
PASSHE HONORS PENNWEST PROFESSOR, STUDENTS WITH KEEPERS OF THE FLAME AWARDS



October 28, 2024

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education recognized three members of the PennWest community with Keepers of the Flame Awards during the 2024 PASSHE Summit held Monday, Oct. 28, at Millersville University.

The annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion award recognizes an individual from each of the 14 State System campuses for their contributions to creating and promoting diverse, equitable and inclusive environments that cultivate a sense of belonging.

“Keepers of the Flame are truly special people who embody a commitment to promoting environments that cultivate a sense of belonging,” said Sheleta Camarda-Webb, chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer at PennWest. “These three individuals we celebrate strive to improve the human, social and organizational conditions in and around the university, including those that address historical inequities.”

PennWest 2024 Keepers of the Flame honorees:

California: [Kyle B. Bennett](#), a senior mechatronics major

Clarion: [Dr. Natasha Dias](#), assistant professor, Biology, Earth and Environmental Sciences

Edinboro: [Gavin Mitsdarfer](#), a junior secondary education and special education major

“The Keepers of the Flame Award honors members of the PASSHE community for contributions to the success of everyone at our universities and always striving to make our campuses welcoming places for everyone,” said Dr. Denise Pearson, vice chancellor and chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) officer at the Office of the Chancellor. “We celebrate and honor each of these recipients who have shown time and again that a commitment to academic excellence, DEI and student success can open doors of opportunity and strengthen each of our university communities.”

Award recipients may be students, staff, faculty, administrators, or community members. They are members of the university who inspire others, engage in collaboration, and enact positive change. The annual award began in 2022.

More information about the commitment of the State System and its universities to cultivating welcoming campuses is available on the [PASSHE](#) and [PennWest](#) websites.