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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## In the Marianist Spirit

**01.23.2012 | Faculty, Catholic, Campus and Community**

The University of Dayton will honor two employees with one of its highest honors for their longtime contributions to the Catholic, Marianist character and identity of the University.

Paul Benson and Patricia Johnson are the 2012 recipients of the Lackner Award, named in honor of Bro. Elmer Lackner, S.M., whose influence throughout 45 years of service permeated nearly all areas of University life.

The award is given to full-time faculty or staff who are not vowed Marianists and who have made a noteworthy contribution to the Catholic and Marianist character of the University, which was founded by the Society of Mary (Marianists) in 1850.

They will be honored at an invitation-only dinner on Feb. 3, sponsored by the Marianists through the Office of Mission and Rector.

Benson came to the University as a philosophy professor and has stayed for 26 years, in roles of increasing responsibility. He has served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences since 2007. He also served as director of the core program, chair of the department of philosophy, and associate dean for integrated learning and curriculum. His latest initiative is heading the first major reform of the University's general education curriculum in two decades.

In 2005, Benson joined the first cohort of the Marianist Educational Associates program, a group of lay leaders who commit to stewardship of the University's Marianist and Catholic values and traditions.

"From the time I came to the University of Dayton, there really was a clear intention to pay attention and listen to one another in an important way," Benson said. "Over time, as I took on different kinds of responsibilities, it had some real influence on me. It made me more observant and a different person than I was coming in."

The Rev. James Fitz, S.M., vice president for mission and rector, added that Benson was a key contributor and coordinator in the development of *Habits of Inquiry and Reflection*, a University document that speaks of the contribution of the Marianist tradition to the educational process. His colleagues describe him as a bridge builder.

Johnson, who currently serves as Alumni Chair in Humanities, came to the University in 1979 as a faculty member in philosophy. She has served as director of the women's studies program, chair of the philosophy department and associate dean for connected learning in the College of Arts and Sciences, and oversaw the University's general education program. She designed and implemented programs that emphasize ethics across the curriculum, established the philosophy program for the Marianists in Bangalore, India, and worked to increase the presence of academic women.

Fitz indicated Johnson is appreciated for her quiet and peaceful presence, her empowerment of women and her commitment to educating the whole person.

Johnson said when she arrived on campus 32 years ago, the faculty included only a small number of women.

"I became director of women's studies in the 80s and we really focused on presenting women scholars," Johnson said. "At that point we were bringing national and international women to campus. Now it's nice to be able to say we have those women here teaching."

For more on the Lackner Awards, visit the related link.