Connections

Fall 2025 COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE www.uwsp.edu/cols

Psychology Faculty Earns Statewide Teaching Honor

Department of Psychology Katz Distinguished Professor Jeana Council has won every faculty category award during her tenure at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Council is honored this year with the Universities of Wisconsin 2025 Board of Regents Teaching Excellence Award.

Council joined her alma mater of UWSP in 2003. Since her earliest teaching days, she has strived to keep innovating and engaging with students. Her work encompasses sound research. For example, as part of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Scholars program in 2010, she collected data to assess learning and personal outcomes for students who participated in service learning as part of her course, Positive Psychology. Students served for area non-profits, dedicating 4,000 hours in their service-learning projects and raising over $26,000 from fundraising efforts in the process. And further, her students personally benefited.

Professor Jeana Council, psychology, holds her Universities of Wisconsin 2025 Board of Regents Teaching Excellence Award.

Dr. Council assessed her students' levels of positive and negative affect and other types of functioning before and after service-learning. The results were published as part of SoTL research in multiple scholarly outlets. Her assessments have demonstrated students' levels of happiness increase with service.

Her analysis of service learning was recognized nationally by groups including the American Psychological Association's Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) Award for Infusing Diversity into Teaching, among others.

Outside of the classroom, Council has grown the Psychology Human Services internship program immensely in her 15 years as coordinator. Students are placed with 75 sites in Wisconsin and surrounding states, working with students to get them connected to applied learning in their home communities. Those workplace experiences boost student confidence and drive successful graduate school admissions and employment by her former students.

In fact, UWSP '07 graduate, Rhea Owens, professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, enrolled in the same graduate program as Council, The University of Kansas, for the Counseling Psychology doctoral program. She set an engaging example, Owens said. She remembers Dr. Council as a dynamic lecturer who emphasized her own clinical examples she would share through her work in private practice. This instilled a crucial understanding for Owens.

"I distinctly remember Dr. Council's perspective and her sharing, 'there is more to a person than their diagnosis'," said Owens.

The two went on to collaborate over a period of years. Owens was a student research assistant on Council's learning outcomes analysis, gauging the impacts of team-testing as opposed to solo testing in studies. Those endeavors resulted in publications and conference presentations.

Since Council's earliest teaching experiences during graduate school, she desired to model effective active-learning approaches. She developed SoTL projects that could foster her students' intellectual growth. In one, she used a clicker response system to elicit student responses in real time. It also gave students anonymity regarding their answers to sensitive questions and increased their participation rates.

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UWSP Offers Credential for Cybersecurity Professionals

UW-Stevens Point is now a recognized EC-Council Academia Partner with nationally recognized standards in security training. As an accredited EC-Council Certification institution, UWSP is an authorized partner through October 28, 2028. EC-Council Academia Partners are committed to cybersecurity education, certification, and experiential learning to strengthen the cybersecurity posture of the global workforce. The university is pleased to announce the opportunity for alumni to sit for their Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) credential at a 50 percent discount. Interested in learning more information? Send an email: cnmt@uwsp.edu.

EC-COUNCIL | ACADEMIA PARTNER

DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE

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"As a teacher, I feel I can contribute to student learning of those things most worth knowing via fostering open-mindedness, developing critical-thinking abilities, and helping students to learn to appreciate and work with other people. I see the content of what I teach as a significant part of the picture, however, I see the process of how it is taught to be of the utmost importance," Council said.

The passion for learning that Council modeled for '25 Psychology: Human Services graduate Mickey McGuire instilled values she uses in her position as a deflection specialist for the Marathon County District Court. Discussions brought people together and empowered the students to share ideas.

"Her classes really solidified my interests. She cultivated a space that was so welcoming with differing opinions," said McGuire. "Her teaching style and passion, you could just feel it in the classroom."

She said Council emphasized a strength-based treatment approach in working with clients. That is something McGuire leans on routinely while working with adults who have substance use challenges. The district court program works with community partners to place people into treatment programs and services for mental health and substance use, where it applies, as opposed to answering the charges in the court system. McGuire said she feels she is well positioned to make positive impacts through her two internship experiences and her psychology degree work.

Celebrating Dr. Council's award, left to right: Provost La Vonne Cornell-Swanson, Jeana Council, College Dean Joshua Hagen and Assistant Dean of the School of Behavioral and Social Sciences Craig Wendorf.

"I really lead with what clients say are their strengths and by taking a collaborative approach," McGuire said.

Council will no doubt continue to demonstrate engaging teaching methods for her students and strive to keep analyzing those teaching strategies in her career. The esteemed Board of Regents Teaching Excellence Award comes with $7,500 in award funds to be used toward program development activities to enhance Council's ongoing work.

Alumni Honored at Homecoming Celebration

The UW-Stevens Point Alumni Awards recognize those who have made an impact in Wisconsin and beyond. University leadership and friends gathered to celebrate the newest honored alumni at an evening celebration for Homecoming 2025 on Oct. 18, 2025.

The **Lifetime Achievement Award** is given to graduates who, over the course of 20 years or more since graduating from UWSP, have achieved overall greatness in professional, service or personal areas.

Frank, '70 and Kathleen Haeni '70, were longtime educators prior to their retirement. They have supported students at UWSP through volunteer service, endowed scholarships, faculty-mentored undergraduate research, the College of Letters and Science Undergraduate Research Symposium and the Olson Museum of Natural History. Their recent commitment created an endowment to fund laboratory repairs, equipment purchases and maintenance in what is now the Frank R. and Kathleen Y. Haeni Chemistry Biology Building. Kathleen was a seventh and eighth grade science teacher for 24 years. During her career, she was also a part-time naturalist while in New York and was the Camp Bird Director for the School District of Crivitz from 1986-2010. Frank taught science education for 33 years.

Left, Dean Joshua Hagen greets Frank and Kathleen Haeni during Homecoming festivities Oct. 18 at Goerke Park.

The **Distinguished Alumni Award** is given to alumni who have demonstrated exceptional achievement in their professions.

Julie Lassa '93, political science, is the Administrator for the Division of Agriculture Development for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture where she connects farmers to resources and businesses to local and international opportunities. She previously served as State Director for USDA Rural Development in Wisconsin where she oversaw the investment of over $2.7 billion to strengthen rural communities through investments in housing, community infrastructure, and business development. As a Wisconsin state legislator, Julie championed legislation protecting children, promoting workforce and economic development, and making government more accountable to taxpayers.

The **Trailblazer Award** is bestowed upon an alumnus who has achieved outstanding professional accomplishments in their area of study, employment or research early on in their career.

Khalif El-Amin '09, sociology, is the co-founder and COO of Young Enterprising Society (YES). YES serves as a project management company that specializes in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) programming for middle and high school students, and business acceleration for underrepresented founders with tech startups. YES has worked with over 6,000 students in eight different states, and 85 adult startups in 10 different YES Blueprint cohorts.

ARRIVALS

Welcome College of Letters and Science Faculty and Staff

FACULTY

Ibrahim Said Ahmad - Computing and New Media Technologies
Vanessa Bailey - Geography and Geology
Chris Hanten - Sociology and Social Work
Jianan Liu - Biology
Ashley Peper - Computing and New Media Technologies

INSTRUCTIONAL ACADEMIC STAFF

Guldana Bazarbayeva - Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant
Cory Bougie - Chemistry and Biochemistry
Dion Campbell - Sociology and Social Work
Victoria Kuykendall - English
Eileen Lee - Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant
Salvador Lopez Rivera - World Languages and Literatures
Rachel Tanski - English
Bertrand Tirel - Mathematical Sciences
Doug Urbina - Mathematical Sciences

STAFF

Eliza Christopher - NADF
Thomas Craig - NADF

Museum Gift Shop Opening

The first week of December marked the opening of the Olson Museum of Natural History Gift Shop. While the Rock and Fossil Room undergoes some additional exhibit installation work, the gift shop located in Science A104 welcomed visitors to browse the nature and science-themed merchandise. The shop will be open for sales from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., initially from Tuesday through Friday. Visitors will see the newly installed allosaurus display in the lobby, just outside the gift shop entry!

Meanwhile, the museum's Junior Science programs continued to connect UWSP student interns with children and their families. Fall programs, attended by over 140, provided a central science topic and then an activity to engage participants through art, experimentation, games and more.

Outreach specialist Brigid Ferkett, left, rings up the first customer sale in the newly opened Museum Gift Shop.

Dean's Message

Dear Friends of UW-Stevens Point's College of Letters and Science,

The 2025-26 academic year got off to a strong start with nearly 1,900 incoming first-year students. While retention rates among current students remained strong, it was exciting to welcome so many new Pointers to campus. We are also excited to launch new programs in Artificial Intelligence, Geographic Information Science, Cannabis Science, and a Masters in Social Work, while also keeping our existing curriculum strong and relevant for students and employers across Central Wisconsin and beyond.

Our Winter Commencement celebrated the more than 115 graduates from College of Letters and Science majors who stepped across the stage to earn their place among Pointer alumni. We are proud of their accomplishments and eager to see what they will achieve next.

As always, this newsletter can only provide a small snapshot of those achievements across teaching, research, and service to our communities and state. I owe my heartfelt gratitude to the faculty, staff, and students of the College of Letters and Science for their dedication and determination to make a difference.

Joshua Hagen

SAVE THE DATE!

Alumni and friends of the College are welcome to celebrate the achievements of our outstanding student researchers. The 27th Annual COLS Undergraduate Research Symposium will take place on Friday, May 1, 2026.

Faculty mentors and students will once again prepare to present research from across the humanities, natural sciences, math, computing, and the social and behavioral sciences. Nearly 150 research posters and oral presentations will be showcased in the Haeni Chemistry Biology Building. The opening presentation by David Barry, professor of sociology, will be held in Room 105.

MAY 1, 2026

2:00 p.m. - OPENING REMARKS/ PRESENTATION

2:30 - 4:00 p.m. - ORAL/ POSTER SESSIONS

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

STEVENS POINT • MARSHFIELD • WAUSAU

NEUROSCIENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

UW-Stevens Point hosted over 160 attendees for the Upper Midwest Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience on October 25. The event featured nine nanosymposium presentations, 48 research posters, and a keynote by Dr. Herbert Covington of Empire State University. One of the lead conference organizers was assistant professor of psychology Sean Mooney-Leber. View the photo album.

Conference keynote speaker, below, Herb Covington of Empire State University.

Left, Sean Mooney-Leber, speaks after the presentation by his student, right, Nicole Pingel. She presented the winning conference Lightning Presentation for the project, "Sex and Genetic Influences on Biobehavioral Outcomes Following Acute Restraint Stress."

Dean Joshua Hagen, right, presents the Homecoming Scholarship check to English Education major Emily Mathiowetz. The $1,000 is awarded toward her spring semester tuition.

Day of Giving Surpasses Goal

Giving Tuesday was a big success with more than 315 gifts to support students and programs at UWSP. The Alumni Association reported total giving of $109,544, surpassing its goal of $80,000. The College is fundraising to keep the treasured Blocher Planetarium going strong; offering informative, accessible science programming to young and old alike. Donations raised $16,000 to go toward needed technology updates so the space will continue to inspire future generations. Don '75 and Judi '76 Olson provided a giving match of up to $7,500 in the "Rebuild the Wonder" campaign. You can still support the ongoing campaign for the Planetarium by visiting the COLS giving page.

POINT TO THE STARS
REBUILD WONDER

To create a legacy at UW-Stevens Point, please contact COLS Major Gifts Officer Amanda Gilman
amanda.gilman@uwsp.edu | 715-346-2299
Thank you for your consideration!

Social Media

Connect with the College of Letters and Science UWSPCOLS on social media platforms:

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution and a tobacco-free campus.

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