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Trena Wilkerson to Receive the Louise Hay Award for Contributions to Mathematics Education

The Association for Women in Mathematics is pleased to announce the 2024 Louise Hay Award will be presented to Dr. Trena Wilkerson, Professor and Interim Chair in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction in the School of Education at Baylor University, for her leadership at the national, state, and local levels in mathematics education, her transformational teaching and mentorship, and her global initiatives and programs.

Citation
Dr. Wilkerson is an accomplished researcher in mathematics education and mathematics teacher education with expertise in algebra teacher efficacy, student understanding of rational numbers, and professional development. As a teacher educator, she prepares future teachers and teacher leaders of tomorrow. As a career teacher herself, she stands out for her genuine, sincere commitment not only to her profession but to those her profession serves—students.

One prominent nationally influential contribution from Dr. Wilkerson is her service as the President of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the largest and most significant organization of math teachers and math education researchers in this country. She was President of NCTM from 2020-2022, during the challenging years of height of the global pandemic, and she is currently serving as Past-President. She met the formidable challenges presented by a global pandemic with poise and purpose as she led the organization in making difficult business and financial decisions. As President, she initiated and led collaborations with other national organizations to provide teachers in immediate need of support and direction during an educational crisis that upended almost everything they had learned from experience. Through unprecedented challenges, she ensured that NCTM as an organization kept equity foremost in the minds of its leaders and decision makers.

Dr. Wilkerson contributed to and spoke nationally about the NCTM Catalyzing Change Initiative. The initiative has three publications (focused on the elementary, middle, and high school level), webinars, and additional resources to engage mathematics teachers, mathematics education and teacher education researchers in critical conversations about policies, practices, and issues and to help create positive change. She has also served on national committees, such as the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators (AMTE) and the School Science and Mathematics Association (SSMA).

Her nominators highlighted that Dr. Wilkerson is a talented, valued, and conscientious educator, both for pre-service teachers and for graduate students training to become teacher educators. They noted that Dr. Wilkerson has an outstanding legacy of transformational education and mentorship. She works diligently to stay current on all issues related to mathematics teacher education with the intent of using this information to prepare the next generation of teachers.

Dr. Wilkerson’s exceptional contributions to the field have not gone unnoticed. She was a recipient of the Prakken Professional Cooperation Award.
from International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA) in 2019, the Mississippi College Department of Mathematics Distinguished Alumna of the Year Award in 2019, the Award for Excellence in Integrating Science and Mathematics from the SSMA, and the 2016 Texas Council of Teachers of Mathematics’ E. Glenadine Gibb Achievement Award for her contribution to the improvement of mathematics education at the state and national level.

Response from Trena Wilkerson
It is such an honor to be recognized by the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) with the 2024 Louise Hay Award for contributions to mathematics education. AWM’s focus on a community where women and girls can “thrive in their mathematical endeavors” as noted on their website is a powerful connection to the work in supporting equitable opportunities for all but in particular “marginalized genders and identities across the mathematical sciences”. Over the years as a high school mathematics teacher and now as a mathematics teacher educator and researcher, I have had the opportunity to learn from so many. In particular, as 2020-2022 NCTM President, I had the privilege of serving alongside and working with so many outstanding mathematics educators and organizations to advocate for mathematics for each and every student during a challenging time in our history. There were many unprecedented events that we all faced in mathematics education but our collective purpose was to ensure that each and every student had access to high-quality mathematics and that each and every teacher of mathematics was supported. This is central to the work of equity. As noted in the NCTM Catalyzing Change 2018 and 2020 publications, it is of paramount importance that all see themselves in mathematics and are supported in developing and sustaining a positive mathematics identity.

It was humbling to see the list of past recipients of this award as they have made so many powerful contributions to mathematics education over the years and have been role models for me in many ways. They paved the way for women and girls in mathematics. In particular it was a special moment when I saw that in 1991 Shirley Fry, NCTM President 1988-1990, was honored with the Louise Hay award. Her time as NCTM president was also a pivotal moment in the history of mathematics education with a major focus on curriculum standards in mathematics to provide important mathematics opportunities for all students.

I look to the future with hope as I work with our future teachers of mathematics and future mathematics educators and researchers. I continue to learn so much from them and know they will continue to lead the way so that all, and in particular those that are often marginalized, have access to and opportunities to engage in high-quality mathematics.

Thank you to the AWM award committee for recognizing my work but also the work of so many others who have mentored me. I am grateful and honored to be selected as the 2024 Louise Hay Award recipient.

Photo by Baylor School of Education

Established in 1991, the Hay Award recognizes outstanding achievements in any area of mathematics education. Louise Hay was widely recognized for her contributions to mathematical logic, for her strong leadership as Head of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, for her devotion to students, and for her lifelong commitment to nurturing the talent of young women and men. The annual presentation of this award is intended to highlight the importance of mathematics education and to evoke the memory of all that Hay exemplified as a teacher, scholar, administrator, and human being. It will be presented at the Joint Mathematics Meetings, scheduled for January 3-6, 2024 in San Francisco, CA.