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Three Faculty Awards To Be Given at May Graduation Ceremonies

Winthrop University

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Three Faculty Awards To Be Given at May Graduation Ceremonies

Quick Facts

- On May 5, President Dan Mahony will present the Jane LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award to Melissa Carsten, an associate professor of management.
- During the May 7 undergraduate Commencement ceremonies, the president will bestow the Distinguished Professor Award on Scott Huffmon, a political science professor, and the Outstanding Junior Professor Award on Kristen Abernathy, an assistant professor of mathematics.



Melissa Carsten

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA - During upcoming May graduation exercises, Winthrop University will honor faculty members who are known for their dedicated teaching, ground-breaking scholarship, and collaborative work with others.

On May 5, **President Dan Mahony** will present the **Jane LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award** to **Melissa Carsten**, an associate professor of management. The presentation will occur during the 7 p.m. graduate Commencement ceremony at the Winthrop Coliseum, where master's or specialist degrees will be given to nearly 245 graduate degree candidates.



Scott Huffmon

During the May 7 undergraduate Commencement ceremonies, the president will bestow the **Distinguished Professor Award** on **Scott Huffmon**, a political science professor, and the **Outstanding Junior Professor Award** on **Kristen Abernathy**, an assistant professor of mathematics.

This year's undergraduate commencement activities will be split into two ceremonies. The faculty awards will be presented at 10 a.m. at the Winthrop Coliseum during the ceremony for the **College of Arts and Sciences** and the **College of Visual and Performing Arts**. A 3 p.m. Commencement will be held for those graduating from the **Richard W. Riley College of Education** and the **College of Business Administration**.



Kristen Abernathy

The first undergraduate ceremony will involve nearly 390 seniors from the colleges of Arts and Sciences and Visual and Performing Arts, while the afternoon ceremony will honor 290 seniors from the colleges of Business Administration and Education.

Distinguished Professor

Scott Huffmon is the **2016 Distinguished Professor of the Year**. The designation is the highest honor the Winthrop community can bestow upon a faculty member.

He joined the Winthrop faculty in 2001 as an assistant professor of political science. Promoted to associate professor in 2006, Huffmon earned tenure in 2007 and was promoted to professor in 2011. He was recognized as Winthrop's Outstanding Junior Professor in 2004.

Huffmon founded and has served as the director of the Social and Behavioral Research Laboratory since 2002. His direction of the Winthrop Poll, considered the most scientific and consistent measure of the opinions of South Carolinians specifically and Southern voters more generally, has earned him an international, national, and regional reputation as the go-to expert on American, Southern, and South Carolina politics.

During this presidential election cycle and with South Carolina's unique position as the "First in the South" primary, Winthrop has received significant media attention because of campus visits by 10 presidential candidates and Winthrop Poll findings. Huffmon's expertise, name recognition, hundreds of media interviews and polling data have catapulted Winthrop into the media spotlight on several occasions.

Excellent in the classroom, Huffmon teaches mainly in the areas of American politics and political methodology. He also is a prolific scholar and researcher. In 2015 he published four peer reviewed articles and one book chapter. His colleagues noted that he mentors undergraduate and graduate students alike and lists them as co-authors on his publications. Several have gone on to successful careers in government, politics, public relations, survey research, and academia.

Huffmon also earned selection as a member of the Class of 2015 Liberty Fellows. He received an Fulbright Lecturing Fellowship in American studies and spent the fall 2009 semester teaching at the University of Debrecen in Debrecen, Hungary.

He currently is engaging in a sabbatical project on the attitudes of the Presbyterian Church on marriage equality.

Huffmon earned a Ph.D. in American politics and political methodology from the University of Mississippi and a bachelor's degree from James Madison University.

Outstanding Junior Professor

Kristen Abernathy, an assistant professor of mathematics, is the **2016 Outstanding Junior Professor**. Her selection indicates a reputation for inspired teaching, research or creative excellence and dedication to the welfare of students.

She joined the Winthrop faculty in 2011. In her five years at the university, she has distinguished herself as an excellent teacher, which has been recognized at the regional level with her receiving the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) Southeastern Section's Beginning Teaching Award in 2015.

Abernathy also is a MAA Project NExT (New Experiences in Teaching) fellow, an undergraduate mentor for the National Alliance for Doctoral Studies in the Mathematical Sciences, and student activities coordinator for the MAA Southeastern section.

She teaches a wide range of courses from introductory level and general education courses to advanced courses in undergraduate mathematical research. Her colleagues noted that she demonstrates maturity and professionalism in the classroom, and she constantly seeks to find new ways for students to better connect with mathematics. To help recruit students to Winthrop and to showcase the mathematics department, Abernathy was one of the organizers of the department's successful Sonia Kovalevsky Day, which is an outreach program designed to spark interest in mathematics in middle school girls.

Equally committed to student intellectual development outside of the classroom, Abernathy has mentored 14 undergraduate research projects, and she encourages students to attend regional and national mathematics conferences.

She also devotes considerable time to scholarly endeavors. She currently has three manuscripts that have been submitted for publication.

Abernathy has distinguished herself through service to her department and the university. Currently she serves as her department's curriculum committee chair, internships coordinator, and library liaison. At the university level, she serves on the judicial council, academic council, intensive writing committee, teacher education committee, library committee, and as an advisor to the mathematics club, Nu Epsilon Rho Delta.

Abernathy earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Catawba College, a master's degree in mathematics from Wake Forest University, and a Ph.D. in mathematics from North Carolina State University.

Jane LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award

Melissa Carsten, an associate professor of management, is the **2016 recipient of the Jane LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award**. This award, established in 2008, recognizes outstanding teaching at the graduate level and significant contributions to graduate education at Winthrop.

Carsten joined the Winthrop faculty in 2008 as an assistant professor of management. She was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor in 2013. Her colleagues noted that her stellar teaching evaluations consistently place her in the top third of all college faculty. Because of her

exceptional teaching, she also earned the College of Business Administration's 2015 Wells Fargo Outstanding Teaching Award.

Her colleagues have also praised her dedication, knowledge, and enthusiasm in enhancing the M.B.A. curriculum through course innovations and service learning activities, involvement in college and university committees, and individual mentoring of graduate students in the College of Business Administration.

Carsten also has developed an outstanding portfolio of intellectual contribution. In a five-year period, she has had seven articles accepted for publication in relevant and reputable refereed journals, published two books on leaderships and followership, contributed seven chapters to scholarly books, and has presented more than 20 papers at national conferences. In addition, she contributes her time and talents as an editorial review board member for The Leadership Quarterly and Group and Organization Management publications.

She received her Ph.D. in organizational psychology in 2006 from Claremont Graduate University, an M.S. in industrial-organizational psychology in 2002 from San Francisco State University, and a bachelor's degree in psychology with honors in 2000 from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 and longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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