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University Relations, "Angela Laidlaw, Yuri Machkasov, and James Cotter receive the 2011 Cesar Chavez award" (2011). *Campus News Archive*. 638.

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Angela Laidlaw, Yuri Machkasov, and James Cotter receive the 2011 Cesar Chavez award

Summary: Nominated by students, the recipients reflect the values of the late civil rights leader.

(June 13, 2011)-Students Angela Laidlaw and Yuri Machkasov, and James Cotter, professor of geology, received the 2011 César Chávez award at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Recipients of the award personify service to others, sacrifice, desire to help the neediest in society, determination, nonviolence, tolerance, respect for life, celebrating community, knowledge and innovation—all characteristics embodied by the late labor and civil rights leader César Chávez.

Angela Laidlaw '11, Saint Louis Park, was recognized for her commitment to human rights and social justice. The Latin American area studies and anthropology major's many projects on behalf of Latin American laborers opened the campus community's eyes to the injustices done to them in their countries. She hopes to remain engaged in the struggle for human rights and is pursuing an internship that will allow her to be actively involved in either Guatemala or Nicaragua next year.

Yuri Machkasov '11, Morris, Spanish and management: global business emphasis major, embodies the late Chávez's mission of bringing people together through nonviolent means, so that they will come to accept one another as fellow human beings. He formed an intercultural campus-community soccer league and devoted much time to the English as a Second Language (ESL) program to lessen the language barriers between the Morris area's Hispanic and English-speaking populations.

James Cotter was nominated for his dedication and contributions to the surrounding American Indian communities, particularly his leadership in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Talent Expansion (STEP) and Wind-STEP programs. The STEP Program seeks to encourage American Indian students to pursue degrees and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in an effort to address the need for scientists in the United States. Wind-STEP focuses on wind energy and its application to the needs and wants of reservation communities. He is also known for his "contagious" enthusiasm.

Voces Unidas student organization sponsors and coordinates the annual César E. Chávez Award program.

Photo above: César E. Chávez courtesy Life photo archive

Photo below: Gathering to celebrate recipients Yuri Machkasov '11 and Angela Laidlaw '11, not available for photo, Professor Cotter

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