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2024 Bliss Award Winner Announced

The 2024 Edward L. Bliss Award winner for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education is Dr. Stacey Woelfel, emeritus professor at the University of Missouri.

This award, widely recognized as one of broadcast journalism education's highest honors, is bestowed annually by the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

The award is named for the late Edward L. Bliss, Jr., a legendary news producer and editor for CBS News, and the author of six books. Bliss was known for his work with Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, and he founded the broadcast journalism program at American University in Washington, D.C.

In the nomination letter for Dr. Woelfel, David Kurpius, dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, noted that Woelfel helped teach, lead and mentor more than 3,000 students over 35 years as an educator and journalist. "His impact on the television news industry is so widespread and significant that there is hardly a television market in the country in which Professor Woelfel cannot sit down, turn on the television and see one of his students reporting or producing the news," Kurpius wrote.

Dr. Woelfel was the longest-serving news director at KOMU-TV. In addition to his affiliation with Missouri, Dr. Woelfel has been a national leader in the broadcast industry, having served as president of the Radio TV Digital News Association (RTDNA) and as a national trustee for the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS). Even in retirement from full-time teaching, he continues to promote journalism education around the world, including working with the U.S. State Department to train student journalists in Croatia.

The Bliss Award committee consisted of three past Bliss winners and a former head of the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism division. Dr. Woelfel was the unanimous choice for this year's award. Mary Rogus, 2014 Bliss Award winner and associate professor emerita at Ohio University, was impressed with his contributions as an educator from her years working as an executive producer.

“Whenever I needed a producer, he would be my first call,” Rogus said. “His students were always prepared to step right in and produce any show. When I moved to academe, he was my role model for teaching producing – not just the mechanics, but also the ethics and leadership skills.”

2013 Bliss winner Dr. Bill Davie of the University of Louisiana-Lafayette praised Woelfel’s record of teaching, service, and scholarship.

“Stacey Woelfel fulfills the ideals of the Edward L. Bliss Award in every measure. The light of his scholarship shines through his book, *Suspicious Signs*, describing impressions of journalism bias made by newscasters’ words and images,” Davie said. “The recognition of his teaching by the University of Missouri’s William T. Kemper Fellowship along with testimonies of former students offer further evidence of why he is so deserving of this signal honor.”

2017 Bliss winner Ken Fischer, now at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, echoed the praise for Dr. Woelfel’s record. “There are two words that come to mind as we hear colleagues and former students talk about Stacey Woelfel: professional and class. Whether it was while running the ship at KOMU News, teaching in the classroom, or navigating through the professional organizations, Stacey always conducted himself with the utmost integrity with the best for both the industry and his students as his guide,” Fischer said.

Lindsey Conlin Maxwell of the University of Southern Mississippi, a recent former head of the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism division who joined the Bliss Award committee this year, emphasized the strength of the testimonials in Dr. Woelfel’s nomination packet. “I was most impressed by the way that colleagues and students spoke about Stacey and how much they supported his application. I hope my students talk about me one day the way Stacey’s spoke about him,” Dr. Maxwell said.

The selection committee was chaired by 2018 Bliss winner Lee Hood of Loyola-Chicago. The Bliss Award will be presented in a ceremony on Friday, August 9, at 8:30 p.m. as part of the AEJMC annual conference in Philadelphia.

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); Bob Gould, Michigan State (2022); and Laura Smith, South Carolina (2023). Woelfel's name will be added to the plaque of honorees hanging just outside the Ed Bliss Memorial newsroom at American University.