

Provost Teaching Awardees, Charter Professors empower local communities, students

Honoring Principled Innovation in action

By Margaret Coulombe, ASU News
March 26, 2025

The ASU [Charter](#) embodies the university's commitment to student success and research of public value and responsibility to the community. In recognition of its importance, each year, Executive Vice President and University Provost [Nancy Gonzales](#) recognizes four exceptional Arizona State University tenure-track and career-track faculty members engaged in projects that advance the charter's values, two as Charter Professors and two with Provost Teaching Awards.

This year, Gonzales has selected [Maureen McCoy](#) and [Trevor Reed](#) as the 2024 [Charter Professors](#), a three-year appointment that comes with \$10,000 per year in financial support for the recipients' community projects, and receiving 2024 [Provost Teaching Awards](#) are [Carolyn Cavanaugh Toft](#) and [Heather Bateman](#).

"One of the most rewarding parts of my role is celebrating the dedicated professors who bring ASU's charter to life every day," Gonzales said. " ... I've had the pleasure last week to join them in a panel discussion at [ASU's FOLC Fest](#) about their work. Their passion, innovation and dedication inspire all of us, and I can't wait to see how they continue to contribute to the future of teaching and learning at ASU."

Get to know the 2024 Charter Professors and Provost Teaching Awardees:

Maureen McCoy: Addressing student food literacy

When people think about food access, college students often aren't considered among the populations most in need. But as living costs have increased, so have the challenges students face in accessing and preparing food that supports their health and academic success.

McCoy, a teaching professor in the College of Health Solutions, was named Charter Professor for her ongoing efforts to improve food access and nutritional education for ASU students. While she has been involved with the student-led Pitchfork Pantry, her focus goes beyond just addressing immediate food needs. McCoy's work emphasizes increasing food literacy and teaching students how to prepare affordable, nutritious meals, equipping them with life skills that extend well beyond their time at ASU.

"Maureen McCoy's work is an embodiment of the ASU Charter, supporting the success of our students and the health of the community," said Michael Yudell, interim dean of the College of Health Solutions, who nominated McCoy. "As a Charter Professor, we are excited to see the results of Professor McCoy's work addressing the health and well-being needs of our students, particularly those in emergency situations and at risk of food insecurity."

With the resources that come with the Charter Professor appointment, McCoy plans to further enhance food literacy programs and expand her work in educating students on how to prepare healthy meals with limited resources.

Trevor Reed: Empowering tribal entrepreneurs and artists

Reed (Hopi) is a professor of law, but he has also been passionate about music. In fact, it was music that led him toward his pursuit of law, starting in graduate school with the Hopi Music Repatriation Project.

Now, as the faculty director of ASU's Indigenous Innovation Initiative, a fellow with the Center for Law, Science and Innovation and a faculty member with the Indian Legal Program at ASU Law, Reed's experiences in the arts have brought unique perspective to his research, commitment to Indigenous creators and sovereignty.

Reed was named a Charter Professor because [Principled Innovation](#) is a core tenant of his research, teaching and service, including his efforts to generate strategies to better protect Indigenous creatives, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions from misappropriation.

"Reed's research has included identifying the causes of intellectual property inequities and determining ways to alleviate them," says his nominator Stacy Leeds, the William H. Pedrick Dean, Regents and Foundation Professor of Law at ASUs' Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. "It has included working directly with tribal nations to develop their laws and policies around innovation and informing non-Indigenous governments about Indigenous intellectual property rights."

In partnership with local tribal nations, Reed intends to build culturally engaged training programs and web-based Indigenous community-oriented learning environments, workshops, courses, podcasts and online training modules. His goal is to help Indigenous creatives, entrepreneurs and inventors navigate the complex world of intellectual property and understand what rights they have to their work.

Cavanaugh Toft: Clinical lessons and critical thought

Toft has taught more than 16,000 students since 2011, primarily in large-enrollment psychology classes across the curriculum. She uses storytelling as a primary mode of teaching "to give students a sense of how people with different psychological disorders perceive the world."

The experience is much sought-after, as one student noted: "Dr. C. is the best professor I have ever had. She relates so much material to outside stories and events, and it really sticks in my brain after that. I want to take every class she teaches. I am truly grateful to have her as a professor!"

In the past five years, Toft has also supervised 119 students in Barrett, The Honors College doing honors contracts or serving on honors thesis committees. Of these, more than 50 students completed honors contracts, researching and critically evaluating popularized psychological ideas.

"Carolyn Cavanaugh Toft is a shining example of a faculty member whose work embodies the spirit of ASU's charter," said Tamera Schneider, a psychology professor who nominated Toft for the Provost Teaching Award. "Her innovative teaching methods, coupled with her deep commitment to student success, align perfectly with the university's mission to be a New American University. By fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment, she empowers students to think critically, solve complex problems and become engaged citizens."

Heather Bateman: Field experience with working professionals

Bateman's powerful storytelling and applied and career-connected learning have positioned her students literally in a field, doing nighttime road-cruising to look for wildlife, checking Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport lizard traps, repopulating Tarahumara frogs in native habitats and building new homes for burrowing owls.

"My goals are to teach graduate and undergraduate students ways to integrate aspects of discovery and curiosity with hands-on experience so mentees can achieve real-world application in conservation," Bateman said.

Her support for students also includes addressing some often overlooked career development fundamentals: financial support to cover professional conference registration costs for underrepresented and early-career speakers and also field gear. She helped establish a gear closet for students in applied biological sciences that provides access to outdoor equipment necessary to do fieldwork, such as tents, sleeping pads, binoculars, hiking boots and field clothes.

"Heather Bateman shares her love of learning with our students, taking them to field sites beyond the classroom where they apply what they learn about biodiversity in Arizona and the Southwest more generally," says Joanna Grabski, Foundation Professor and dean of the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts. "As a model teacher, scholar and mentor, she exemplifies CISA's commitment to applied learning, to creating spaces where all students learn, engage and discover with each other and in multiple environments."

Nominations for [Provost Teaching Awards](#) and [Charter Professors](#) are now being accepted for 2025. Two faculty members are recognized for each honor every year. Nominations can only be made by deans of academic units or dean's designees and are due by April 16.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

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