

2024 PRESIDENTIAL FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

Wednesday, May 1, 2024 | 11:30 a.m.



UMBC

Welcome

2024 PRESIDENTIAL
FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

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2024 AWARDEES

Presidential Teaching Professor Award

Amy Froide

Professor and Chair, History

Presidential Research Professor Award

Tülay Adali

Distinguished University Professor and Professor of Computer Science and Electrical Engineering

Presidential Distinguished Staff Award, Professional Staff

Fritzie Charne-Merriwether

Acting Associate Vice President for Student Engagement and Diversity, and Director of Parent and Family Engagement, Division of Student Affairs

Professional Distinguished Staff Award, Non-Exempt Staff

Laura A. Weathers

Library Services Supervisor, Serials Department, Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery

USM Board of Regents Faculty Award for Excellence in Mentoring

Liang Zhu

Professor, Mechanical Engineering

USM Board of Regents Faculty Award for Excellence in Scholarship or Research

Vandana Janeja

Professor of Information Systems and Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, College of Engineering and Information Technology

USM Board of Regents Staff Award for Extraordinary Public Service to the University or Greater Community

Stanyell Odom

Director, Alumni Engagement, Office of Institutional Advancement

USM Board of Regents Staff Award for Effectiveness and Efficiency

Margo Young

Director, Earth and Space Research Administration, Goddard Planetary Heliophysics Institute

Diane M. Lee Teaching Award

Janet R. Gross

Lecturer, English and Academic Engagement and Transition First-Year Seminar

Jakubik Family Endowment Award

B. Collier Jones

Campus Portal Architect, Division of Information Technology

Karen L. Wensch Endowment Award for Outstanding Non-Exempt Staff

Donique J. Lewis

Executive Administrative Assistant II, College of Engineering and Information Technology

Marilyn E. Demorest Award for Faculty Advancement

Lee Blaney

Professor, Chemical, Biochemical, and Environmental Engineering

L.D. Timmie Topoleski

Professor, Mechanical Engineering

Teresa Lupinek Endowment Award

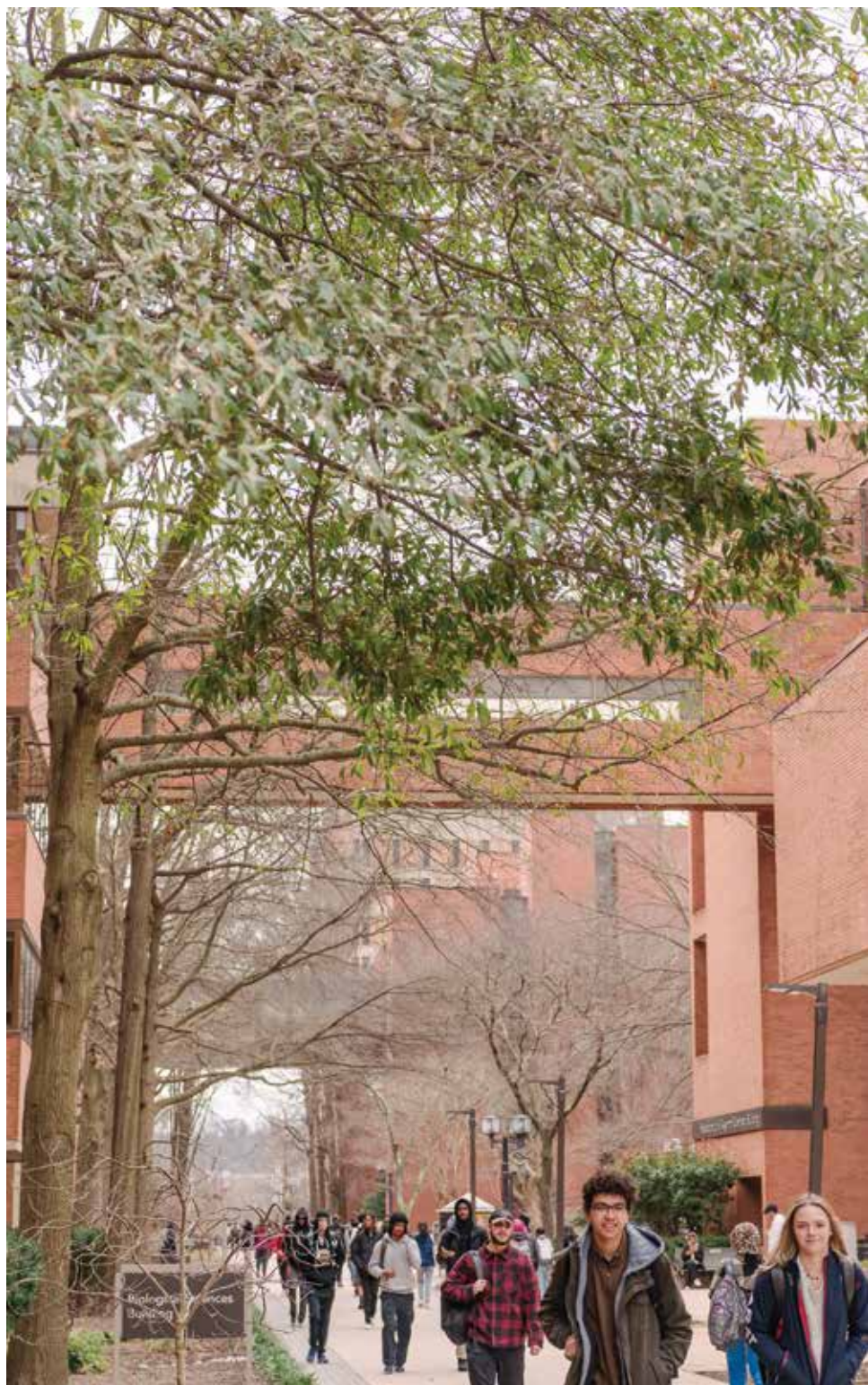
Sundiata Jangha

Director of Pipeline Programs, Upward Bound Mathematics and Science Center, Graduate School, Office of Academic Opportunity Programs

UMBC Research Faculty Excellence Award

Roberto A. Fernandez Borda

Senior Research Engineer, Joint Center for Earth Systems Technology



AWARD DESCRIPTIONS

PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING & RESEARCH PROFESSORS

Presidential Teaching and Research Professors, named annually to three-year appointments, are nominated by administrative and academic departments. They are honored for their professional accomplishments, dedication to the fulfillment of the university's mission, and service to the university. In the first year of their appointments, the Presidential Teaching and Research Professors serve as marshals, leading the student and faculty processions at Convocation and Commencement.

PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED STAFF AWARD

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The Presidential Distinguished Staff Award, Professional Staff recognizes exceptional performance, leadership, and service by a full-time member of the associate staff. To be eligible for consideration, nominees must have been employed by UMBC for at least seven years and have a career distinguished by dedication to achieving the university's mission and goals, by professional accomplishments, and by service to the campus. Recipients are nominated by their colleagues across campus and selected by UMBC's Staff Awards Committee.

NON-EXEMPT STAFF

The Presidential Distinguished Staff Award, Non-Exempt Staff recognizes exceptional performance and service by a full-time member of the non-exempt staff. To be eligible for consideration, nominees must have been employed by UMBC for at least five years and have a career distinguished by dedication to achieving the university's mission and goals by service to the campus. Recipients are nominated by their colleagues across campus and selected by UMBC's Staff Awards Committee.

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS STAFF AWARDS

Regents Staff Awards publicly recognize distinguished performance by staff members. These awards are the highest honor presented by the Board of Regents to staff members. The awards are presented to staff who have demonstrated excellence in one of the following categories: Exceptional Contribution to the Institution; Outstanding Service to Students in an Academic or Residential Environment; Extraordinary Public Service to the University or Greater Community; Effectiveness and Efficiency; and Inclusion, Multiculturalism, and Social Justice.

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FACULTY AWARDS

Regents Faculty Awards publicly recognize distinguished performance on the part of faculty members. These awards are the highest honor presented by the Board of Regents to exemplary faculty members. The awardees are selected by the Council of University System Faculty and submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. The awards are presented to faculty members who have demonstrated excellence in one of the following categories: Mentoring; Teaching; Public Service; Scholarship or Research; and Creative Activity. Four awards may be given in categories one through four with the possibility of one award in each category being designated for a collaboration.

DIANE M. LEE TEACHING AWARD

The Diane M. Lee Teaching Award recognizes instructional faculty and staff for their work with students during their year of transition to UMBC. The Teaching Award assists the recipient in their ongoing work with new students. Awardees will share their experiences and teaching strategies with partners working with first-year students to ensure that new students achieve successful outcomes academically as they engage with opportunities across campus. Awardees have made positive contributions to learning outcomes that enable students to find their own success as they transition to college through one of UMBC's first-year programs.

JAKUBIK FAMILY ENDOWMENT STAFF AWARD

The Jakubik Family Endowment Staff Award honors an exceptional staff member who has contributed to student academic success. Staff members are selected by the UMBC Staff Awards Committee based on their innovative advisement, excellence in teaching, creative application of technology, mentorship of undergraduate students, or development of new programs. Awardees have worked at UMBC for at least five years and have made a positive contribution to student success.

KAREN L. WENSCH ENDOWMENT AWARD

The Karen L. Wensch Endowment Award for Outstanding Non-Exempt Staff honors non-exempt staff who make outstanding contributions in one or more of the following areas: engagement in the UMBC community, dedication to UMBC, performance above and beyond position requirements, personal commitment and persistence to the employee's work, excellent problem solving skills, high professional standards, community involvement off campus, and advocacy for non-exempt staff. Awardees must have worked at UMBC for at least five years as a member of the non-exempt staff.

MARILYN E. DEMOREST AWARD FOR FACULTY ADVANCEMENT

The Marilyn E. Demorest Award for Faculty Advancement honors an exceptional faculty member who has made outstanding contributions to the mission of supporting the advancement of faculty members and their academic careers. Faculty awardees are selected by a committee of their peers based on their deep commitment to fostering professional excellence and career advancement, and success at UMBC through mentorship, collaboration, and innovative programs and services.

TERESA LUPINEK ENDOWMENT AWARD

The Teresa Lupinek Endowment Award for Outstanding Exempt or Non-Exempt Staff honors one exempt or non-exempt staff member whose work embodies the many outstanding qualities that Teresa Lupinek displayed during her more than 30 years at UMBC. Awardees are selected by a committee of their peers and have worked at UMBC for at least five years.

UMBC RESEARCH FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Established in 2018, the UMBC Research Faculty Excellence Award recognizes excellence in research and, where appropriate, significant contributions to teaching and service or leadership by research faculty. Awardees are selected by a committee of their peers based on the quality of their research and its impact on UMBC's success. Nominees must have been research or clinical faculty at UMBC for at least three years.



2024 - 2027 PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING PROFESSOR**Amy Froide***Professor and Chair, History*

Amy Froide is professor of history and chair of the history department at UMBC. She teaches courses in British history, women's history, and early modern European history. Her most recent book is *Silent Partners: Women as Public Investors during Britain's Financial Revolution, 1690-1750*. She is also the author of *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* and co-editor of *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*. Professor Froide is the founding director of UMBC's entrepreneurship and innovation minor. She holds affiliate appointments in GWSST and the LLC Ph.D. program. Professor Froide mentors master's degree students in early modern and European women's history as well as Ph.D. students in eighteenth century history and culture. She was awarded the 2018 USM Board of Regents Award for Teaching Excellence. Professor Froide is the incoming Director of the Drescher Center for the Humanities.

2024 - 2027 PRESIDENTIAL RESEARCH PROFESSOR**Tülay Adalı***Distinguished University Professor, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering*

Tülay Adalı received the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, in 1992 and joined the faculty at UMBC the same year, where she is now a Distinguished University Professor. Over the years, she has served her professional community in numerous capacities. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the *IEEE Signal Processing Magazine*; served as the Chair of the Brain Technical Community and the Signal Processing Society (SPS) Vice President for Technical Directions 2019–2022. She has been part of the organizing committees of many conferences and workshops including the IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing, Technical Chair (2017 and 2026), Special Sessions Chair (2018 and 2024), Publicity Chair (2000 and 2005). Professor Adalı is a Fellow of the IEEE, AIMBE, and AAIA, a Fulbright Scholar, and an IEEE SPS Distinguished Lecturer. She is the recipient of the SPS Meritorious Service Award, Humboldt Research Award, IEEE SPS Best Paper Award, the SPIE Unsupervised Learning and ICA Pioneer Award, the University System of Maryland Regents' Award for Research, and the NSF CAREER Award.

2024 PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED PROFESSIONAL STAFF



Fritzie Charne-Merriwether

Acting Associate Vice President for Student Engagement and Diversity, and Director of Parent and Family Engagement

Fritzie Charne-Merriwether is known for her tireless dedication, exceptional leadership, and invaluable service. Her commitment to UMBC students and the campus community is apparent by her instrumental role in helping establish the Retriever Essentials program and the Stay

Black and Gold Emergency Fund. Her student support and engagement efforts do not stop there. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Fritzie spearheaded the equitable distribution of millions of dollars of emergency assistance to UMBC students through the CARES Act Funding. She has also worked to include UMBC families in the campus community by establishing the Family Advisory Board (FAB) as well as the UMBC Family Connection Portal, which have both been pivotal in increasing family involvement and communication. Fritzie received a B.A. in psychology from Roger Williams University and a master's in education from the University of Vermont.

2024 - 2027 PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED NON-EXEMPT STAFF



Laura A. Weathers '80, M.A. '87

Library Services Supervisor, Serials Department, Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery

Laura is an invaluable member of the Albin O. Kuhn Library team. She joined UMBC as a student in African American studies and a library volunteer, and has been serving the UMBC community as part of the library staff since 1983. She has largely contributed to the early adoption of the online catalog and specializes in online serials holdings to the

catalog. In addition to managing the complexity of online catalogs, she was instrumental in making sure that three phases of the physical moving of the collection were done in a timely and consistent manner, and recorded and updated accordingly. The final, IV Phase of the serials collection project is almost completed thanks to her planning and communication skills. Laura earned her bachelor's degree in Afro-American studies in 1980 and her master's in history in 1987, both from UMBC.

2024 UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FACULTY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN MENTORING



Liang Zhu

Professor, Mechanical Engineering

Liang Zhu is known for her strong commitment to diversity and inclusion which is evident in the work she does on campus. In 2010, Professor Zhu established the Mechanical Engineering S-STEM Scholarship Program, which focuses on mentoring and supporting activities and increasing research participation for economically disadvantaged and academically talented students. The program has supported

135 students since then. Professor Zhu's mentorship does not stop at the undergraduate level however. She is an active leading member of Women in Science and Engineering and the Asian and Asian American Faculty and Staff Council, where she mentors junior faculty members on the UMBC campus. She earned her B.S. in engineering thermophysics from the University of Science and Technology of China, and her Ph.D. in engineering from City University of New York.

2024 UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FACULTY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP OR RESEARCH



Vandana Janeja

Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development and Professor of Information Systems, College of Engineering and Information Technology

Director, iHARP, NSF-HDR Institute for Harnessing Data and Model Revolution in the Polar Regions

Vandana Janeja is an exemplary researcher, mentor, educator, and leader in the field of data science and artificial intelligence. She has brought an ethos of equity, respect, transparency, and curiosity to her teams' research efforts that has enabled a model of transdisciplinary collaboration for social impact. Her abilities have played a key role in the advancement of computationally intensive methods in arctic research, as shown through the iHARP project she leads. She heads the Multi-Data Lab at UMBC, uniting important societal projects such as climate change, ethics in data science, misinformation detection, and security through the lens of her research in data science. Dr. Janeja is deeply committed to mentoring a diverse group of students and researchers. She is currently mentoring 10 doctoral students, as well as directing the undergraduate Data Science Scholars Program. Her outreach to engage students from different majors and K-12 students brings new generations into the real world applications of data science, while allowing these students to have real impact. Dr. Janeja holds a Ph.D. in information technology from Rutgers University. She completed her M.B.A. from Rutgers University and an M.S. in computer science from New Jersey Institute of Technology.

**2024 UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS
STAFF AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SERVICE TO THE
UNIVERSITY OR GREATER COMMUNITY**



Stanyell Odom

*Director of Alumni Engagement,
Office of Institutional Advancement*

Throughout the 17 years of her tenure at UMBC, including in her current position as director of alumni engagement, Stanyell has become recognized at UMBC and throughout the University System of Maryland alumni engagement community as a trusted and respected colleague, manager, shared governance leader, and mentor. Her outstanding contributions include establishing the Chapter of Black and Latino Alumni, Legends of Excellence Awards, and elevating the annual Alumni of the Year Awards and UMBC's annual Homecoming to become a highlight of alumni engagement. Her leadership, vision, and enthusiasm were instrumental in planning and executing UMBC's remarkable and memorable 50th celebration and the nationwide RetriEVER Grateful tour that engaged over 4,000 alumni and resulted in substantial donations and gifts. A true believer in giving back, Stanyell served as vice president and president of the Professional Staff Senate (PSS) and provided leadership for development of the PSS's Staff Mentoring Program. She's demonstrated that people—alumni, students, colleagues—are always at the center of her work.

**2024 UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND BOARD OF REGENTS
STAFF AWARD FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY**



Margo Young

Director, Earth and Space Research Administration

Margo began her career at UMBC in 2007 and quickly progressed in her responsibilities, serving first as business manager, then assistant director, and associate director of the JCET and two other research centers: the Center for Space Sciences and Technology and the Goddard Planetary Heliophysics Institute. In 2019, Margo initiated and led a major administrative transformation to develop an independent shared services center called Earth and Space Research Administration (ESRA), supporting roughly 230 scientists in three research centers and one institutional center. Her exceptional vision in developing ESRA, nurturing UMBC's important relationship with NASA, and her outstanding work as a leader in UMBC's vital program of research administration greatly contributed to naming UMBC as an R1 university. Margo's administrative decisions and knowledge on how they impact science and creative activities are declared "unmatched" by her colleagues, and efficiency projects such as DocuSign, Procurement, and Travel System, which Margo was instrumental in launching, result in multimillion cost savings.

2024 - 2027 DIANE M. LEE TEACHING AWARD**Janet R. Gross**

Lecturer, English and Academic Engagement and Transition First-Year Seminar

Janet Gross has been teaching first-year students at UMBC since 2017. She is known for her commitment and unwavering support to new students. Her first-year composition courses step students through the writing process and she cheerfully makes herself available for clarifications and quelling student anxieties. In addition, Janet has taught the invaluable course

Introduction to an Honors University (now known as University 101), settling the new students into university life at UMBC through topics such as academic success, healthy self-care and self-knowledge, global education, career exploration, financial skills and campus resources. To better her teaching, Janet is a regular participant in year-long faculty development programs, most recently in inclusive teaching, contemplative pedagogies and fostering critical thinking. A tireless advocate of enriching students and exposing them to available opportunities, she is planning to take a group of new Retrievers to Ireland this summer. Her passion, support, and care ensures that first-year students transform to firmly established, “whole” Retrievers.

2024 - 2027 JAKUBIK FAMILY ENDOWMENT STAFF AWARD**B. Collier Jones '16**

*Campus Portal Architect,
Division of Information Technology*

B. Collier Jones has been a transformative force at UMBC since joining in 2006, using his passion for technology and design to enhance myUMBC and other initiatives with an attitude described as “distinctly and unapologetically student-oriented.” With his team, Collier developed the Profile, a tool that consolidates student information onto a

single screen. This includes the “degree donut,” a visual tool showing degree progress, and the “registration guide,” which personalizes advising by integrating individual student data. He also introduced features to facilitate promotion and engagement for departments and student organizations, targeted institutional communications, event attendance tracking, and profile sharing for parents. Collier earned a bachelor’s degree in information systems from UMBC in 2016.

**2024 KAREN L. WENSCH ENDOWMENT AWARD FOR
OUTSTANDING NON-EXEMPT STAFF**



Donique J. Lewis

*Executive Administrative Assistant II, College of
Engineering and Information Technology*

Donique J. Lewis is an engaged, dedicated, and cheerful team member who goes above and beyond to provide the best customer service and overall positive experience campus-wide. Donique has been with UMBC for 20 years. In 2019, she joined COEIT, where she triages phone calls, meeting requests, and visitors for the office. During the

COVID-19 pandemic, she supported her colleagues virtually by maintaining deadlines while also providing mental encouragement by scheduling regular check-ins with the entire team. During the transition between COEIT deans, Donique went beyond her role to ensure the transition was as seamless as possible while continuing to provide quality service to the university. She accomplished these feats all while pursuing a B.S. degree from University of Maryland Global Campus in gerontology and aging services, where she also made the Dean's List in the fall.



2024 MARILYN E. DEMOREST AWARD FOR FACULTY ADVANCEMENT**Lee Blaney**

Professor, Chemical, Biochemical and Environmental Engineering

Mentoring early-career and future faculty is one of Professor Lee Blaney's passions. He has particularly dedicated himself to this task through professional service to the Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors (AEESP). Blaney is a co-organizer of the AEESP Faculty Mentoring Program, which matches 30 - 40 early-career faculty mentees with senior faculty mentors each year. He has also served as a mentor in every iteration of this important program. Blaney invests a significant amount of time in each of his mentees, offering structured guidance on tenure and promotion expectations, comprehensive feedback on proposals and tenure packages, and positive reinforcement. As president elect of AEESP, he also delivers ad hoc support and advice to faculty around the country on various matters. Blaney has leveraged similar interests to ensure successful faculty searches at UMBC. As a STRIDE fellow (2019 - 2023), he conducted dozens of consultations and workshops related to best practices for inclusive faculty searches. As a recipient of the 2023 - 2024 Marilyn E. Demorest Faculty Advancement Award, Blaney plans to work with the colleges to increase nominations of UMBC faculty for prestigious awards.

**L.D. Timmie Topoleski**

Professor, Mechanical Engineering

Since arriving at UMBC in 1990, Topoleski has been a dedicated member of the mechanical engineering faculty, mentoring undergraduate and graduate students and encouraging excellence in his lab and beyond. He has served as president of the Faculty Senate and won numerous awards for his service and teaching, including being named UMBC Presidential Teaching Professor, a fellow with the American Institute for Medical and Biomedical Engineering, UMBC Honors College Faculty of the Year, among others. His research focuses on understanding fundamental mechanisms of material behavior, and using that understanding to create new materials to solve problems based on materials performance and longevity. His research is focused on biomaterials: both materials that are manufactured to be implanted in the human body and understanding human tissues as materials. The current studies in his lab concentrate on surface modifications to biomaterials to prevent wear and corrosion; micro- and nano-structural modifications to increase fatigue and fracture resistance; understanding the structure/function changes in human arteries that occur as a result of aging or disease; and responses to interventions used to treat heart disease.

2024 TERESA LUPINEK ENDOWMENT AWARD



Sundiata "Sunji" Jangha, M.P.P. '18

Director of Pipeline Programs, Upward Bound Mathematics and Science Center, Director of Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Program (LSAMP), and Co-PI and leader of LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate Fellowships in the Office of Academic Opportunity Programs

Sunji Jangha is described as a community builder, extraordinary mentor, master at communication, and empathetic listener with an unwavering willingness to offer assistance. Sunji has served the mission of UMBC for over 15 years, supporting and motivating current and prospective students from underrepresented communities to succeed in postsecondary education programs in STEM. He truly lives to make the campus more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming for our students. His mentorship focuses on identifying with students' struggles, sharing his own keys to persistence, and connecting them directly to others who can be mentors in their next steps toward success. Sunji earned his B.S. from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and M.S. from Georgia Institute of Technology. He completed a master's in public policy in 2018 and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at UMBC.

2024 UMBC RESEARCH FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARD



Roberto A. Fernandez Borda

Senior Research Engineer, Goddard Earth Sciences Technology and Research II (GESTAR II)

Roberto Fernandez Borda joined UMBC in 2006, specializing in researching and designing novel instrumental applications for remote sensing and addressing complex problems using fundamental physics principles. He employs analytical mathematical methods and computational simulations in his work. One of Dr. Borda's significant accomplishments is the development of a comprehensive computational model for characterizing the response of optical systems to polarized and partially polarized light. Dr. Borda serves as the lead optical designer of the HARP polarimeter family (HARP2 is currently in space in NASA's PACE mission) and also leads the design of the FPGA firmware controlling the custom acquisition of the polarimeters. His adeptness at bridging the gap between engineers and scientists greatly facilitates the achievement of scientific goals within his projects. Dr. Borda provides invaluable mentorship to UMBC students, enabling interns under his guidance to launch successful careers in organizations such as NASA, NSA, and the private sector. He earned his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Buenos Aires.



To learn more about past awardees
please visit facultystaffawards.umbc.edu.





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