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## **CU's Jefferson Awards celebrate well-rounded excellence**

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March 5, 2014

### ***Faculty, staff, students recognized for high achievement in academics, service***

This year's award winners – two faculty members, a staff professional and two students – were chosen for embodying and advancing the ideals of Jefferson, the third U.S. president and a Founding Father who greatly influenced American arts, sciences, education and public affairs. The Jefferson Award recognizes CU faculty, staff and students who demonstrate excellence in the performance of regular academic responsibilities while contributing outstanding service to the broader community.

The 2014 honorees are:

#### **Faculty:**

**Charles Ferguson**, Ph.D., associate professor of biology at the University of Colorado Denver. For years he has inspired students as a teacher, adviser, mentor and advocate. Ferguson is director of the BA-BS/MD Honors Program at CU Denver, and chairs the Health Careers Advisory Committee, which he helped develop. Past honors include Carnegie Foundation Professor of the Year for Colorado, and two College of Liberal Arts and Sciences awards for Excellence in Teaching. He also is a three-time CU alumnus, having earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at CU Denver; his doctorate at the University of Colorado Boulder.

**Therese Jones**, Ph.D., associate professor, Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine, University of Colorado School of Medicine at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus; interim director of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities; director of Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program. A leading advocate and practitioner of the use of the humanities in undergraduate and graduate medical education, she has developed educational programs in undergraduate institutions and health professions programs to advance the study of literature, arts and writing as they relate to scientific inquiry and clinical practice. Jones edits the *Journal of Medical Humanities* and co-leads the disability studies working group across CU. She earned her doctorate from CU-Boulder.

#### **Staff:**

**Peter Simons**, director of the Institute for Ethical and Civic Engagement (IECE) at CU-Boulder. He led the development of the institute, and has served as director since its establishment in 2005. He consistently demonstrates commitment to the belief that

educators and students have a civic responsibility to engage with and learn from their communities. The IECE is a hub of civic-minded, service-learning efforts across the campus that has fostered the creation of 13 civic engagement programs. Through them, Simons emphasizes that the university and the community are equal partners, both having much to contribute to addressing community-defined issues. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from CU-Boulder.

### **Students:**

**Helen Achol Abyei**, recent graduate of the University of Colorado Denver with a bachelor's degree in psychology and theater. Praised for her profound love of writing, the theater, and public speaking, she endured life in war-torn North Sudan while raising six children. After time in a refugee camp in Egypt, she settled in Denver, taught herself English and enrolled in college. As a young mother stressing education to her children, she worked in banking for nearly 30 years. Now she writes plays – some of which have been acted out by CU Denver students – to shed light on atrocities taking place in her home country. She expects to return there someday as a teacher.

**Alexandra Antonioli**, M.D./Ph.D. candidate in the Medical Scientist Training Program, CU School of Medicine at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. A high school valedictorian in Montana, she went to Yale University, earned a bachelor's degree in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry and worked in a laboratory. Now in the fifth year of the University of Colorado's combined M.D./Ph.D. program, her thesis work focuses on the understanding of certain proteins and their role in autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and age-related macular degeneration. She is an accomplished classical pianist and devotes considerable time to charitable work.

A committee of CU faculty, staff and students selects winners. Recipients receive an engraved plaque and a \$2,000 honorarium, and are recognized by the CU Board of Regents. The Thomas Jefferson Award was established at the University of Virginia in 1951 by the Robert Earll McConnell Foundation to honor teaching faculty who exemplified the humanistic ideals associated with Jefferson. By 1962, six other institutions – including CU – had established a Jefferson Award. In 1980, the university added a student category; in 1988, the staff category was approved. Funding for the awards is derived from earnings on an endowment provided by the McConnell Foundation and from a bequest by Harrison Blair, a CU alumnus.

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### **About the CU System**

The University of Colorado is a premier public research university with four campuses: the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, the University of Colorado Denver and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. More than 58,000 students are pursuing academic degrees at CU. Academic prestige is marked by the university's five Nobel laureates, nine MacArthur "genius" Fellows, 18 alumni astronauts and 19 Rhodes Scholars. For more information about the entire CU system, and to access campus resources, go to [www.cu.edu](http://www.cu.edu) [3].

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**Intro:**

Five members of the University of Colorado community are recipients of the 2014 Thomas Jefferson Award, among the highest honors given at CU, the state's flagship university.

**Original Story:**

**News Type:**

Press Release <sup>[4]</sup>

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