

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Albertan Researchers and Teachers celebrated for “life-changing” work

Edmonton, Alberta - September 25, 2024 - The Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2024 Distinguished Academic Awards, celebrating the outstanding contributions of academic staff at Alberta's public universities. The ceremony will be held in Edmonton on September 26.

The recipient of the 2024 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award is Dr. George Georgiou, Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Professor Georgiou is a groundbreaking researcher in the fields of literacy acquisition and early prevention of reading difficulties. His work has transformed literacy education across Canada and internationally. As director of the Reading Research Laboratory, Dr. Georgiou and his team have developed reading intervention programs that have helped thousands of children in Alberta and in disadvantaged countries to read at grade expected levels.

Dr. Janelle Baker, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Athabasca University, is the winner of the 2024 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award. Dr. Baker is a pioneer in working with Indigenous communities on issues of food sovereignty and environmental monitoring. She has led multiple community-based projects examining the impacts of resource extraction on traditional food systems. Her collaborations with the Bigstone Cree Nation and Stoney Nakoda Nations have influenced national policy on Indigenous rights and environmental justice.

The 2024 CAFA Distinguished Teaching Award is awarded to Dr. Robbin Gibb, Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Lethbridge. Professor Gibb is recognized for her exceptional contributions to academic and community education. For more than 25 years, Professor Gibb has inspired students of all levels with her teaching and research. Her innovative pedagogical methods and dedication to science outreach have made lasting impacts on public health initiatives. She is a national leader in promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in science.

The 2024 Distinguished Teaching Award for Precarious Faculty is awarded to Professor Kristine Nutting, a theater instructor at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus. Professor Nutting is celebrated for her transformative and life-changing work in post-modern theater praxis and interdisciplinary arts and commitment to equity, decolonial pedagogies, and innovative, performance-based teaching. Despite her precarious academic employment, Professor Nutting's dedication to her students has made her a vital member of the academic and local communities.

“These awards from researchers at four different institutions show the strength of public post secondary education in Alberta,” said Dr. Lee Easton, President of CAFA. “For 18 years, the CAFA awards have celebrated the important contributions Albertan researchers and teachers have made to our community through research, teaching, and creative pursuits. We congratulate this year’s winners”

[For further information on the work of this year’s Award recipients, please see the attached backgrounders.](#)

For more information, contact: Lori Morinville, admin@cafa-ab.ca, 780-232-6812

Backgrounders

2024 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award

Professor George Georgiou, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Dr. George Georgiou, Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta, is an internationally recognized expert in literacy acquisition, focusing on the early identification and remediation of reading difficulties. Over the past two decades, Dr. Georgiou has developed evidence-based reading interventions that have reached over 60,000 students across Canada and around the world, including Belize, India, and multiple Canadian provinces. His collaborative research with educators has not only transformed classrooms but also contributed to the development of English Language Arts curricula in Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick. Dr. Georgiou's dedication to the field of literacy education has earned him numerous accolades, including the prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, the Killam Professorship, and induction into the Royal Society of Canada. His research continues to influence educational policies and practices, equipping educators with the tools needed to foster literacy in children, especially those at risk for reading difficulties. In addition to his teaching and research, Dr. Georgiou leads the J. P. Das Centre on Developmental and Learning Disabilities at the University of Alberta, offering free reading assessments and interventions to families in need.

2024 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award

Dr. Janelle Baker, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Athabasca University

Dr. Janelle Baker, an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Athabasca University, leads a robust research program focused on Indigenous food sovereignty, environmental contamination, and cultural preservation. Since joining Athabasca University in 2018, Dr. Baker has collaborated extensively with First Nations communities, including the Bigstone Cree Nation and Stoney Nakoda Nations, to document and respond to environmental impacts on traditional food systems caused by industrial activities. Her interdisciplinary approach, combining ethnography and environmental science, has resulted in groundbreaking contributions to public policy and Indigenous rights. With over \$5 million in research funding, Dr. Baker's work has garnered widespread attention, featured in major media outlets like CBC and National Geographic, and has led to significant academic outputs, including peer-reviewed publications and international lectures. Dr. Baker also serves as a lead author for the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Environment Outlook, further solidifying her role as a leading figure in the study of Indigenous knowledge and environmental justice.

2024 CAFA Distinguished Teaching Award

Professor Robbin Gibb, Department of Neuroscience, University of Lethbridge

Dr. Robbin Gibb, Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Lethbridge, is widely recognized for her contributions to teaching, research, and public outreach. With a research focus on brain development, particularly how preconception experiences shape offspring brain function, Dr. Gibb has mentored hundreds of students through hands-on research projects, helping them develop skills in neuroscience research. Beyond the university, Dr. Gibb is passionate about translating her research for public benefit, regularly engaging with parents, educators, clinicians, and policymakers to promote healthy brain development. Her innovative community outreach efforts, including involvement with Indigenous communities and regional schools, have made a profound impact on public health initiatives. Dr. Gibb has also been recognized for her efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in STEM fields, and her students frequently commend her engaging teaching style and dedication to their academic growth. Dr. Gibb's work exemplifies the power of research-informed teaching, with lasting benefits for both her students and the broader community.

**2024 Distinguished Teaching Award for Precarious Faculty Professor
Kristine Nutting, Augustana Campus, University of Alberta**

Professor Kristine Nutting has been a cornerstone of the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus since 2011, where her innovative and experiential approach to teaching theater has transformed the lives of countless students. Specializing in post-modern theater praxis, movement, and contemporary interdisciplinary art, Kristine blends creative performance with a deep understanding of cultural theory and pedagogy. Her work extends beyond the classroom, with a rich body of creative performances, workshops, and community-based projects that have earned her numerous awards, including the William H. Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Through her commitment to inclusive and decolonial pedagogies, Kristine creates an inspiring and supportive environment, encouraging students to push creative boundaries while fostering personal growth.

– 40 –