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Subject: [Employees] Alcorn announces the 2012 President's Award recipients

Categories: Purple Category

Alcorn announces the 2012 President's Award recipients

Alcorn State, MS (April 16, 2012) – Alcorn State University will recognize seven outstanding individuals who personify the institution's commitment to academic excellence and service with the prestigious 2012 President's Awards.

President M. Christopher Brown II will present the 2012 President's Awards and other major university awards to recipients at the Commencement Convocation on Saturday, May 12, at 8:30 a.m. in the Davey L. Whitney HPER Complex.

The selection committee assessed numerous highly competitive applications reflecting the essential work of our faculty, staff and community members and believes all nominees are winners.

"The individuals selected are making significant changes and strengthening our communities," says Dr. M. Christopher Brown II as he explains the extraordinary contributions of the recipients. "They are not just exceptional scholars, they are also outstanding people whose commitment to education and service exemplifies the values shared by Alcorn."

About Honorees

The *President's Award for Community Engagement* is awarded to a familiar face of the arts throughout Mississippi: **Mr. Charles Wesley**, assistant professor of music and director of the Men Chorale, began his career at Alcorn in 1975. Wesley has been dedicated to providing dynamic opportunities for students to perform and compete in a wide range of music events and competitions, helping to enhance their skills while advancing the reputation of the university by sharing and increasing a love for the arts in communities across the state. The Men Chorale has become well known for its considerable talent as well as consummate professionalism. Through local performances, the Chorale and Wesley bring the joy of music to a host of appreciative groups. According to one of his students, "Mr. Wesley is a wonderful and loving person, and he makes sure that we always give our best."

Dr. John Igwebuiké is associate dean of undergraduate programs and associate professor of legal environment of business for the School of Business, and the recipient of the *President's Award for Distinguished Teaching*. In addition, as the NCAA faculty athletics representative for Alcorn, Igwebuiké was responsible for spearheading the university's recently successful efforts to receive recertification of its intercollegiate athletics programs for another ten years. A dedicated educator and genuine advocate for students, Igwebuiké utilizes an intellectually exciting style of teaching to engage students and create a dynamic, learner-centered environment. His popular classes are deeply appreciated by students, and he has developed innovative new courses that deliver critical real-world learning experiences.

Receiving the **President's Award for Research Excellence** is **Dr. Yufeng Zheng** serves as assistant professor in the Department of Advanced Technologies. Since joining Alcorn in 2006, Zheng has served as a model for scholarly productivity, generating over \$1.4 million dollars in research funds for the university in the areas of breast cancer detection using digitized mammograms, multisensory image fusion and night vision colorization, thermal face recognition for security applications, and a dual face recognition system for human identification. In addition, he holds two patents and has published one book, four book chapters, and more than 50 academic papers, with his work on face recognition techniques being considered as a true innovation in the field. According to one of his nominators, "Dr. Zheng exemplifies the utmost professional qualities as a teacher, researcher, and academician."

Highly respected by his students, **Dr. Bettaiya Rajanna** is professor and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences and the recipient of the *President's Award for Excellence in Student Services*. Through his tireless dedication to providing research opportunities for students, Rajanna's work has been the impetus for establishing the highly successful Minority Health International Research Training Institute (ASU-MHIRT) and the Bridges to the Doctorate Program in partnership with Penn State. These initiatives as well as his own personal mentorship has led his students to publish more than 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals and deliver over 140 conference presentations. A recipient of nearly \$7 million in grants since joining Alcorn in 1995, Rajanna's projects have allowed groups of students to travel to India each summer to conduct research and enhance their scholarly abilities.

The *President's Award for University Service* goes to an employee better known as "**Mr. Ike,**" **Isiah Starks** who has been a driver and mechanic in the Department of Facilities Management at Alcorn since 1987. Always visible with a bright smile and Alcorn attire, Starks embodies the essence of this award through his positive example and loyal dedication to the University. In particular, Starks' service to the university athletic teams has provided not only safe travels, but also a supportive and comforting presence. According to one student, "His bright and lively personality, wise words of encouragement, sense of humor, and optimistic nature have really touched my heart."

Growing up on a cotton farm in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, **Ms. Johnnie Dorris** received little exposure to formal schooling. Yet, as a testament in her belief in education in spite of the societal obstacles hindering schooling opportunities for African-Americans, Dorris passionately emphasized its importance to her own seven children who all graduated from high school. Many years later, Dorris made the commitment to fulfilling her own dream of earning a high school diploma, becoming Urbana High School's oldest graduate ever at the age of 69. In her program, Dorris became a true role model for other students and freely shared her wisdom and love with them. In a newspaper article celebrating her achievement, Dorris' words attest to the power of education and the spirit of faith and determination: "It's like a dream, and I haven't woken up yet. Sometimes I cry thinking about it – I just can't believe it's happened." Alcorn State University believes in Dorris who is one of the recipients of the *President's Honorary Alumnus Award*.

Another honoree of the greatly coveted *President's Honorary Alumnus Award* is **Dr. Charles C. Teamer Sr.**, chair and co-founder, of Dryades Savings Bank in New Orleans. A distinguished business and civic leader, Teamer has served as president of Sigma Pi Phi, the 27th National President of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and as board member and chair for numerous national and local organizations. During his stellar academic career, he held the position of vice president of Finance at Dillard University and was president of the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers. With his considerable expertise in management and finance, Teamer has been a highly sought after consultant and was appointed by Louisiana governor David Treen as the first African-American on the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans.

All the honorees have two things in common: one is a high regard for education and the other is their love and devotion to Alcorn State University.

The public is invited to join Alcorn on May 12, at 8:30 a.m. during the Commencement Convocation in the Davey L. Whitney HPER Complex as we salute the 2012 President's Award recipients. For information on Commencement ceremonies and speakers, visit www.alcorn.edu.