

3-30-2017

## Rebecca Dean Receives 2017 UMMAA Teaching Award

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel\\_news](http://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news)

---

### Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Rebecca Dean Receives 2017 UMMAA Teaching Award" (2017). *University Relations News Archive*. 2183.  
[http://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel\\_news/2183](http://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/2183)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the External Relations at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Relations News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact [skulann@morris.umn.edu](mailto:skulann@morris.umn.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**MORRIS**

Contact:

Melissa Vangsness, Director of Communications  
Phone: [320-589-6414](tel:320-589-6414), [melissav@morris.umn.edu](mailto:melissav@morris.umn.edu)

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer  
Phone: [320-589-6068](tel:320-589-6068), [jrray@morris.umn.edu](mailto:jrray@morris.umn.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**[Rebecca Dean Receives 2017 UMMAA Teaching Award](#)**

MORRIS, Minnesota (March 30, 2017)—Rebecca Dean, associate professor of anthropology, has received the 2017 University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association Teaching Award. The award honors faculty members for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education by calling attention to educational philosophies, objectives, and methods.

According to nominators, Dean stands out for her creative and highly effective pedagogy, her incorporation of community outreach into her teaching and research with students, and her leadership in redesigning the anthropology curriculum to [emphasize service learning](#). They describe her as “a highly skilled, creative and rigorous instructor,” and students praise her advising work.

“Rebecca demonstrates a profound commitment to serving students and her field. Her enthusiasm for service learning illustrates her belief in the liberal arts as a force for good and creating these opportunities for her students sets her apart from her peers,” says Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean Bart Finzel. “This recognition is well deserved.”

Dean says her philosophies, objectives, and methods stem from her commitment to “scaffolding for success” in the classroom: creating an environment in which it’s possible for every student to succeed. To do so, she provides expectations and experiences tailored to individual strengths and skill levels and removes as many barriers as possible. She connects with students in and out of the classroom and makes sure they can “find something for them in any course,” whatever their majors, interests, or backgrounds.

“I try to make sure there are ways for students to engage in the material, whether they are far ahead or behind what we might think of as ‘average’ in terms of background,” says Dean. “I set my classes up so there are different activities for different students, which allows me to challenge and engage the students with the backgrounds to do that without having others who are struggling just throw up their hands.”

One of the ways Dean encourages connection and engagement is by incorporating service learning opportunities into her curriculum. Anthropology, she says, is an inherently applied field, so service learning is a natural fit. Dean, along with colleague Assistant Professor Cristina Ortiz, has built on previous service learning courses in the discipline to expand these opportunities for students in recent years. She says these opportunities are both a practical necessity of the work being done in her field as well as a way to, in the words of famed anthropologist Ruth Benedict, “make the world safe for human differences.”

“Much of what we do is so hands-on: we work with people, and you just can’t learn the material if you’re not actually getting out into the community; it’s very hard to teach anthropological methods without getting your hands dirty,” she says. “But if I talk about the importance of human difference, then putting it into action is important. I can’t just talk about it—I have to model a real, ethical field for my students.”

Dean is the 22nd faculty member to receive the award, sponsored by the University of Minnesota, Morris Alumni Association. More information is available at [alumni.morris.umn.edu](http://alumni.morris.umn.edu).

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.

###