Three Tulane researchers honored with national STEM award

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|
Barri Bronston bbronst@tulane.edu

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Tulane researchers, from left, Michael Cunningham, Michael Moore and Katherine Elfer (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Two Tulane scientists and a graduate student are among 40 national winners of the 2017 Inspiring Leaders in STEM Award, which honors professionals from underrepresented groups who have made a difference in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The winners – psychology professor Michael Cunningham, biomedical engineering associate professor Michael Moore and doctoral student Katherine Elfer – will be featured with the other recipients in the September 2017 issue of *INSIGHT Into*

Diversity magazine.

"I am proud of the work that the Tulane School of Science and Engineering is doing to attract and support a diverse community of STEM students and faculty," said Tulane Provost Robin Forman.

> "We want to honor the many professionals who are inspirations to their colleagues, their community, and to young people who may be interested in a future career in STEM."
> *Lenore Pearlstein, owner and publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine*

"It is wonderful to see these three members of our community receive special recognition for their roles as both path-breaking scholars and campus leaders who do much to inspire and support the success of others."

Cunningham's research focuses on resilience and vulnerability in adolescents, including mental health and academic outcomes among African Americans. In addition, he serves on the faculty of the African and African Diaspora Studies program, and is an associate provost responsible for oversight of all graduate and professional studies academic issues.

Elfer's research interests lie at the intersection of optics, chemicals, biological materials and clinical diagnostics. A doctoral student in biomedical engineering, she is especially interested in outreach activities for students in grades K-12 and serves as program coordinator for Girls in STEM (GiST), a middle school initiative.

Moore created the startup AxoSim Technologies, which with funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health is developing nerve-on-a-chip approaches for pre-clinical drug testing. He has been awarded an NSF CAREER Award and elected "Teacher of the Year" three times by biomedical engineering students.

Inspiring Leaders in STEM Award recipients were nominated by colleagues and selected by INSIGHT Into Diversity based on their efforts to inspire and encourage a new generation of young people to consider careers in STEM through mentoring, teaching, research, and successful programs and initiatives.