2025 Models of Excellence Program Awards

Models of Excellence Award

The FAFSA Simplification Act Pilot Team

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act Pilot Team educated and trained students, families, staff, and faculty on the impact of changes to the FAFSA application process and federal funding. The team developed and presented educational sessions throughout campus, resulting in a seamless application process for students and families and achieving a positive revenue stream of over $250 million in federal funding for the University.

Sadia Abarry, Division of Finance

Bria Boddie, Division of Finance

Lyndsi Burcham, Division of Finance

Samantha Corsaro, Division of Finance

Jeffrey Greenberg, Division of Finance

Erick Herrera, Division of Finance

Amy Hooper, Division of Finance

Joseph Manning, Division of Finance

Hannah R. McKeever, Division of Finance

Lissette Patterson, Division of Finance

Nicole Soroka, Division of Finance

Mathias Stangl-Riehle, Division of Finance

Tom Stewart, Division of Finance

Elaine Papas Varas, Division of Finance

Jodi Wagner, Division of Finance

Diana A. Johnson, Graduate School of Education (GSE)

Diana A. Johnson, Executive Assistant for the Dean's Office at GSE, exemplifies dedication as a steadfast supporter of multiple deans. She handles intricate schedules, sensitive matters, and cross-functional projects with grace. A cornerstone of the school's culture, Diana shares a wealth of institutional knowledge. Her reassuring, approachable presence is highly valued by faculty and staff.

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The Joint Research Practices (JRP) Working Group

The Joint Research Practices (JRP) Working Group is a collaboration between the Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics (CHIBE) and the Palliative and Advanced Illness Research (PAIR) Center. The JRP develops and disseminates best practices for conducting research that welcomes people from all backgrounds and represents the community we serve. The working group also provides free online resources and hands-on training on how to practice research in ways that build trust, promote fairness, and respect the experiences and contributions of all patients. The goal of the JRP is to make academic research more accessible to everyone.

Lizzie Bair, Perelman School of Medicine

Shira Blady, Perelman School of Medicine

Emma Britez Ferrante, Perelman School of Medicine

Emily Campbell, Perelman School of Medicine

Brigit Joseph, Perelman School of Medicine

Craig Kwiatkowski, Perelman School of Medicine

Adina Lieberman, Perelman School of Medicine

Arleen Lopez Cruz, Perelman School of Medicine

Adam Mussell, Perelman School of Medicine

Nirali Patel, Perelman School of Medicine

Sara Riaz, Perelman School of Medicine

Jonathan Richards, Perelman School of Medicine

Devon Schroeder, Perelman School of Medicine

Conor Shatto, Perelman School of Medicine

Dorothy Sheu, Perelman School of Medicine

Jingsan Zhu, Perelman School of Medicine

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Leslie M. Levin, Graduate School of Education (GSE)

Leslie M. Levin, Vice Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs in GSE, unified all centralized student services under one cohesive umbrella. She created systems and processes to maintain strong enrollment and provide the highest-quality experience to students. She plays a crucial role by prioritizing a culture of service to ensure that GSE offers students appropriate guidance and support.

Mental Health Co-Responder Program

The Mental Health Co-Responder Program is designed to enhance the University's response to urgent student mental health emergencies during overnight and weekend hours. The program reduces stigma and potential barriers to accessing necessary emergency care for students in crisis. The team successfully expanded upon the virtual co-responder model to incorporate professional, in-person mental health services to provide a safe, efficient experience for students as well as emergency responders.

Michael J. Belisairo, Division of Public Safety

Beverly Carter- Fulmore, Human Resources

Benoit Dubé, Health and Wellness

Joseph W. Ferdman, Division of Public Safety

Tamara Greenfield King, Student Services

William Melleby, Division of Public Safety

Nora Nienhagen Greenberg, Division of Public Safety

Jasmine Owens, Division of Public Safety

Paige Wigginton, Division of Public Safety

Derrick E. Wood, Division of Public Safety

Cindy Nguyen, School of Arts and Sciences (SAS)

Cindy Nguyen, Information Technology Support Specialist in SAS, is the go-to person for institutional knowledge and serves as a pivotal member of the Knowledge Management team within SAS Computing. Cindy has solidified many new standard processes and stands out as an excellent example of genuine dedication to the community. She embodies the goal of helping researchers get their work done.

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Bob Paul, Wharton School

Bob Paul, Senior Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at the Wharton School, inspires his team to exceed fundraising targets through collaboration, integrity, and strategic vision. His leadership has been pivotal in advancing interdisciplinary initiatives, including Wharton's AI and Environmental, Social, and Governance efforts. With over a decade of service, Bob's empathy and trust-based relationships with stakeholders have set him apart, while his mentorship has fostered team growth and development.

Pillars of Excellence Award

Anthony DeValerio, Facilities and Real Estate Services (FRES)

Anthony DeValerio, Chargeperson in FRES, oversees the operation and maintenance of all campus cooling and refrigerant-based systems. He ensures reliable performance across the University's infrastructure, which includes two centralized chilled water plants and an extensive 16-mile underground distribution network. Anthony's outstanding implementation of corrective, preventative, and predictive maintenance strategies has maximized system performance and reliability, which supports the University's mission by providing a comfortable, efficient, and sustainable environment for learning and research.

Weining Guo, Student Services

Weining Guo, Senior Application Developer in Student Services, is a driving force in redesigning the technical infrastructure for departments across the University Life division. Her work has drastically increased the capacity and efficiency of the division and improved the user experience for both students and staff. Weining was vital in developing University Life's account management portal, a critical tool that provides technical access to new and existing staff, automating several essential processes to free up the technical team for other initiatives. Weining has increased the technical security and stability of the University Life division.

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Hitomi Yoshida, Student Services

Hitomi Yoshida, Financial Administrative Coordinator at the Penn Women's Center (PWC), manages the Center's financial activities. She was instrumental in re-engaging the Penn community after COVID impacted the center's initiatives, to create a space where students and colleagues feel comfortable coming to the center for programs and individual support. Hitomi created more leadership opportunities for work-study students, empowering them to organize programming aligned with their passions and the PWC mission. Hitomi also streamlined financial processes to help student organizations revitalize and grow their programs.

Model Supervisor Award

Edwin Berrios, Residential and Hospitality Services (RHS)

Edwin Berrios, Associate Director for Building Operations in RHS, leads a team that directly supports 6,000 on-campus residents. He is a patient mentor who strengthens the community by promoting well-being and work-life integration. He empowers conversations by encouraging his team to explore ways to better serve our students, families, and peers with empathy and care.

Adrian Madison Cario, Wharton School

Adrian Madison Cario, Executive Director of Wharton San Francisco, transformed Wharton's West Coast campus workplace by cultivating deep relationships and fostering greater collaboration. Adrian empowers their team by creating an environment where everyone feels truly valued and respected. Among other initiatives, Adrian launched the internal Fog Lifter Award, which recognizes colleagues who bring clarity and insight to discussions.

Melissa Kelly, Provost's Center

Melissa Kelly, Deputy Managing Director at the Penn Center for Innovation, transformed the Corporate Contracts and Licensing teams through comprehensive mentorship and collaborative relationships. She is intentional and thoughtful about how individuals can grow and contribute. Melissa's strategic vision and dedication have enhanced the morale of her teams and the quality of services they provide to the Penn community.

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Model Supervisor Award

Katia Strieck, University Library

Katia Strieck, Goldstein Director in the Information Processing Center and Library Research Annex in the University Library, is a visionary leader who advances strategic initiatives to build dynamic resources, tools, and expertise that inspire critical inquiry and creative expression. Katia manages change with finesse, ensuring smooth transitions for staff within the evolving landscape of library services. Katia approaches each challenge with a consistently calm demeanor and focus on achieving the best outcome for her staff and the institution.