

## NEWS RELEASE

### Contacts

[Abbey Goers](#), Marketing Communications, 715-232-2565

[Marketing Communications](#), 715-232-2381

[News Center](#)



## UW-Stout's Fostering Success Program, leaders awarded by Gov. Evers at state Diversity Awards

*First-of-its-kind program, Provost Rodríguez, Professor Lukowski recognized Oct. 27 at capitol*

[Story Link](#)

**Photos attached**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 30, 2023

Menomonie, Wis. – A unique program and two outstanding individuals at University of Wisconsin-Stout were recognized by the [Wisconsin State Council on Affirmative Action](#) and the Division of Personnel Management for their commitment to faculty, staff and student success through diverse educational services and efforts in the workforce.

At the council's Diversity Awards ceremony on Oct. 27, UW-Stout's [Fostering Success Program](#), the first-of-its-kind program on Universities on Wisconsin campuses, received the Ann Lydecker Educational Diversity Award.

UW-Stout **Provost Glendalí Rodríguez**, vice chancellor of Academic Affairs, received the Lifetime of Service Diversity Award for her profound impact on efforts across the institution for the last two decades.

And **Associate Professor Alison Lukowski** received an Outstanding Leadership Diversity Award for her leadership as director of the university's First-Year Composition program, promoting a respectful and inclusive campus environment.

"UW-Stout is appreciative of this recognition of the outstanding work of our faculty and staff in support of student success and institutional excellence," said **Chancellor Katherine Frank**. "We value our people at UW-Stout. It is because of their tireless efforts on behalf of our institution and

our students that we are able to meet our mission as Wisconsin's Polytechnic University and support the workforce needs of our state.”

UW-Stout has received the Ann Lydecker Educational Diversity Award two years in a row; [Stoutward Bound](#), an early-start bridge program for incoming first-year underrepresented students, including first-generation or low-income students, was recognized in 2022. Fostering Success received the [Regents' Diversity Award](#) from the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents in 2020.

[View the awards ceremony recording on YouTube.](#)

### **Fostering Success through unequalled support**

UW-Stout's Fostering Success supports college students who were former foster youth, students who have experienced out-of-home care, are orphaned or wards of the court, or those experiencing housing insecurity, a population that is often underserved and faces additional barriers to college education.

The program provides guidance, resources, leadership and involvement opportunities on and off campus so students can make the most of their college experience.

Fostering Success has a strong enrollment and retention rate, with 30 returning students in the program this year and 46 new eligible students identified. Students in the program have an average cumulative grade point average of 3.0 and are retained at an average rate of 73%.

Nationally, although 80% of foster youth hope to attend college, only 13% enroll and less than 4% graduate from a four-year institution.

The program also coordinates overnight experiences and campus tours for youth ages 13 to 17 to learn about higher education, grants and scholarships, courses and resources. It provides information to other campuses interested in developing a similar program.

**Angie Ruppe**, director of [Fostering Success](#) and [TRIO Student Support Services](#), is proud and honored that the program was recognized.

“Fostering Success has been a labor of love and a collective effort by our university community, and its impact on the lives of our students is truly remarkable,” she said. “It's heartwarming to know that our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is being acknowledged. This award serves as a validation of the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in the program.”

In its letter of recognition, the DOA congratulated Fostering Success, as its initiative “embodies your institution's commitment to equity and inclusion. The program also showcases your dedication to offering a multicultural, multiethnic experience for students at all levels of academic pursuit. Programs such as this make a difference in student success and make possible options that might not otherwise be attainable.”

Fostering Success works in collaboration with the TRIO Student Support Services grant, which supports students from first-generation and limited-income backgrounds as well as students with a disability.

### **A career of profound impact**

In her 18 years at UW-Stout, Rodríguez has been an active leader at the university, in the community and in academia, affecting positive change with a collaborative approach through her expertise, actions and lived experience as a woman of color.

She joined UW-Stout's [construction program](#) in 2005 as its only female faculty member and has had a demonstrable impact on the university through progressive roles as department chair, associate provost and provost. Rodriguez continues to play a central leadership role on the university's Baldrige committee, which identifies people as a key driver of organizational success.

Actively involved with students beyond the classroom, Rodriguez was also an early advocate of planned improvements to UW-Stout's [Student Counseling Center](#). She has served as a faculty adviser to UW-Stout's Latinos Unidos chapter, one of the university's largest student organizations, and as director of the university's former STEPS program, inspiring young women in engineering, technology and science fields.

Under her leadership, UW-Stout was awarded the U.S. State Department, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs' IDEAS grant to support a series of [heritage-based, faculty-led study abroad programs](#) and led the first Latinx program to Costa Rica in January 2023.

To aid faculty, Rodríguez worked to create support networks for diverse employees across campus through the Minority Faculty and Staff Network, now known as the Underrepresented Faculty and Staff Alliance.

As a licensed architect with expertise in building information modeling and design, she has advised nonprofit organizations on aspects of universal design, and her work with students integrated service learning as a high impact practice.

She is a recipient of the UW System Pathways Initiative grant and was selected to participate in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Student Success Institute, a leadership development program for campus leaders to help implement transformational change necessary to meet the evolving needs of diverse students. She was the recipient of the Fellow's Choice award in the program.

### **Diversifying student experiences through education**

Lukowski is in her sixth year at UW-Stout. As director of First-Year Composition, nearly every incoming first-year student passes through her program. "We work really hard to make these courses support student success," she said.

Lukowski also teaches women and gender studies in the English, philosophy and communication studies department, serves as a faculty fellow for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office, is a core team member of the Higher Learning Commission's [Student Success Academy](#) and has presented research and published articles on supporting diverse student needs.

"Equity, diversity and inclusion have always been central to my career," she said. "Some of my motivation for this work is tied to my experience as a Pell grant recipient and first-generation college student. I took the position at Stout because I saw an opportunity to support students like me."

Now in their 24th year, the Diversity Awards were presented at the Diversity and Virginia Hart Special Recognition Awards event, at the Capitol's Assembly Chambers in Madison. The ceremony was open to the public, with remarks by Gov. Tony Evers, Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, SCAA Chair Angela Nash and special guest Maysee Herr, CEO of the Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce.

The SCAA established the Diversity Awards program in 2000 to recognize outstanding Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action practices among state agencies, UW campuses and Wisconsin technical colleges for their strong commitment to recruiting, retaining and promoting a diverse classified workforce.

“These awards recognize some of the most dedicated public servants in our midst,” said state Department of Administration Secretary Kathy Blumenfeld, “and we are proud to be able to celebrate not only the impact of these outstanding individuals, but to also inspire future leaders to serve and build a state government that is equitable and inclusive.”

UW-Stout’s [FOCUS2030 strategic plan](#) includes initiatives for inclusive excellence, student retention and employee success.

*UW-Stout is [Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes.*

###

### **Photos**

Diversity Awards recipients (from left to right) Associate Professor Alison Lukowski, Provost Glendalí Rodríguez and Fostering Success Director Angie Ruppe with Gov. Tony Evers and UW-Stout Multicultural Student Services Director Mai Khou Xiong. Photo provided by Mai Khou Xiong.

2023 Diversity and Virginia Hart award recipients at the Capitol’s Assembly Chambers in Madison. UW-Stout recipients are Provost Glendalí Rodríguez (front row, fourth from right), Associate Professor Alison Lukowski (front row, third from right) and Fostering Success Director Angie Ruppe (front row, second from right). Photo by the Department of Administration.