

ASU names 4 Regents Professors for 2026

Recognition honors their groundbreaking work in evolutionary anthropology, computer science, learning sciences and technology policy

By Penny Walker, ASU News
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Arizona State University has named four new Regents Professors — the university's highest faculty honor — for 2026.

Their work crosses disciplinary boundaries, from cognitive and learning sciences to evolutionary anthropology, from computer science to technology policy, showcasing the breadth and ambition of ASU's scholarly enterprise.

The title, approved by the Arizona Board of Regents in November, recognizes sustained scholarship, national and international distinction, and contributions that have significantly advanced their fields and the university's mission. The new Regents Professors are:

[Robert Boyd](#), a professor in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change and a research scientist with the Institute of Human Origins, part of The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

[Stephanie Forrest](#), director of the Biodesign Center for Biocomputing, Security and Society and a professor of computer science in the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, part of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering.

[Danielle S. McNamara](#), the executive director of the Learning Engineering Institute, director of the Science of Learning and Educational Technology (SoLET) Lab and a professor in the Department of Psychology in The College.

[Donald S. Siegel](#), co-executive director of the Global Center for Technology Transfer and a Foundation Professor of Public Policy and Management in the School of Public Affairs, part of the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

"These four individuals represent the very best of ASU's scholarly talent; visionary thinkers whose work shapes disciplines, inspires colleagues and students, and extends our impact around the world," said Nancy Gonzales, ASU executive vice president and university provost. "Their

promotion to Regents Professor reflects not only decades of deep intellectual commitment, but also an enduring record of innovation and influence.”

Read on to learn more about the new Regents Professors, who will be inducted in a ceremony Feb. 18.

Robert Boyd: Cultural evolution and human origins

Boyd has long been a pioneer in the field of cultural evolution. His research reframed the understanding of human evolution by demonstrating that cultural processes, not just genetic changes, have played a decisive role in shaping human behavior, social structures and adaptation.

Boyd’s work, including influential books published with co-author P.J. Richerson, helped establish cultural evolution as a serious scientific field, contributing to a broader shift in how social and natural scientists conceptualize human culture over time.

One reviewer wrote: “Rob’s scientific contributions are immense, and his influence extends across several fields. He, along with Peter Richerson and Marc Feldman, essentially founded a new field of science, now called cultural evolution. The field has its own society, the Cultural Evolution Society. Rob’s 1985 book (co-authored with Richerson), ‘Culture and the Evolutionary Process,’ is now a citation classic and a founding text in the field. His subsequent work on the origins and nature of cooperation, ethnic groups, social classes, social norms and complex technologies has opened up entirely new lines of research.”

Stephanie Forrest: Computing, cybersecurity and biologically inspired algorithms

Forrest is recognized for decades of groundbreaking research at the intersection of computer science, biology and security. Her work has shaped fields including automated software repair, computational immunology, biologically inspired algorithms and computer security, making her scholarship a model of “use-inspired research.”

From early work on genetic algorithms and adaptive systems to later breakthroughs in software repair and intrusion detection, Forrest’s contributions have had lasting academic and real-world impact. Her research exemplifies the creative cross-pollination ASU encourages between disciplines to address complex societal problems.

One reviewer wrote: “Her pioneering work in computational immunology fundamentally transformed how we approach computer security, introducing immune system models that have become foundational to some intrusion-detection systems. Her seminal 1996 IEEE Symposium paper and subsequent ACM Communications article established entirely new research directions, inspiring countless researchers and leading to practical applications, including commercial security products. This work exemplifies her unique ability to bridge topics in a way that advances both fields simultaneously.”

Danielle S. McNamara: Learning sciences and educational technology

McNamara has earned this distinction in recognition of her groundbreaking interdisciplinary work at the intersection of cognition, reading comprehension, writing and educational technology. As director of the Learning Engineering Institute's SoLET Lab, she has led development of influential computer-based tutoring systems, including iSTART and Writing Pal, to support reading comprehension and writing skill development across diverse student populations.

Her scholarship spans cognitive psychology, natural language processing, learning analytics and adaptive educational environments. With dozens of peer-reviewed publications and external grants, her work has helped redefine how educators and researchers think about learning at scale and technology-enabled instruction.

One reviewer wrote: "Professor McNamara's scholarly contributions are noteworthy not only for their scope and quantity, but also for their broad influence. Her early research on reading strategies, including self-explanation and text coherence, has laid foundational principles in the cognitive science of literacy. Her co-development of Coh-Metrix, a computational tool for analyzing textual cohesion, is widely recognized as a pioneering advancement in the application of psycholinguistic and discourse theories to educational research. Coh-Metrix and related tools have been cited thousands of times and continue to be widely used in the learning sciences, psycholinguistics and educational technology communities."

Donald S. Siegel: Technology transfer, innovation and public policy

Siegel is a world-renowned scholar whose work at the intersection of economics, business, public policy and innovation has reshaped how academics and policymakers understand technology transfer, corporate social responsibility and the flow of ideas from universities into industry and society.

A longtime leader in studies of technology transfer and entrepreneurship, Siegel brings both scholarly rigor and real-world relevance. His work has informed institutional policy, influenced business strategy and guided public-sector approaches to innovation.

One reviewer wrote: "Professor Siegel is internationally recognized for his pioneering research in innovation, technology transfer, entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. ... (He) has advised the United Nations, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and multiple foreign governments on innovation and entrepreneurship policy. He has testified before the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on the Small Business Innovation Research program and co-chaired National Academies committees on advancing commercialization from federal laboratories."

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