

Laura Smith wins 2023 Bliss Award for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education

Broadcast Journalism Education's Highest Honor Goes To South Carolina Senior Instructor

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by B. William Silcock, Bliss Award Committee Chair, Emeritus Assistant Dean Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

The Broadcast and Mobile Journalism (BAMJ) Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) announces the 2023 Edward L. Bliss Award for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education goes to Dr. Laura K. Smith, Senior Instructor at the University of South Carolina's College of Information and Communications. A panel of former Bliss winners unanimously selected Smith, a consummate broadcast educator, based on letters from students, colleagues, and documents supporting an exemplary record of teaching, research, and service.

This year's Bliss competition was highly competitive. Still, Professor Mary Rogus, 2014 Bliss winner recently retired from Ohio University, found Smith's teaching effectiveness worthy of what is recognized as broadcast journalism education's most distinguished honor.

“One of the many things that struck me about Dr. Smith in reading her nomination packet was that every letter (student and colleague) talked about how she meets each student where they are and helps them find their path to success,” Rogus said. “That dedication reflects everything I've ever read about Edward Bliss as a professional and educator.”

Smith joins Rogus and a small but growing number of women educators on the Bliss list of honorees, including Dr. Lee Hood, Associate Professor at Loyola University Chicago and 2018 Bliss winner, who commented on her leadership skills.

“Laura's boundless energy and enthusiasm are infectious,” Hood said. “She is a powerful advocate for her students and a passionate practitioner of outstanding broadcast education.”

Smith's passion was recognized by two other judges, both former news division heads and Bliss winners. Dr. Bill Davie, 2013 Bliss winner from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette found Smith's teaching connected well with her research.

“When you review documents of Dr. Laura Smith's career as a teacher and scholar in multimedia journalism, you recognize an expert veteran of local television newsrooms who is keenly aware of what her mentees and colleagues need to know about what it takes to win in a highly competitive business,” Davie said.

Professor of Practice at the University of Nebraska and 2017 Bliss winner Ken Fischer also noted Smith's strong ties to the professional world that she expertly uses to prepare her students to enter.

“She not only educates her students at the University of South Carolina; Professor Smith educates all of us,” Fisher said. “Her workshop sessions at various conferences make the rest of us better teachers. I used some materials that came from Dr. Smith. The academy is lucky to have someone like Professor Smith, who could easily be a news director, general manager, or vice president of training in the industry.”

BAMJ Division Chair, Dr. Dylan McLemore, was delighted to learn of the Bliss committee's decision.

“Laura is not only a mentor to her students but to all of us who have followed her example in association and division leadership,” McLemore said. “The officers, chairs and committee members she has encouraged and assisted across AEJMC and the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism Division are a testament to her service to our scholarly community.”

McLemore added that this year's Bliss Award presentation would be historic. A special off-site ceremony will take place in the Edward L. Bliss newsroom of American University in Washington, D.C., at 7 p.m., Tue., Aug. 8, during the annual AEJMC conference.

The Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education award was named for Edward L. Bliss, Jr., an author of six books, news producer, and editor for CBS News. He was known for his work with Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite and ended his career as an educator at American University. A plaque listing the winners of the award resides in the Ed Bliss Memorial newsroom at American University in Washington, D.C.

Past winners of the Bliss Award (formerly Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator Award) are Jack Shelley, Iowa State (1983); Ed Bliss, American (1984); Dick Yoakam, Indiana (1985); Henry Lippold, Wisconsin-Eau Claire (1986); Rod Gelatt, Missouri (1987); Mitchell Charnley, Minnesota (1988); Don Brown, Arizona State (1989); Irving Fang, Minnesota (1990); Ernest F. Andrews, Syracuse (1991); Al Anderson, Texas (1992); Michael Murray, Missouri-St Louis (1993); Joseph R. Dominick, Georgia (1994); Joan Konner, Columbia (1995); Gordon Greb, San Jose State (1996); Travis Linn, Nevada-Reno (1997); Vernon Stone, Missouri (1998); Elmer Lower, ABC, NBC (1999); Ken Keller, SIU-Carbondale (2000); Lincoln Furber, American (2001); James Hoyt, Wisconsin (2002); Phillip O. Keirstead, Florida A&M (2003); Thomas Griffiths, Brigham Young (2004); Peter Mayeux, Nebraska (2005); Bill Knowles, Montana (2006); Jim Upshaw, Oregon (2007); Glenn Johnson, Washington State (2008); Sam Swan, Tennessee (2009); Phillip Jeter, Winston Salem State (2010); C.A. "Charlie" Tuggle, North Carolina (2011); Robert Papper, Hofstra (2012); William R. Davie, Louisiana at Lafayette (2013); Mary Rogus, Ohio (2014); Mark Harmon, Tennessee (2015); Gary Hanson, Kent State (2016); Ken Fischer, Oklahoma (2017); Lee Hood, Loyola-Chicago (2018); Kent Collins, Missouri (2019); Max Utsler, Kansas (2020); Nancy DuPont, Mississippi (2021); and Bob Gould, Michigan State (2022).