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Burke Earns UMMAA Teaching Award

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Burks earns UMMAA Teaching Award

(April 24, 2024) University of Minnesota Morris professor of economics Steve Burks has earned the 2024 University of Minnesota Morris Alumni Association Teaching Award. This award honors individual faculty members for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education by calling attention to educational philosophies, objectives, and methods.



Burks was nominated for this award because he, in the nominating committee's words, "exemplifies the best of liberal arts college teaching."

In their nomination, students and colleagues point to the significant impact Burks has had on the lives of numerous students he has taught and mentored/advised in undergraduate research. According to his former students, Burks's teaching and mentoring clearly allows students to cultivate skills in critical thinking, data analysis, coding, and problem-solving, equipping them to take on challenges beyond the classroom. In particular, former students who have had the opportunity to work

with Burks on multiple research questions related to the Truckers and Turnover Project, which he organized in collaboration with statistician Jon Anderson and economist Bibhu Panda, sang praises of him and mentioned that the invaluable lessons and skills they learned continue to resonate in their professional endeavors.

Over Burks' career the Project gave intensive training to more than 70 students in research techniques related to the empirical analysis of data. Forty-two have been co-authors of refereed scientific journal publications, and 10 more are expected to join the co-authorship list in the next two years. One paper was judged the best of the year 2013 in the journal *Experimental Economics*, and the project team won the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies annual *Robert C. Johns Research Partnership Award* in 2019 for work with a large trucking company on sleep apnea in truck drivers.

In terms of leadership, nominators state that Burks has been "central to the development of the Economics and Business Management curriculum," and he has been recognized at the national level for his expertise in economics and the trucking industry through his service on the research committee of the National Academies on truck drivers' compensation.

Burks found his academic passion in economics and believes that integrating a systematic approach to student participation in research has been central to him sharing that passion with UMN Morris students. He admits that he brings a unique mix of life and educational experiences to his role as teacher, having first earned degrees in philosophy, then shifting to economics following a decade-long career as a tractor-trailer driver.

Burks received his award at the Annual Faculty and Staff Recognition Dinner on Tuesday, April 23.

About Burks

Burks joined the UMN Morris faculty in 1999. In 2005, he co-founded the Truckers & Turnover Project, a multi-year study in the field of behavioral personnel economics conducted by a team of Morris faculty and students as well as faculty from other institutions, in cooperation with trucking industry partners. Burks has studied the trucking labor market since driving big rigs for several years between stints in graduate school. It was due to his experience as a truck driver in the early 1980s, when deregulation of the trucking industry took place, that he decided to become an economist.

About the UMMAA Teaching Award

The University of Minnesota Morris Alumni Association established the UMMAA Teaching Award in 1997 to honor individual faculty members for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education. Learn more at alumni.morris.umn.edu

