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Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence Goes to Longtime Educator



The University of Alaska Foundation has announced that Dana Thomas, UA System vice president for Academic Affairs and Research and a 30-plus year statistics faculty member at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, has been selected the 2014 recipient of the Edith R. Bullock Prize.

The prestigious title includes a cash award, and is the single largest award presented by the Foundation's Board of Trustees each year.

"Dana's reputation for collaboration has earned him respect and admiration both inside and outside the university. His leadership in the area of improving service to students has been extraordinary," said Foundation Chair Susan Anderson of Anchorage. "Dana's many years of above-and-beyond dedication to the University of Alaska make him a deserving candidate for this award. Ms.

Bullock would have undoubtedly admired him."

Born and raised in Fairbanks and an alumnus of the UAF Biology program, Dana Thomas returned home to develop a statistics program at UAF in 1981 after completing his graduate work in Oregon.

He served six years as chair of UAF's Department of Mathematics and Statistics. He received the Emil Usibelli Distinguished Teaching Award in 2005. While on faculty at UAF, he arranged United States Agency for International Development contracts to work two years in the Republic of Yemen facilitating a national survey of agriculture and two years in the Sultanate of Oman, improving fisheries statistics operations there.

From 2006 to 2012, Thomas served as UAF's vice provost and accreditation liaison officer, and he has served as an institutional accreditation evaluator of other institutions for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

While serving in his current role as the chief academic officer for the UA System, Thomas has provided invaluable leadership in UA's "Shaping Alaska's Future" initiative, a long-term effort initiated by President Pat Gamble to strengthen UA's culture of excellence, continuous improvement and innovation.

“Dr. Thomas’s overarching goal as an administrator is to promote the success of students, within the fundamental principle that students are successful only if they attain a high standard of academic accomplishment,” said Susan Henrichs, UAF provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs.

Thomas’s dedication to student success has brought about many positive changes. While at UAF, he worked with faculty and Fairbanks North Star Borough high school teachers to better align high school and college courses to prepare high school students for university placement tests. He implemented programs to help with the transition time after a student enters college – from freshmen seminars to advising. Thomas was instrumental in the development of an Early Warning Program to identify at-risk freshman during the third week of each fall and spring semester. Under his guidance, the TRiO program, for first-generation, low-income, and disabled students, achieved better graduation rates for this disadvantaged group than is found for baccalaureate-seeking students as a whole.

The Bullock award was established through a generous gift from the late Edith R. Bullock, who served the university for 30 years as a member of the UA Board of Regents and the foundation’s Board of Trustees. The University of Alaska Foundation, a non-profit 501(c) (3), raises, invests and manages privately donated funds for the sole benefit of the University of Alaska. Nominations for the Edith R. Bullock award are due for consideration annually on December 1.