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American Chemical Society: Rising Star Award

October 28, 2015

Prof. Karelle Aiken's star is rising and the American Chemical Society has recognized this and has awarded her the Women in Chemistry Committee Rising Star Award for 2016. This prestigious, national award recognizes up to ten remarkable women scientists approaching mid-level careers who have demonstrated outstanding promise for contributions in their respective fields.

The award distinguishes Aiken, Associate Professor of Chemistry at Georgia Southern University, for her outstanding work and mentorship with undergraduate students, graduate students, and new faculty. Aiken came to Georgia Southern in 2007 and quickly gained a reputation as an outstanding mentor.

Her office and laboratory are busy with students engaged in research projects ranging from synthesis of organic compounds with promising pharmaceutical applications to creative molecular sensors with defined applications. Aiken believes strongly in the value of a research-based education. One of her former research students, Senior Zachary Lee, said that Aiken "believes in her students and has a lot of faith in what they are capable of doing. She pushes you hard and does not give you the answer. Dr. Aiken will challenge you to figure out the answer and does not move on until you have done so."



Karelle Aiken, PhD

This approach to teaching and mentoring is based in Aiken's own experiences from those who guided her on her own scientific journey. In her mind, the greatest lesson given by a mentor is, "You can seek to be great at science, but you must extend kindness to your students and act with integrity at every step of the way. High expectations and challenging work will foster students' growth, helping them to reach a level that even the students themselves cannot foresee."

Her passion for research and mentoring found her leading the departmental summer research experience for undergraduates 2012-2015 which with NSF funding (2015-2017) now incorporates an REU program, CEMITURE. The summer program has included intense laboratory work as well as training workshops on grant writing, fellowship applications, scientific presentations, and planning for future employment. Aiken was a founding advisor for the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) chapter at Georgia Southern University. Several of her students have won awards for their presentations at the NOBCChE's national meetings. Aiken has also published papers in internationally-recognized and peer-reviewed scientific journals with her students, several of whom have gone on to pursue postgraduate degrees in the chemical and medical sciences.

Aiken has had an immeasurable influence on the lives of hundreds of students through her hands-on teaching and research mentoring. She has positively influenced her department and university by leading new faculty and taking on service roles that enhance the quality of her work environment. She is a positive force for the development of young researchers and redefines the nature of the scientist. Prof. Aiken's light is shining brightly at Georgia Southern University as a Rising Star Award winner for 2016.

Learn more about the [Women Chemists Committee](#)

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