



University of Colorado

Boulder | Colorado Springs | Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Published on *University of Colorado* (<https://www.cu.edu>)

[Home](#) > Thomas Jefferson Award winners

---

## **Thomas Jefferson Award winners** <sup>[1]</sup>

April 9, 2014

DENVER?A high-achieving group of academics, all with a great devotion to the humanities and community service, received Thomas Jefferson Awards at a dinner and reception in the Terrace Room, Lawrence Street Center, at the University of Colorado Denver on April 2.

This year's honorees include two faculty members, a staff member and two students, and four of the five represent the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus. The 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.

The award recognizes CU faculty, staff and students?staff and student categories were added in subsequent years?who demonstrate excellence in the performance of regular academic responsibilities while contributing outstanding service to the broader community.

The winners, who each received a \$2,000 award, are:

Therese Jones, Ph.D., associate professor, Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine, CU School of Medicine at the Anschutz Medical Campus; interim director of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities; director of Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program. Jones edits the Journal of Medical Humanities and co-leads the disability studies working group across CU. She earned her doctorate from CU-Boulder.

"As somebody who is a humanities scholar and educator, I bring the humanities and arts into health professions' education and into the clinical environment of the Anschutz Medical Campus," Jones said. "In many ways it's creating a community?a kind of cultural community?out there at CU Anschutz. It means a great deal to me."

Charles Ferguson, Ph.D., associate professor of biology at CU 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. Ferguson was unable to attend the April 2 reception.

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. 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. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from CU-Boulder.

"What we do at CU-Boulder really matches what (Jefferson) talked about in terms of citizenship and informed and engaged citizens," Simons said. "That's something we place great value on."

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.

Antonioli is in the fifth year of the eight-year M.D./Ph.D. program. She currently performs rheumatology research and would like to pursue research in autoimmune diseases as a career. She is donating her award prize to a pair of community groups. "Two of the groups I'm really passionate about are the Stout Street Clinic, which has helped me as a student, and the Aurora Fitzsimons Rotary Club, which just started a satellite club for students," Antonioli said.

Helen Achol Abyei, recent graduate of CU 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 South 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 performed by CU Denver students ? to shed light on atrocities taking place in her home country.

Abyei said her home country of South Sudan, which in recent years achieved independence, is still struggling as a divided and war-torn country. "People go through daily hardship," she said. "We need somebody to tell them how to survive, how to stand up for yourself and how to never feel that you are less than another. I love education, and I never felt good that I didn't have my education." She wants to return someday to South Sudan as a teacher. "I need to work with the kids there to address some of the things happening." Abyei said.

###

Contact: [christopher.casey@ucdenver.edu](mailto:christopher.casey@ucdenver.edu) [2]

**Promoted to department's home page:**

1

**Cite:**

CU Newsroom

**Intro:**

## CHAMPIONS OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SERVICE

**Original Story:**

**News Type:**

News [3]

**Groups audience:**

Faculty Council

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.cu.edu/faculty-council/news/thomas-jefferson-award-winners>

**Links:**

[1] <https://www.cu.edu/faculty-council/news/thomas-jefferson-award-winners>

[2] <mailto:christopher.casey@ucdenver.edu>

[3] <https://www.cu.edu/news/news>