

School of Science and Engineering presents Dean's Hero Award to two professors

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The School of Science and Engineering recently announced two faculty members as recipients of the Dean's Hero Award: Ricardo Cortez, the William Larkin Duren Professor in Mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics, and Senior Professor of Practice Julie Alvarez of the Department of Psychology. (Graphic by Taryn Pusateri)

The School of Science and Engineering recently announced two professors as recipients of the [Dean's Hero Award](#), a new award that recognizes faculty members who have demonstrated exemplary service, especially during this challenging time.

The Spring 2020 recipient is Ricardo Cortez, the William Larkin Duren Professor in Mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics. The Summer 2020 recipient is Senior Professor of Practice Julie Alvarez of the Department of Psychology.

School of Science and Engineering Dean Kimberly L. Foster said in a statement the two professors embody the university motto of *Non sibi, sed suis*. In March, when the university began to transition to remote learning, Tulane faculty began to explore new ways of teaching. Since that time, Cortez and Alvarez have shown leadership among their fellow faculty members and service to the school.

“Through their actions [they] enabled SSE to do a better job of reacting to the challenges facing the school and the university,” Foster’s statement read. “These two awardees ... are both related to achieving continuity in the educational mission of the university.”

Cortez’s “unwavering, thoughtful, responsive leadership empowered the mathematics faculty to come together as a community to support each other through the sharing of practices and the exchange of creative ideas.”

“The mathematics department teaches a large number of courses, including several coordinated sections of the same courses,” Cortez said. “In order to make the transition to online teaching as smooth as possible, we organized support sessions for instructors and teaching assistants as a community effort.”

Alvarez showed outstanding communication skills with her psychology colleagues and set a positive tone with her contributions to SSE’s Flexible and Adaptive Learning Committee.

“For me, this award is extremely meaningful. And it really did take me by surprise,” said Alvarez, who graduated from Newcomb College in 1998 and who joined the faculty in 2006.

Alvarez, who will teach an online class this summer, noted the challenges that faculty members face when they switch from a traditional classroom setting to online teaching, adding that challenges can vary with individual departments.

“I have completely redesigned my course to enhance student learning outcomes using best practices of online education; I’m structuring everything differently than what I’ve done for the last 14 years,” she said.

Alvarez added that she was especially moved because her father, a Cuban immigrant, earned a Tulane degree in 1988 by attending night school.

“Tulane always has held a special place in my heart,” she said.

Nominations for future Dean’s Hero Awards may be submitted to Dean Kimberly L. Foster at klfoster@tulane.edu and should include a brief justification.



The School of Science and Engineering presented the Dean’s Hero Award recipients with a commemorative pen.