Operating Staff Announces Quartet of Recipients of Annual Outstanding Service Awards for 2013

Four members of NIU’s Operating Staff have been chosen to receive the Outstanding Service Awards for 2013.

The 2013 recipients are Sharon Freeman, lead secretary, Academic Advising Center; Shyree M. Sanan, business/administrative associate in the Division of Research and Graduate Studies; Steve Sarver, administrative assistant in the Office of Development; and Scott Walstrom, senior photographer in Media Services.

About 1,635 employees make up the Civil Service staff. Each year, four are selected by a committee of their peers to receive the award of plaques and $1,500. They were honored at a Thursday, May 9, banquet.

Here is a closer look at the recipients.

Sharon Freeman
Lead secretary, Academic Advising Center
Imagine meeting more than 20,000 people each year. Sharon Freeman knows exactly what that’s like.

As the receptionist in the NIU Office of Admissions, Freeman often was the first point of contact for prospective students and their families as well as for current students, faculty and others having business on campus.

Freeman also worked on the front lines during several Open House events, making sure that “sometimes stressful check-in and bus tour changes” operated successfully.

“She greeted each visitor with warmth, respect and professionalism,” says Bob Burk, retired director of admissions. “Visitors often singled out Sharon with glowing comments on our feedback surveys. She created the kind of first impression that is so important in creating a positive image of NIU.”

That special calling continues at the Academic Advising Center, which Freeman joined in fall 2011 as lead secretary.

“Sharon has surpassed all of our expectations with her attention to detail, dedication, professional demeanor and eagerness to serve students,” says Jonathon Ferguson, academic adviser. “Her kind and welcoming nature comforts these students as they embark on developing their academic and personal goals.”

Colleagues praise her confident and cheerful approach to her responsibilities as well as her ability to perform beyond expectations and willingness to “go the extra mile” when needed.

Away from the job, Freeman consistently donates clothes and other goods to the DeKalb Goodwill store to support struggling families. She also paid for one NIU student’s travel package to cheer on the Huskies at the Orange Bowl in January.

Shyree M. Sanan
Business/administrative associate, Division of Research and Graduate Studies
Staff in NIU’s Division of Research and Graduate Studies, like those across campus, are tackling the challenge "to do more with less" during difficult fiscal times.

Fortunately, this division counts Shyree M. Sanan and her “heart to serve” among its employees.

“Shyree has played a major role in developing innovative divisional strategies and structures that support efficiency without compromising productivity and stakeholder service,” says Lisa C. Freeman, vice president for...
Research and Graduate Studies. “The division ... could not function effectively without Shyree Sanan. Her value cannot be overstated.”

“She has been the epitome of helpfulness,” adds Clyde Kimball, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus. “Shyree is always cordial – a wonderful characteristic for one handling so many diverse responsibilities – always helpful and always prompt.”

Colleagues praise her “quiet, efficient and professional demeanor” as well as her “skill, imagination, creativity and the deep-seated motivation to overcome problems.”

In her main role as business manager for the division, she helped to balance a once-in-the-red budget and interacts regularly with every department and college.

Sanan also provides personnel support to the Graduate School, Sponsored Projects, the Office of Research Compliance and several centers, institutes and external grants. She also serves as treasurer for the NIU Research Foundation.

Away from her job, she serves on the NIU Affirmative Action and Diversity Resource Committee. Locally, she is an active member of her church, where she is a member of the Altar Committee, secretary of the Ladies Ministry and co-leader of the Power of Two Marriage Ministry.

Sarver communicates directly with donors on the “grunt work” of their financial associations with the university. He also helps to coordinate NIU Foundation trips to football games, giving donors first-class experiences that build Huskie pride.

Colleagues call him smart, fast, accurate and “the ultimate go-to guy.”

“Steve's organizational skills are excellent, allowing him to keep many projects moving forward simultaneously without dropping the ball,” says Alberta Solfisburg, director of Development Operations and Campaign Initiatives. “I have not yet seen a task which he cannot do.”

Sarver is proud of his 35-year commitment to the Boy Scouts of America.

After earning the Eagle Scout Award, he has taken on leadership roles, helping establishing a new Cub Scout pack in Kirkland and serving as co-chair for his hometown troop’s 50th anniversary. He received the Silver Beaver Award – the highest award a council can bestow on a volunteer – as well as the Vigil Honor for outstanding service.

Scott Walstrom
Senior photographer, Media Services

Millions of people see what Scott Walstrom sees through his camera lens.

Walstrom regularly contributes photos to NIU’s social media presence, creating more than 2.5 million impressions among prospective students, parents, alumni and fans in the “Tag Yourself, Tag Your Friends” Facebook campaign.

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He won awards for his cover shot on the Fall 2011 issue of the Northern Now alumni magazine. His photos are featured on interstate billboards, promotional booklets and recruitment postcards.

But it’s his work documenting the feats of Huskie athletes that has left the greatest footprint.

He routinely travels with the football team for away games, including postseason bowls, and is a sidelines fixture at home contests for other sports. His images grace a myriad of publications, from local newspapers to Time, USA Today and Sporting News.

"Much of that travel takes place on weekends and holidays,” says former Athletics Director Jeff Compher. "It is a very difficult thing to be away from your family so much, but Scott never complains, because he understands how important it is to capture these special moments for NIU and our student-athletes."

A mentor to colleagues, he continues to perfect his craft: “Scott was instrumental in the development of a procedure to process digital images on the road and transmit them digitally via cell phone to the various local and regional newspapers so they can use the images in the earliest editions possible,” says Jay Orbik, director of Media Services.

Walstrom is an active churchgoer who has led a group for couples with elementary school children.

Employment Changes

April 2013

Welcome New Employees

Christine Abt, Nurse Practitioner—Counseling & Student Development
Elizabeth Chilton, Account Technician I—Intercollegiate Athletics
Kristine Collin, Account Technician I—Intercollegiate Athletics
David Diaz, Laboratory Mechanic—College of Engineering & Engineering Technology
Amanda Fawcett-Lothson, Program Assistant—Visual & Performing Arts External Programming
Jeremy Hernandez, IT Support Associate—Information Security & Operations
Cheryl Lubbers, Office Support Associate—College of Engineering & Engineering Technology
Kris McClure, Nurse Practitioner—Health Services
Destiny McDonald, Assistant Program Director—Student Involvement & Leadership Development
Belinda Roller, Architect I—Capital Architecture Planning Safety
Kara Rominski, Telephone Operator II—Customer Support Services
Frederick Schwantes, IT Technical Associate—Capital Architecture Planning Safety
Kristin Sherman, Account Technician II—Controller
David Smith, Route Driver—Document Services
Kyle Stahl, IT Support Associate—Information Security & Operations
Ashlei Taylor, Office Support Specialist—Women’s Resource Center
Shirley Walker, Security Guard—Public Safety

Changes

Jessica Ilsley to Building Service Worker—Building Services
Jennifer Jeffries to Office Administrator—Public Safety
James Meyers to IT Manager/Administrative Coordinator—Information Security & Operations
Russell Smith to Building Service Worker—Building Services
Ruth Stone to Building Service Worker—Building Services

Department Changes
Denise Garay, Clerk to First Year Experience
Belinda Roller, Architect I to Architecture & Engineering
Jamie Stage, Cook to Holmes Student Center

Name Change
Dawn Gavin to Dawn Wilkins-Gavin, IT Support Associate—Information Security & Operations

Retirements
Connie Conway, Pharmacist—Health Services
Diana Long, Building Service Worker—Building Services

Separations
Christina Gilman, Office Support Specialist—Family, Consumer & Nutrition
Elizabeth Lamoureux, Police Telecommunicator—Public Safety
Ronda Morrow, Clerk—College of Engineering & Engineering Technology
Kristina Muench, Police Officer—Public Safety

MAY 2013
Welcome New Employees
Dana Van Tholen, Child Development Supervisor—Family, Consumer & Nutrition
Michael Christensen, Sheetmetal Worker—Physical Plant
Kelsey Kryl, Housekeeper—Conference Services
Patrick Hickey II, Sheetmetal Worker—Physical Plant
Craig Mulligan, Grants & Contracts Administrator I—Controller
Marcia Brown, Office Support Associate—University Honors Program

Name Change
Junelle Smith to Junelle Bennett, Police Officer—Public Safety

Retirements
Theresa Wessel, Business Manager II—NIU Outreach Operations
Elefteria Matarangas, Kitchen Helper—Housing & Dining
Sandra Little, Administrative Assistant—Gift Planning
Richard Stefinsky, Maintenance Repair Worker—Lorado Taft

Separations
Jeanne Sixta, Research Nurse—Regional Development Institute
Daniel Stinson, Sports Facilities Manager—Intercollegiate Athletics

Pamela Kombrink, Office Support Specialist—Political Science
Caprice Baker, Residence Hall Attendant—Public Safety
MaryKate Qualls, Interpreter Hearing Impaired—Disability Resource Center
Kiah Johnson, Residence Hall Attendant—Public Safety
Sara Tomlinson, Office Manager—Finance
Henry McDavid II, Police Officer—Public Safety

Service Awards
APRIL 2013
5 Years
John Barnett—Public Safety
Jennifer Lichamer—Health Services
Abigail Mogge—Northern Public Radio
Judith Stecker—Controller
Cathy Walker-Searcy—Registration & Records

10 Years
Kathie Coulter—Career Services
Eric Estes—NIU Outreach Naperville
Tammie Voyles—Leadership, Educational Psychology & Foundations

15 Years
Gwendolyn Campbell—Bursar
Mark Fagerstrom—Grounds
Candace Hintzsche—College of Business
David Holliday—Grounds
Catina Maxwell—University Libraries
Patricia Yenerich—University Press

20 Years
Tammy Shelton—Information Security & Operations

25 Years
Julie Miller—Sponsored Projects
Joanne O'Donnell—Information Security & Operations

MAY 2013
5 Years
Dwayne Alshanski—Conference Services
Stacy Jackson—College of Health & Human Sciences
Raghuraj Mahida—Development Operations

10 Years
Robert Cardinell—Building Services
Lesslie Erickson—Intercollegiate Athletics
Rebecca Hughes—College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Lori Judkins—Biological Sciences
Barbara Meredith—Housing & Dining
Rachel Weber—Housing & Dining

15 Years
David Breed—Biological Sciences
Lon Clark—Media Services
Raymond Greenfield—Building Services
Terry Pottinger—Building Services
Teresa Rogers—Lorado Taft
Wendy Thompson—Information Technology Services
Linda Webb—Customer Support Services

20 Years
Daniel Anthenat—Physical Plant
Justin Bend—Physical Plant
Lynne Meyer—Foreign Language & Literature
Daniel Stankiewicz—Information Security & Operations

25 Years
Marcia Bradlee—University Libraries
Gerald Iglesias—Information Services
Brenda Smith—Building Services

Douglas D. Baker
Named NIU President

Douglas D. Baker has been named the 12th president of Northern Illinois University. His appointment is effective July 1. He comes from the University of Idaho where he served as provost and executive vice president.

An expert in organizational strategy, structure and motivation, Baker said he hopes to bring NIU to the fore as a national model for a 21st century public university.

“NIU is clearly a university with strong students, an excellent staff and outstanding faculty, who are not only exceptional teachers but also top researchers,” he said. “The university’s focus on student engagement is right on target, because ‘job one’ for any university must be student success in the rapidly changing social and economic environment. I believe I can help the university build upon its vision.”

Baker added that the university has the resources to make a difference in the region and beyond, and to provide a world-class experience to students, while at the same time fostering a sense of community.

“NIU is big enough to matter,” he said, “and small enough to care.”

Continued on next page.
Baker holds a Ph.D. in business from the University of Nebraska, and bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Colorado State University. He has served in his present position at the University of Idaho since 2005.

Prior to the University of Idaho, Baker spent 24 years in the Washington State University system, teaching courses in management, organizational behavior, organizational design, strategic planning, human resource management and research methods. He served on the Faculty Senate, including as its chair, and won MBA Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards five times, including Teacher of the Year. He also won the Shell Oil Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award in 1990 and in 1984.

Baker eventually rose to lead the Office of Undergraduate Education and became vice provost for academic affairs for the Washington State University system before moving to Idaho. He has also worked as a consultant to national and international businesses.

Baker himself describes his leadership style as collaborative and goal-oriented.

“I believe in working with people to agree upon a common set of directions and letting people do their work,” he said. “I’m not a micro-manager, but I expect goals to be attained.”

Baker said he plans to hit the ground running at NIU.

By this fall, he will form working groups to address special topics or challenges, such as identifying the needs of the region’s employers, finding ways to leverage NIU’s competitive advantages, building a more sustainable financial model and fine-tuning action plans to improve student success in retention, graduation and employment rates.

“We spend a great deal of effort on recruitment of students, who spend a lot of money to get a degree,” he said. “I want to make sure we also are doing all we can programmatically to make sure they find employment and are on a track to becoming lifelong learners.

“My sense is the 225,000 NIU alumni can play an even bigger role in student success by helping in recruitment, mentoring, internships and post-graduation networking. NIU alumni represent a tremendous resource, and we need their involvement throughout the pipeline.”

Another critical resource, Baker said, is the community of DeKalb. “I look forward to working closely with the local community, which plays such an important part in not only attracting students but also enriching the college experience.”

Baker was born in Hood River, Oregon, the son of two teachers. He also spent portions of his formative years in Kansas and Ohio.

Baker’s wife, Dana L. Stover, comes to NIU from the College of Business and Economics at the University of Idaho, where she serves as assistant dean for Recruitment, Retention and Assessment. Stover joined the faculty in 1999 as an assistant professor and was later promoted to associate professor. She specializes in assurance of learning and assessment and pedagogical issues in management education, organizational design and organizational change.

The couple’s eldest daughter, Hannah, is a 2012 graduate of The Evergreen State College. She works as a 3-D artist at Laika, an animation studio in Oregon. Their younger daughter, Robin, is a junior honors scholar at the University of Idaho, majoring in biology with minors in statistics and natural resources.

“Dana and I are thrilled to be coming to NIU,” Douglas Baker said. “It’s a big job, and a big responsibility, but I’ve always believed that higher education is the key to success in our society and world.

“NIU is a great institution, and we will work hard to help move the university to the next level,” he added. “We can’t wait to get started.”