

2021 Honorary ring recipients

Drs. David and Janine Gray

There hasn't been a dual ring presentation on the Agricultural Campus since 2015 and today that is about to change.

We skipped awarding an honorary Barley Ring in 2020 because we felt we wouldn't be able to do the recipients justice. We just couldn't wait any longer... This year's honorary ring recipients are ambassadors and supporters of the Faculty of Agriculture and have made outstanding contributions to our community both internally and externally. This pair has had a profound impact on our campus, our students, and our alumni.

In eight short years, they have immersed themselves in our campus culture and beyond. Their dedication and commitment to what is special about being an Aggie remains at the forefront of every endeavor.

Drs. David and Janine Gray are the 2021 Honorary ring recipients.

David and Janine arrived on campus with their family in 2013, when the merger with Dalhousie was in its infancy. David, the first Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Principal of the Agricultural Campus is now in his second term and Janine is a senior instructor in the Department of Animal Science and Aquaculture.

David is well-spoken and passionate and uses those qualities to inspire those around him. Endlessly optimistic, he always sees the good in agriculture and in the Agricultural Campus and believes the future of both is very bright. After two major fires on campus within three years, David made sure to always see and communicate the positive outcomes. He does not shy away from tough questions and does not believe in asking his staff to do anything that he is not prepared to do himself. He's even been seen milking cow on Christmas day in the RAC. Although both fires continue to challenge us, there has been minimal disruption to students and that is a huge accomplishment.

As an administrator, David has far surpassed the level of involvement of any dean or president in recent memory. From Orientation through to Convocation, he is exceptionally present in the lives of students. He is approachable and down-to-earth and knows an astounding number of

students by name. He makes time for student events, participates in student fundraisers, and engages with students on social media. Dad jokes anyone? He is a staunch supporter of the Dalhousie Agricultural Students' Association and, when not in a pandemic, holds regular breakfast meetings with the executive to hear updates and concerns – something that was not commonplace before his time.

David is also incredibly supportive of all alumni. He understands and respects the history of our campus and has taken great care not to ostracize NSAC alumni in the years following the merger. He manages to do this while also creating excitement around the future of the Agricultural Campus and how it will fit within the Dalhousie community. He stays in regular touch with alumni by hosting annual Dean's receptions all over the region, joining meetings of the Alumni Association, speaking at class reunions when invited, through the Agricola News and social media, and by never missing a Homecoming or Blue & Gold Awards Dinner.

There has never been a campus administrator as involved in alumni programming as David. He is also a dedicated supporter of the Barley ring – making sure to mention it at all alumni speaking engagements and encouraging those who don't yet have one to join in the tradition.

It is hard to talk about David without his better half – Janine Gray. Dr. Janine Gray is one of the most well-loved instructors on campus. Her course load is astounding – she teaches a combination of lectures and labs for nine different courses over the academic year – and the amount of support she provides to her students is extraordinary. She knows all her students by name and keeps their interests and needs top of mind in all her lectures and labs. Like David, she is very involved in student life and attends student functions and fundraisers whenever her schedule allows.

Janine has strived to bring new opportunities to students in animal-related programs at the Faculty of Agriculture since 2013. With her support, the Bioveterinary Science program was established and accepted its first intake of students in 2016. The only named program of its kind in Canada, Bioveterinary Science provides the foundation for a career in veterinary medicine – and opens a world of other exciting options. The program builds on the strengths of Animal Science to provide a degree more relevant to those students interested in the broader area of animal health sciences. It addresses a gap that previously existed between pre-veterinary studies and the Animal Science program.

Janine is also responsible for the establishment of the African Wildlife Ecology course, offered for the first time in the spring of 2016. African Wildlife Ecology is a three-week intensive credit course taking place in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, developed in partnership with the Wildlife & Reserve Management Research Group at Rhodes University. Janine has traveled to South Africa with three different groups of students and will be heading back for her fourth time this spring. Anyone who has served as a chaperone on a school trip knows this isn't a vacation. African Wildlife Ecology incorporates field research, lectures and practice in conservation and veterinary care and is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Dal AC students - and it wouldn't be possible without Janine.

On top of full-time teaching responsibilities, Janine also spends much of her time supporting recruitment and community education initiatives. Somehow, she finds time to develop activities and lead sessions with youth who are visiting our campus, either as part of a school program or with a community group. She has been instrumental in developing a relationship with local Girl Guides units, who now come to campus on a regular basis to complete badge requirements. She never says no when asked for help, unless it directly conflicts with her teaching schedule – and even then, she often tries to find a work-around. She puts in evenings and weekends to get it all done. Hers is often the last vehicle in the Haley parking lot at the end of the day.

David and Janine will do anything if it's for the good of our campus community – including acting in the play put on by staff and faculty in January of 2019 and again in 2020. They are approachable, down to earth and have great senses of humour. Most of all they are ubiquitous. These two have put more time and commitment into our community than many who have been working here for much longer.

Individually, David and Janine are integral parts of our campus community. Together, they are a force to be reckoned with. They were exactly what was needed to breathe new life into our campus following the merger with Dalhousie in 2012. They may not have studied here, but they are Aggies through and through, and they both deserve to wear the barley ring around their fingers.