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For Immediate Release

PRESTIGIOUS HAYWARD AWARD BESTOWED ON L.A. PIERCE COLLEGE'S DR. JAMES MCKEEVER

Woodland Hills, Calif. – L.A. Pierce College Professor A. James McKeever, Ph.D., has been selected as the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Hayward Award recognizing outstanding community college faculty statewide.

The Board of Governors confers the award upon faculty who have a track record of excellence in teaching and professional activities and who have demonstrated commitment to their students, profession, and college.

"It is a great honor, and it's very humbling," he said. "It's recognition for the type of community work I've been doing all my life."

McKeever has been a sociology professor at Pierce since 2009, taking a central role in helping people who face issues of inequality politics and equity. He teaches a broad range of sociology classes branching into race, gender, human sexuality, politics, and crime and delinquency. He has served as an advisor for the Queer/Gay Straight Alliance and for Blatigenous, a club for black, Latino and indigenous students.

L.A. Pierce College President Alexis Montevirgen said, "We are proud of James McKeever, just one of our exceptional faculty, and one who continually demonstrates his commitment to his field and to diversity, equity and inclusion at Pierce College."

The Van Nuys-born McKeever, whose father was a drug dealer and enforcer for a criminal organization in Pacoima, became a single father in high school, working at fast-food restaurants to support his child during the nine years it took to earn his AA degree from L.A. Valley College.

He now has a bachelor's degree from Cal State L.A. and a Ph.D. from USC.

Pierce Academic Senate President Barbara Anderson said, "James McKeever exemplifies the best of us on many levels. He cares deeply about students and social justice. He is willing to engage in meaningful dialogue with colleagues. He empowers students and elevates the teaching profession. We are all better for knowing James McKeever."



He started volunteering at age 13 as an athletics coach for young children in a low-income neighborhood park in North Hollywood, and mentoring became a way of life.

Students he has taught at Pierce are now working at community-based organizations, getting master's degrees and even Ph.D.s. A few have established themselves as professors and doctors.

McKeever said that while he appreciates being recognized for the work he's been doing, it's what's happened for the students in the community that's most important to him.

"We never know how much we affect a person's life," he said. "It's the outcomes that matter."

The Foundation for California Community Colleges sponsors the Hayward Award, established in 1989 and named after former California Community College Chancellor Gerald C. Hayward. It will be presented to McKeever at the virtual Board of Governors meeting March 22-23, 2021.

Los Angeles Pierce College, www.piercecollege.edu, is recognized as one of the most respected community colleges and transfer institutions in California. Established in 1947 and located on 426 picturesque acres in Woodland Hills, the College's comprehensive curriculum and support services enable its 21,000 students to earn associate degrees and certificates, prepare for university transfer, and gain career education proficiency.

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Professors Brian Walsh, Barbara Anderson and James McKeever at a Pierce College Commencement ceremony.



Professor McKeever.



PRESS RELEASE

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Three Honored with 2020-21 Gerald C. Hayward Award for Excellence in Education

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Community Colleges Board of Governors on Tuesday honored two professors and one academic counseling member with the prestigious 2020-21 Gerald C. Hayward Award for Excellence in Education.

Butte College counselor Brandy Thomas, Los Angeles Pierce College sociology professor A. James McKeever and Solano College political science professor Peter “Tony” Zitko were chosen by representatives of the Academic Senate based on their record of outstanding achievement and participation on campus.

“Brandy Thomas, Peter Zitko and A. James McKeever epitomize the excellence of the California Community Colleges through their commitment to putting students first and their unwavering support of students from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds,” said Board of Governors President Pamela Haynes.

Hayward Award recipients who have earned the honor:



Brandy Thomas is committed to demystifying the higher education experience, especially for those from underrepresented backgrounds, and tailor supportive services to the needs of the student. “I show empathy to students and meet them where they are, while still challenging them to see beyond the narrative that the world has sometimes set for them through stereotypes and hurdle,” Thomas said. “This opens up endless possibilities for our students and helps them feel secure in their place at school. All students can succeed in college, if the college provides the right environment and support. It is my job to help create that space for our students.”



Peter Zitko, a part-time instructor, is known for his dedication in providing a quality college education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, an endeavor that began as a novel teaching assignment but has grown into a lifelong mission and writing scholarly articles promoting greater educational resources to the largely disenfranchised group of learners. His dedication to students with diverse backgrounds, however, is not exclusive to educating the incarcerated. “It has been my teaching and leadership model to treat all students fairly and equally irrespective of their unique experiences and backgrounds,” he said.



A. James McKeever employs an intersectional perspective toward social justice that has resulted in students from diverse backgrounds to ask him to be the faculty advisor of clubs ranging from MEChA and the Black Student Union to I.D.E.A.S (Improving Dreams Equality Access and Success) and the Queer Straight Alliance. McKeever also has helped organize students’ participation in the Women’s March, Black Lives Matter March, a Black Lives Matter town hall and an Undocu Day. In addition, he has conducted numerous workshops on how to apply to graduate school and mentored countless students well into their academic and professional careers.

The Hayward Awards are supported through a grant from the Foundation for California Community Colleges. Each recipient receives a \$1,250 cash award and a commemorative plaque. The award is named in honor of Gerald C. Hayward, who served as chancellor of the California Community Colleges from 1980 to 1985.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 116 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways; and basic skills education in English and math. As the state’s engine for social and economic mobility, the California Community Colleges supports the Vision for Success, a strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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