



Six alumni awarded Presidential Citations for Outstanding Achievement

4:51 p.m., Oct. 21, 2008----Six UD alumni who've made the world a better place since graduating were recognized for their professional and public service achievements Friday afternoon, Oct. 17, at an awards ceremony held at the Louise and David Roselle Center for the Arts at the beginning of Homecoming weekend.

Each of the alums, who received Presidential Citations for Outstanding Achievement, were publicly congratulated by UD President Patrick Harker for their professional achievements, their exemplary public service efforts and their ongoing engagement with the University, and were noted by Harker as being "the 'best of the best'" of UD's alumni.

"Whether the head of a company or the head of a household, we are proud to be associated with such gifted individuals," said Harker to the packed hall in his opening remarks. "And these six individuals, who have graduated from the University of Delaware within the past 20 years, exemplify success through their professional and public service achievements. They are leaders among us, and their noteworthy accomplishments bring distinction not only to them, but to this University, as well."

Harker, who was introduced on stage by Monica Taylor, vice president for Development and Alumni Relations, added that less than 1 percent of UD's alumni are recipients of the award and emphasized that the selection process for the award "is an awe-inspiring and somewhat humbling experience."

"It is very difficult to make final selections from such a distinguished group of people," Harker said. "As Presidential Citation recipients, your individual experiences and momentous accomplishments vary. In fact, the diversity of your achievements is a wonderful reflection on the broad range of opportunities that our University provides."

"But," added Harker, "you also share one important quality--you have remained engaged with this University. This engagement is crucial, and it is truly what helps make the University of Delaware such a special institution."

Taylor gave a brief history of the honor, noting its initiation in 1992 to recognize University of Delaware graduates from the past two decades who had shown great promise in their professional lives and public service activities. She then invited the friends and mentors of the honorees to introduce them before they crossed the stage to receive their framed certificates from Harker; and in the case of the two recipients who could not attend--Traci Hulse and Salman Nodjomian--to give acceptance remarks in the recipients' stead.

The following are this year's honorees.

Deborah Brenner, who received a bachelor's degree in English from UD in 1988, was the first to be recognized Friday.

The author of *Women of the Vine: Inside the World of Women Who Make, Taste and Enjoy Wine*, and proprietor of Women of the Vine Cellars, a first-of-its-kind international wine brand, spoke of getting her enterprise off the ground and the inspiration that led to the effort.

"This is such an honor," Brenner said, thanking Robert Nelson, chairperson of UD's Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management, and Fred DeMicco, Aramark Professor of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management, whom she said encouraged her ongoing connection with UD by inviting her to visit regularly for wine-tasting events and lectures.

Brenner also thanked her parents, who, she said, supported her in making the entrepreneurial leap after 15 years in a corporate job, and all her former professors at UD, whom she credited with giving her a solid foundation on which to build her career.

"I came in here as a biology major, and I left as an English major," Brenner said, "and now, 20 years later I've found the perfect job that allows me to combine science and art."

The first wine importing and marketing company to unite women winemakers under one label, Women of the Vine Cellars was launched by Brenner to serve both her passion for fine wine and her wish to create a community and support base for other women entrepreneurs in the wine- making, selling and importing business.

William P. (Chip) Eveland Jr., who received bachelor's and master's degrees in communications from UD in 1991 and 1993, respectively, was next to receive recognition.

A professor of communication and political science at Ohio State University, Eveland, who earned a doctoral degree in mass communication from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, is a leading scholar in the cognitive processing of political communication.

"When I started at UD, it was under a one-year contract with my mother who insisted I try college for one year," Eveland said, after his introduction by Elizabeth Perse, chairperson of UD's Department of Communication. "And so I'd like to thank, first, my mother, who, as a single parent, put me through 12 years of private school and then college. I wouldn't be anywhere without her."

"I'd also like to thank the University of Delaware," Eveland said, "and not just for this award, which I really appreciate, but also for my education, and all the support I got from the Department of Communication. [Professor] Perse was the one who got me going. She, along with others in the department, really encouraged my interest in research and inspired me to get involved and go on in her footsteps, to graduate school and then teaching."

A recipient of the 2007 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Kriegbaum Under 40-Award, which honors scholars who have shown outstanding achievement in teaching, research and public service, Eveland also was a recipient of the International Communication Association's Young Scholar Award, in 2003. He has published more than 45 articles and chapters in books since 1994 and is frequently cited by other scholars.

Traci Hill Hulse received a bachelor's degree in animal science from UD in 1991. A veterinarian at the Durango Equine Veterinary Clinic, in Arizona, she works with horses as a general practitioner and as an equine dentist.

Recognized as Arizona's Young Veterinarian of the Year in 2000, Hulse served on the board of directors of the Arizona Veterinary Medical Association and the Arizona Veterinary



UD President Patrick Harker (center) presents presidential citations to (from left) the wife and sons of Col. Salman Nodjomian; Wayne Westerman; Deborah Brenner; Bruce Robertson; Chip Eveland; and the parents of Traci Hill Hulse.

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Academy, where she was the chairperson. Beyond her veterinary duties at the clinic, Hulse also provides educational opportunities to young professionals through the Arizona Veterinary Academy. Additionally, she serves the equine community through an online newsletter for horse owners.

Speaking on Hulse's behalf, Lesa Griffiths, professor of animal and food sciences at UD, read from remarks that Hulse had prepared and sent to her for reading at the ceremony.

"I thank my parents for supporting my dream to become a veterinarian," Hulse said in her message, read by Griffiths. "I am also very grateful to the University of Delaware for my bachelor's degree in animal science. I loved my years there--they are among the best of my life--and they prepared me for a job and a career that I also love."

Hulse's father, Robert, accepted the award for his daughter, who could not attend the ceremony because of travel conflicts from Vietnam, where she had just adopted a young son.

Col. Salman Nodjomian, who received a bachelor's degree in civil and environmental engineering from UD in 1988, is the chief of the Programs Division in the Office of the Civil Engineer; and the deputy chief of staff/logistics in Installation and Mission Support for the U.S. Air Force.

Responsible for the worldwide management and administration of the Air Force's military construction, military family housing, high value operations and management and other capital investment programs valued in excess of \$1.5 billion annually, Nodjomian holds many military honors. A recipient of the Bronze Star, the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal, Nodjomian recently was elected second vice president of the National War College Board of Directors.

Matthew Boyle, a former college roommate and longtime friend of Nodjomian, introduced him before showing a video Nodjomian had made for the occasion from his Air Base station in Iraq, in which he shared memories from UD and talked about his initial motivations to join the armed forces.

"I am truly humbled by this honor and all it represents," Nodjomian said in his video, in which he thanked his wife, sons, parents and in-laws, all of whom were in the audience. "As the son of immigrant parents, I'm the first person in my family to serve in the United States armed forces.

"With the help of the University of Delaware, professors, teaching assistants and fellow students, I raised my grade point average to a point where I qualified for a two-year scholarship, and from that point on, the Air Force became a huge part of my life," Nodjomian said, remembering his early years and academic challenges at UD.

"It's been nearly 20 years since I received my degree from UD, and given the opportunity, I'd do it all over again," he said. "I believe that everything happens for a reason, and success can only be defined in the way that one recovers from unfortunate events. The experiences I had at the University of Delaware provided the opportunities to put me where I am today, and I'm aware that any success I've enjoyed is a direct result of the contributions from those around me."

Nodjomian's wife, Carla, and his two sons, Adam and Jason, accepted the award and shook hands with Harker on Nodjomian's behalf.

Bruce C. Robertson, who earned his doctoral degree in chemical engineering from UD in 1988, is the managing director of H.I.G. Ventures, a venture capital fund invested in four life science companies in the United States.

Robertson, who was introduced by Norman Wagner, chairperson of UD's Department of Chemical Engineering, thanked his wife of 19 years, Terri, his parents, and several former professors and mentors at the University.

"Many people here at the University of Delaware inspired me during my time here and in the years since," Robertson said, noting that the George Laird Fellowship he received while a student at UD "was a very big part" of his graduate-level educational experience.

"That fellowship was a very big part of my time here and it's continued to be a very big part of my relationships here," Robertson said. "The fellows get back together every five years and all these years later, we have formed an incredible network."

From leading biotech companies to directing venture capital funds, Robertson has established himself as a leader in identifying investment opportunities in the life sciences and serves on the board of directors for all four of the life sciences companies in which H.I.G. Ventures is invested. In 2003, Robertson received UD's College of Engineering Outstanding Alumni Award; and in 2007, he participated on a panel at UD's 30th Reunion of the Laird Fellows.

He is currently the treasurer of the University of Delaware Research Foundation, where, through his ties to the private sector, he has provided valuable assistance in technology transfer of UD's intellectual property.

Wayne Westerman, who received his doctoral degree in electrical engineering from UD in 1999, developed the revolutionary computer interface technology, based on human touch, that is used in Apple's iPhone.

"I still remember the excitement of the day when John Elias [UD professor of electrical and computer engineering] and I began brainstorming our future," said Westerman, remembering his first few weeks as a student at UD, after being introduced by Gonzalo R. Arce, chairperson of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

"We were working together from the start," said Westerman, who teamed with Elias to develop the computer "touchstream" keyboard technology, which is operated by gesturing or moving fingers across a touch- and motion-sensitive surface. "It has been a great and shaping relationship."

Westerman talked about the role serendipity played in the invention, from his stubborn bout with tendonitis, which hobbled his progress until he devised the touch-sensitive technology, to his experience as a pianist, in which his interaction with the keyboard was graceful and natural.

"I had an ergonomic problem and I paired it with a motivation," Westerman said of the early inspiration. "I'd always felt that playing the piano was so much more graceful and expressive than using a computer keyboard, and I thought how great it would be if I pulled some of that expression from the piano to the computer experience."

Currently a senior engineer at Apple Inc., Westerman began his research at UD, where he started the touch screen project as his doctoral thesis. The technology was at the heart of the foundation of Fingerworks, a company Westerman started in 1998, along with Elias.

In 2005, Apple Inc. purchased Fingerworks, and in July 2007, an 80-page patent filing, partially credited to Westerman, hinted at the next-generation touch screen technology. Three years ago, in 2005, Westerman established a scholarship fund at UD, in honor of his father, to be used to support electrical and computer engineering students who demonstrate invention, innovation and entrepreneurial vision.

The ceremony concluded with a reception for the honorees and their guests in the gardens of the Roselle Center for the Arts.

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