

2016 WINNERS

Susan Cahn



“Susan Cahn is the most sought-after PhD adviser we have,” says Professor Jim Bono, Chair of the History Department. She is “a steady yet impassioned advocate for excellence in historical scholarship including new and emergent fields of study, and an immensely generous and intellectually rigorous colleague and mentor.”

A renowned historian of women and sports, Dr. Cahn provides priceless mentorship to her colleagues in the History Department. Michael Rembis, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Disability Studies, remarks that as soon as he arrived on campus Susan Cahn “went out of her way to make me feel welcomed . . . and she has been a consistent source of support and comradeship in both my professional and personal life” over many years. Other colleagues expressed similar sentiments.

Dr. Cahn’s current and former students are profuse in their gratitude for her influence in their lives. They note that she inspires them with the confidence to follow their intellectual passions, and she provides rigorous but encouraging “feedback not just as a scholar but also as a person with tremendous life experience.”

Shuko Tamao, a PhD student in History, observes: “Dr. Cahn understands the challenges that I face as a racial minority woman who grew up outside the United States. . . [S]he encourages me to learn from these challenges and use them as scholarly strengths because she believes these experiences give me an ability to recognize the stories of people who have been regarded as ‘unimportant’ and to represent their narratives as a powerful discourse of social change.”

Terrienne K. Schulte, an Associate Professor of History at D’Youville College, spoke for many of Professor Cahn’s former students who have moved on to successful careers: “I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today if it were not for Dr. Cahn.”

Letitia Thomas



Letitia Thomas serves as Director of STEM Diversity Programs in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) at the University at Buffalo (UB).

With more than twenty years' experience in higher education administration Dr. Thomas is a resource for STEM outreach in our community, working with national, state and local organizations to bring together like-minded individuals for STEM collaborations.

In addition to her administrative duties Dr. Thomas is committed to scholarship and teaching. Her research interests include STEM education, socially responsible engineering, social media and qualitative research methods. She has taught courses in sociology including Race & Ethnic Relations, Social Problems and Social Justice.

Letitia Thomas exemplifies the invaluable contributions to campus life of UB's most dedicated staff members. She has helped countless students and colleagues thrive in their academic careers.

Nancy Campos credits Dr. Thomas with helping her to believe in herself and to excel academically, first as an undergraduate and now as a PhD student. She praises Dr. Thomas for creating "an environment for students of color at UB that makes them feel like they belong."

Noting that Dr. Thomas is a constant advocate for students, Ms. Campos cites as an example Dr. Thomas's success in enabling six students of color to gain funding to participate in a three-week study abroad program in Turkey, which was "a once in a lifetime opportunity."

A sophomore in Environmental Engineering, Jess Turner, praises Dr. Thomas "as a role model for students from all backgrounds." Joseph Carleton, a sophomore in Mechanical Engineering, echoes that praise, noting that "she wants to enable every one of us so that we will believe we are capable of great things. . . . Dr. Thomas has opened doors for me that otherwise would have remained shut."