

4 ASU faculty earn prestigious President's Professor designation

Recognized for their innovation in teaching and scholarly work, their fields are anthropology, complex data, geology and regenerative medicine

By Lisa Robbins, ASU News
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This fall, four Arizona State University faculty members have added a new title to their list of merits: President's Professor.

The designation, one of the most prestigious faculty honors, is given to honor and reward inspiration and innovation in the classroom, as well as research and scholarly contributions.

The 2025 awardees are: [K. Selçuk Candan](#) and [Sarah Stabenfeldt](#) in the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, and [Steve Semken](#) and [Cindi SturtzSreetharan](#) in The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Learn more about these professors and their accomplishments:

K. Selçuk Candan

Candan, a professor of computer science and engineering in the [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#), is internationally recognized for his pioneering work in managing and analyzing large, complex and often imprecise datasets — ranging from multimedia and web content to scientific research data and medical records.

Over his nearly three decades at ASU, he has authored more than 250 peer-reviewed articles, holds 10 patents and has secured more than \$34 million in research funding to advance data-driven decision-making. His projects have spanned critical areas such as pandemic preparedness, sustainability, water resilience, energy optimization and medical technologies.

Watch

Candan has mentored dozens of doctoral, graduate and undergraduate students, often extending his support to high school researchers. His teaching is celebrated for

blending technical depth with real-world relevance, sparking curiosity and creativity in students who go on to become leaders in academia, industry and public service.

(Video: {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-XJwo4RBm4>})

“Being a teacher and mentor is the most rewarding part of my career,” Candan says. “I want my students to see that the concepts we study are not just abstract theories but tools that can be used to solve real problems and make a difference in people’s lives. This recognition is truly an honor because it reflects the success and growth of the students I’ve had the privilege to work with.”

Ross Maciejewski, director of the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, says the recognition is well deserved.

“Selçuk’s career is a masterclass in how to integrate scholarly excellence with a deep commitment to student success,” Maciejewski says. “He’s not only advanced the field of data science in areas like public health, sustainability and artificial intelligence, but he’s also inspired generations of students through his enthusiasm, mentorship and innovation in teaching. His impact on ASU and beyond will be felt for decades.”

Sarah Stabenfeldt

Stabenfeldt is a distinguished professor at the [School of Biological and Health Systems Engineering](#) and serves on numerous scientific journal editorial boards and review panels.

Since joining the ASU community in 2011, Stabenfeldt has dedicated her career to researching regenerative medicine strategies for acute neural injury. Her efforts have been honored with an array of accolades, including the 2015 Arizona Biomedical Research Consortium Early-Stage Investigator Award, the National Institutes of Health Director’s New Innovator Award and the 2015 National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Award. She recently [received the Mosaic Award](#) for her dedication to the biomedical engineering community.

“From day one, it was clear to me that ASU provides opportunities to innovate in all aspects of a faculty’s role,” Stabenfeldt says.

“This mindset, along with commitment to advancing education for all to succeed, keeps me motivated to contribute to ASU’s vision/mission for years to come.”

Watch

(Video: {https://youtu.be/HG1stW_y-JQ})

Stabenfeldt is co-leading a regenerative medicine graduate training program that fosters transdisciplinary skills and connects students with the booming local biotech industry.

“Sarah is an amazing asset to ASU, and our students benefit every day from her time here,” says Heather Clark, director of the School of Biological and Health Systems Engineering. “Whether it’s in the classroom or lab, she touches a lot of lives.”

Steve Semken

Semken is a professor of geology and education in the [School of Earth and Space Exploration](#). His work spans geological heritage, virtual field education and the geological evolution of southwestern North America.

He is a Geological Society of America Fellow and has served as past-president and a distinguished speaker of the National Association of Geoscience Teachers. His scholarship actively informs his teaching, where he engages students through culturally responsive, place-based methods that spark curiosity and encourage active learning.

Semken is also a co-creator of the award-winning [Trail of Time](#) interpretive trail at Grand Canyon National Park. Beyond the university, he shares his passion for geology with the public through the [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at ASU](#) and at [Yavapai College](#) in Arizona's Verde Valley, and by leading geologic hikes at many state and national parks.

Watch

(Video: {<https://youtu.be/1TIs3guHpss>})

"I am humbled by and truly grateful for this recognition, as the scholarship and effective practice of geoscience teaching have always been of greatest professional importance to me," Semken said. "I deeply appreciate the enthusiasm of my students and the support of my colleagues at ASU and count myself very fortunate to be able to live, work and teach in beautiful Arizona."

"This is a very well-deserved honor for Professor Semken. He is a serious and dedicated teacher focused on Earth science literacy," said Ramon Arrowsmith, interim director for the School of Earth and Space Exploration. "He is deeply committed to his students and colleagues and to understanding Earth science and how it is learned and relevant locally. The School of Earth and Space Exploration is very proud and honored to have him as our colleague."

Cindi SturtzSreetharan

SturtzSreetharan is a highly regarded linguistic anthropologist and professor in the [School of Human Evolution and Social Change](#).

She has been at the forefront of linguistic anthropology, studying how language reflects and influences society. She emphasizes language, not only as communication, but as a form of social action capable of fostering empathy, inclusion and meaningful change.

Her commitment to teaching extends beyond her classroom. She is the lead author of ["Fat in Four Cultures: A Global Ethnography of Weight,"](#) a textbook specifically written to engage undergraduates and to teach empathy around weight. She also [co-authored the textbook "The Human Story: An Introduction to Anthropology,"](#) integrating linguistic anthropology across all chapters of the introductory textbook. The four-field perspective text highlights the intersection of biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology and archaeology.

In 2024, SturtzSreetharan was recognized with both the Faculty Mentor Award by ASU's Faculty Women's Association and the Outstanding Doctoral Mentor Award from the ASU Graduate College, reflecting her extraordinary dedication to mentoring faculty and students.

Watch

(Video: {<https://youtu.be/SKMNVu8Vc-k>})

"I am deeply honored to be awarded the title of ASU President's Professor," SturtzSreetharan said. "I am very grateful to students, staff and faculty across ASU who provide the space and resources to constantly refine and hone my teaching and mentoring skills. I love teaching because, to my mind, it is the ultimate collaborative learning. Without students, I would never grow my teaching and mentoring."

"She is an innovator in curriculum, a creator of opportunities for her students and a dedicated scholar committed to ASU's charter at the highest levels," said Ryan William, director of the School of Human Evolution and Social Change. "Her work and values as a teacher have been built on collaborative research experiences, scaling online research, innovating new fields of instruction and publishing on pedagogical innovations to share them with other scholars and the broader public."

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

Main image



Old Main on the ASU Tempe campus. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

Text image(s)



Computer science and engineering Professor K. Selçuk Candan has mentored dozens of doctoral, graduate and undergraduate students during his nearly three decades at ASU. Photo courtesy ASU Academic Enterprise Communications



Professor Sarah Stabenfeldt (right) co-leads a regenerative medicine graduate training program that fosters transdisciplinary skills and connects students with the booming local biotech industry. Photo courtesy ASU Academic Enterprise Communications



Geology Professor Steve Semken is known for engaging students through culturally responsive, place-based methods that spark curiosity and encourage active learning. Photo courtesy ASU Academic Enterprise Communications



Anthropology Professor Cindi SturtzSreetharan emphasizes language as a form of social action capable of fostering empathy, inclusion and meaningful change. Photo courtesy ASU Academic Enterprise Communications