Two outstanding alumni, three brilliant faculty members and a pair of dedicated staff members were honored with top awards at the MU College of Engineering Awards Banquet on March 17 in Columbia.

Alumnus Steve Pierson was the night’s marquee honoree, receiving the Missouri Honor Award for Distinguished Service in Engineering. The award pays tribute to individuals or organizations that “foster the professional development of young engineering college graduates’ exceptional ability in the planning and direction of significant and important projects in technical engineering; and exceptional contributions by an individual to technical engineering knowledge.

Alumnus Les Palmer was selected to receive the MU Engineering Alumni Association’s Citation of Merit Award. This honor goes to alumni “who have made significant contributions to the field of engineering and MU.”

Henry He, professor in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department, earned Senior Faculty Excellence in Research Award honors, while department colleague Prasad Calyam, an assistant professor, was chosen for the Junior Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award recognition. Yuyi Lin, professor in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department, was named the winner of the Senior Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award.

Director of Advising Stephanie Praschan and Laura Pierce, undergraduate coordinator in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, were selected as Outstanding Staff Award Recipients.

Steve Pierson
Pierson currently is a managing partner and Business Innovation Executive with NexGen Technology Solutions. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Mizzou in 1985 before earning an MBA from Rockhurst University.

At NexGen Technology Solutions and in his previous positions, Pierson has been a results-driven leader, building multidisciplinary teams to accomplish a wide array of organizational objectives by leaning on employees with diverse technical and business backgrounds.

Pierson’s generosity to his alma mater and to several professional organizations has been exemplary. He has served on the MAE Industrial Advisory Council since 2007. He is past-president of the KC Chapter of the Association of Energy Engineers, member of the KC Area Development Council on Advanced Energy, and advised Lilypad, an electric vehicle charging station provider startup company.

Pierson served as an industry representative for the University of Central Missouri to develop curriculum for the Engineering Technology program, which was later recognized by President Obama for innovation in making a bachelor degree program debt free for the student. He is an acknowledged contributor to a book titled *Pivot: How Entrepreneurs Adapt and Change Course to Find Ultimate Success*.

**Les Palmer**

Palmer is an associate technical fellow with Boeing Defense Systems in St. Louis, Missouri.

In June of 1984, upon graduating from Mizzou with a degree in electrical engineering, Palmer joined the Astronautics Division of McDonnell Douglas Corporation, then headquartered in St. Louis.

In 1998, McDonnell Douglas merged with Boeing. Palmer has served for more than 32 years as an electrical engineer in the Advanced Weapons and Missile Systems division.
Shortly out of college, Palmer took a vacated position as MUEAO Board Member, St. Louis Area Director in 1984, and he has remained active in the MUEAO ever since. After serving the terms as a director, Palmer proceeded through the officer positions, eventually serving as president of the Board of Directors from July 2000 to June 2002. He currently serves as the scholarship committee chair.

**Henry He**

In the last four years, He has received six grants from the National Science Foundation as a principal investigator in smart manufacturing, virtual reality for social learning, wildlife monitoring and ecology using animal-borne cameras, and algal biomass production. He also received an NSF grant as a co-PI and a Coulter Foundation Award to fund research into diagnosis of dysphagia using computer vision.

His range of projects are incredibly interdisciplinary in nature, and his current grants total more than $3 million. He has published 10 peer-reviewed journal articles and three top conference papers in the last four years and has established himself as a leader in the field of wireless video communications for wildlife monitoring.

He was named a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers in 2015 in recognition of his work, and tonight, he receives the Senior Faculty Excellence in Research Award.

**Yuyi Lin**

Lin has gone above and beyond in his willingness to take on courses in mechanical and aerospace engineering, teaching more than any other faculty member in the department. He has averaged more than three courses per semester over the last seven semesters and is chair of the design and manufacturing committee and the international committee. He also advises two student organizations, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and the MU 3D Printing Club.
Lin currently is advising three doctoral and four master’s students and teaches the multi-disciplinary capstone design for the department. Since 2013, he’s advised one doctoral student, 13 master’s students and six honors/undergraduate research students. And he’s been instrumental in soliciting support for his senior’s capstone design projects from alumni and industry.

His instructor evaluations from students have consistently ranked above average since 2013, averaging a score of nearly 4 on a 5 scale.

**Prasad Calyam**

Calyam’s courses in cloud computing are consistently among the most popular in the department, with as many as 60 students participating in the course sequence at a time, a sequence he developed himself. And his high standards and demeanor endear him to faculty and students alike.

Over the last two years, his evaluation average from students has been a 4.43 on a scale of 5 thanks to his engaging courses, innovative use of technology and integration of undergraduate research into his work.

In just four years, Calyam has graduated one doctoral student, 13 master’s students, three undergraduate/honor students and mentored a post doctoral researcher who secured a tenure-track position. Currently, he’s advising four doctoral students, four master’s students and three undergraduate students.

Calyam also is incredibly active in summer programs and is director of the NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates Site on Consumer Networking Technologies.

These accolades, among many others, make him a perfect choice for this incredible honor.

**Laura Pierce**

Pierce was lauded by members of the department for her great attitude, attention to detail, initiative and performance both in support of students and faculty.

Her wide array of responsibilities ranges from undergraduate education to facilities management. One of her most recent success stories was her coordination of the department’s move from Laffere Hall to the Heinkel Building during the renovation project, then coordinating the department’s return.

Her organization, personal touch, communication skills and drive helped the transition go as smoothly as possible, giving constant feedback to faculty and staff throughout the process to ensure everyone was on the same page.
Stephanie Praschan

Praschan joined the College in 2014, and in her short time has become one of the College's most dependable and reliable staff members.

During a key time of transition for the advising department, Praschan went above and beyond to ensure the success of students. She oversees student tutoring sessions and serves as a supervisor and team leader, and she also worked with fellow staff members to develop MU ENGR Info, a weekly announcement service that helps to streamline information for students.

Her transition into the director position of the newly-formed Central Advising Office was smooth and plotted an excellent course for the office as a whole, and her great ability as a team player and leader has really helped make the office a well-oiled machine.
Categorized as:

- Academic Departments
- Alumni
- Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
- Faculty
- Faculty & Staff
- Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering
- Researcher

This story is tagged as:

- Citation of Merit
- Henry He
- Laura Pierce
- Les Palmer
- Missouri Honor Award
- Prasad Calyam
- Stephanie Praschan
- Steve Pierson
- Yuyi Lin

Related News

- Mizzou Timber Bridge Team reaches top
- Professor to give keynote at major Indian applied mechanics conference
- MU Engineering, Honeywell team up on national security, experiential learning
- Students transition to future engineering leaders at 2017 Commencement Ceremony
- Team MindFlow claims RJI Student Competition crown