer science from the University of Illinois. William accepted an opportunity to design, build and teach an Android mobile development class at the Research Park. The eight week course was filled to capacity at 25 students, including developers from AITS and other organizations. He invested many evening and weekend hours to develop the materials and ensure students had a positive experience.

William wrote an application for the president’s office to convert thousands of legacy system TIFF images into searchable PDF files. A vendor wanted to charge over ten thousand dollars to provide this same service, but William’s solution cost a mere fraction of that.

William maintains a very high bar for himself and that’s what drives him to produce innovative, cost-saving solutions for the university. He’s been a significant contributor towards AITS’ reputation as a quality organization, which makes him a highly qualified candidate for this award.



Andrew Sestak

Andrew Sestak is an Assistant Director in the University Office of Planning and Budgeting. He has the high performance standards and understands the critical nature and timing of completing projects, whatever they may be, in an effective and efficient manner.

The Office for Planning and Budgeting must navigate through a complex University environment to secure answers for the leadership of the University quickly, while also being respectful of the proper protocol. The office must anticipate issues, gather

data, and turn it into meaningful information both for the University, the Office for Governmental Relations, and various state agencies, all with very short timelines. Andy excels at each of these skills.

There are many examples of his initiative and creativity. For instance, recently UOPB won an Energy Conservation Incentive Award from the Urbana-Champaign campus. This is largely because of Andy's efforts with Henry Administration Building occupants and working with F&S. UOPB will receive a financial award towards the building which can be used to restore the deteriorated doors of the building. A second example is his creative work with the campus Integrated Pest Management office headed by Program Manager Dr. Sue Ratcliffe. Dr. Ratcliffe selected the Henry Administration Building for a pest control experimental site. Working with Dr. Ratcliffe and her colleagues, Andy moved the project beyond just HAB, becoming involved in an experimental project on pest control in the Housing Division at UIUC. Andy worked collaboratively with different offices; the project was very successful and is saving Housing a significant amount of time and resources. The University is now expanding that project to museums and UIS Housing, with a goal to expand Dr. Ratcliffe and her team's expertise eventually to UIC.

Andy has secured additional training where necessary. He has also taken the initiative to provide important lifesaving training for the University Administration. For example, he organized training on AED equipment throughout UA and had the devices installed throughout the building. The new BOT Secretary off-handedly mentioned CPR training; we talked for a few minutes in a general way and Andy took action. He organized a CPR certification class, which was so popular he had to add a second section. It is possible that Andy's action in getting dozens of people trained may literally save someone's life.

Andy Sestak is and has been a successful contributor to the success of the university at large and to the University Administration. He works behind the scenes to create efficiencies, streamline processes, and provide accurate data to the appropriate administrative and state agencies.



Mikel D. Storm

Mikel Storm is a Network Coordinator for the Administrative Information Technology Services (AITS).

The entire Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) nominated Mikel Storm for the DELTA Award. Mikel has a wealth of information technology (IT) expertise and problem-solving skills and has provided service to every member of the OVPR team. This nomination is significant in that it is written from one of Mikel's clients and not his parent organization.

In August 2012, OVPR was broken into on a Friday night. Mikel met the staff in the office early on Saturday morning to help identify missing computers and confirming serial numbers/information for University Police. The office eventually recovered several of the missing computers and he worked to get those machines back into service very quickly.

Mikel started with AITS, sharing in the support of multiple clients, but has grown to include the primary support for the Executive Offices. He has dedicated his time to improving processes to responding to client's needs in a quick manner. He is the primary supporter for the Board of Trustees (BOT) members and visited each one of them at their personal locations to assist in setting up the new Board Vantage Software that was implemented over the last year.

Thanks to Mikel's support (as well as his entire team), OVPR has a strong relationship with Administrative Information Technology Services (AITS). Having a collaborative relationship with such a critical UA unit ensures that the OVPR team can work in an efficient manner and that sensitive data will be secure.

Mikel checks with OVPR on nearly a daily basis to ensure that everything is running smoothly, he is always pleasant to work with, and he takes a genuine interest in his clients.



Joann Walker

Joann is a Business/Administrative Associate for Employee Relations and Human Resources.

When people dream up their ideal employee or ideal coworker, the individual will likely be someone that is caring, understanding, a good listener, flexible, hardworking, professional and motivated, a team player, and an all-around nice person. Joann is the epitome of those dream characteristics.

Joann has a can do, positive attitude. She doesn't shy away from work and has grown each year by learning about employee relations and human resources operations.

She can execute some of every person's work in that office, which means she can help keep processes moving along. She never hesitates to ask if she can take something off of your plate, especially if she knows that she can quickly squeeze it into her busy schedule and take care of it. Also, Joann is great at recognizing/ knowing the strengths of the employees in our office in order to quickly get answers to customers when they call.

Joann works very closely with the student employee, taking her under her wing to help the office operate more efficiently. Joann guides the student worker on projects and ensures that is used to the fullest extent.

Joann is the face of Employee Relations and Human Resources. She is the first person that people see when they come in and the last person they see when they leave the office. She always greets the customers/ employees immediately upon entering, ensuring that she can help them. She is equally as customer focused on the phone, as she is in person. She greets customers with enthusiasm and offering her assistance in any form that she is able.

Joann truly is a wonderful coworker that adds tremendous value to ER/HR. She is diligent and hardworking and very humble about the amount of value she adds to our office. Joann was the perfect addition to the ER/HR team.



Jeff Weaver

Jeff Weaver is a Senior Associate Director of Property Accounting for Office of Business and Financial Services. Through his leadership, expertise and ability to break work down into smaller workable units, he has been able to achieve the OBFS mission of providing business and financial services of exceptional quality in the most effective manner. An example of this is Jeff's improvements to the FABweb system, which allows departments to electronically process new acquisitions of equipment and transfer it through Banner. Jeff researched department needs on each campus, built relationships and listened to the user community to achieve the best possible product. Another related project under development is the Surplus Warehouse Inventory

System (SWIS) designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the receipt and distribution of surplus equipment. This is expected to improve the satisfaction of the campus units.

Jeff has taken initiative in many areas; for example, he implemented a quarterly review process to review miscoded items. The result of the process is to make the University's inventory record and financial statements more accurate.

His employees are encouraged to grow in their areas of strength and then expand their knowledge into broader areas of property accounting. Jeff provides assistance, advice and coaching as well as on-the-job training to his staff. He helps to draw out their potential.

Jeff is considered an outstanding asset to OBFS and the department units on all three campuses. His persistent search for knowledge of processes, and then initiating the implementation of better processes, has been key to making Property Accounting and all units involved more productive and the data more accurate. He continuously strives for improvement and encourages the same from his employees.



University Relations - FOIA Process Consolidation Project

Background: The Illinois Freedom of Information Act was first enacted in 1984 and provides for the public accessibility of documents in the possession of public institutions, ranging from emails to contracts. In 2010, the University of Illinois

processed more than 600 FOIA requests – an average of 2.3 requests per business day or 12 requests per week – and produced more than 100,000 pages of responsive documents. Subsequent changes in the law have shortened the time period for public bodies to respond to FOIA requests, added stiffer financial penalties and added over 70 exemptions. Prior to this project, the University took a highly decentralized approach to FOIA administration.

The Administrative Review and Restructuring study recommended new staff be assigned, realigned, or employed to comply with the requirements of the updated Freedom of Information Act. In keeping with the intent of streamlining and creating more efficient operations, Ginny Hudak-David developed a plan to centralize the process. The objectives for the project included:

1. Centralize intake of requests to the University
2. Develop robust tracking, data, and deadline-alert systems
3. Implement a shared data repository for requests and records
4. Develop a team – either in one office or decentralized – of FOIA coordinators to handle records (locate, obtain, review, apply exemptions, and produce documents)
5. Recruit and hire an attorney with Illinois FOIA-processing experience to manage the process.

Results: Within a twelve month time period, the OUR team took a decentralized process in place for over twenty years and, among other things, coordinated the transition to centralized intake, trained and transitioned campus staff on the new process, established consistent practices, developed programs necessary to track the hundreds of requests received a year, presented to units throughout the University, and reduced the burden of FOIA on certain departments—all while consistently meeting the day-to-day legal requirements of the over 600 requests that came in during that period. The process in place today is as efficient and effective as possible given the almost limitless variety of requests received by the university. And, importantly, the university's relationships with the state public access counselor and regular FOIA requestors are strong.

The team members responsible for this good work are:

Melanie Kuehn
Ginny Hudak-David
Kathleen McCarthy