Five faculty members will be honored for their exceptional achievements during the University's undergraduate Commencement ceremony on Sunday, May 20.

Awards will be presented for outstanding accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarship, service, and contributions to the All-University Curriculum. In addition, the Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize, which was established in 2009, will be awarded.

Ken Steen, professor of music theory and composition in The Hartt School, is this year’s recipient of the Roy E. Larsen Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Students consistently comment on Steen’s approachability, patience, and receptiveness to new ideas, as well as his high expectations for their work. He has a remarkable ability to engage students with a variety of learning styles, while challenging them to grow intellectually and in their fields of study.

Steen has collaborated for many years with Gene Gort, professor of media arts in the Hartford Art School, on cutting-edge, multimedia projects that combine video, sound, and other elements. In Reliquary of Labor, commissioned for the expansion of the New Britain Museum of American Art, Steen and Gort utilized audio, video, and photographic material collected from the construction site to create a multimedia work celebrating labor as a creative process. That collaboration led to a project called Emergence, which enabled student composers, actors, and dancers at Hartt to collaborate with art school students, as well as students from CETA, Hillyer, and A&S, in creating multimedia pieces performed by the Hartt Contemporary Players. Steen’s spirit of innovation has led him to stay on top of the incredible advances in music technology, enabling him to bring electronic music into the curriculum for Hartt composition students.
This year's **James E. and Frances W. Bent Award for Scholarly and/or Artistic Creativity** will go to **Mahmoud Wahab**, professor of finance in the Barney School of Business.

Wahab is an outstanding and prolific scholar in the area of financial theory and practice. He has contributed a tremendous amount of high-quality research in the areas of international finance, investments, financial markets, and economic growth and public finance, and his work has been published in numerous important finance journals. With more than 450 citations to his work, Wahab has made lasting and important contributions to his profession.

At the Barney School, Wahab has taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses in the areas of corporate finance, investments, international finance, and international investments, and his classes are constantly sought after. In addition to his outstanding accomplishments in research and teaching, Wahab has served on numerous University-wide committees and organizations, including the Faculty Senate. In addition, he has served as associate dean of the Barney School, served on the University's Investments and Finance Committees, and was an interim chair of the school's Department of Economics, Finance and Insurance.

**Katherine Black**, professor and co-chair of the Department of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S), will receive the **Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Award for Sustained Service to the University**.

Black is known for the exceptional quantity, quality, and importance of her service to the University of Hartford. Since arriving at the University in 1998, she has served on 48 committees and has chaired or
co-chaired 18 of them. Black currently serves as associate dean for budget and finance for the College of Arts and Sciences, and as co-chair of the Department of Psychology. She had served as chair of the department from 2008 to 2011, and agreed to continue as co-chair after accepting the duties of associate dean. Black also served as assistant provost and dean of graduate studies from 2004 to 2006, and as assistant provost and dean of faculty development from 2006 to 2008.

Black helped create a more welcoming environment for diverse faculty through the design of the Jackie McLean Faculty Fellowship program. She recognized the need for a full-time dean of graduate studies, facilitated the creation of the position, and assisted in the selection of the first appointment to that position. Black also co-chaired a committee to develop the University’s Educational Technology Strategic Plan. Currently, Black serves as co-chair of the Academic Programs Task Force for Foundation of the Future, the University’s program review and prioritization initiative.

Maria Esposito Frank, professor of Italian Studies and chair of the Modern Languages and Cultures Department, A&S, is the recipient of the Donald W. Davis All-University Curriculum Award.

The All-University Curriculum (AUC) is an innovative program that allows students to explore the depth and breadth of a liberal education through integrative, cross-disciplinary courses. The Davis award honors a faculty member who is an effective interdisciplinary teacher and scholar, has contributed to the AUC program as a whole, and is an advocate for interdisciplinary education.

Frank’s dedication to the AUC program is evident in the energy and passion she exudes in the classroom, the quality of instruction she delivers, and the high standards she sets for her students. Frank is a strong and effective advocate for interdisciplinary education. In the classroom she weaves a broad perspective out of a variety of strands that includes philosophy, literature, history, literary criticism, and religion. She accomplishes this not only with her wealth of knowledge, but also by calling in guest scholars from other fields to offer a rigorous interdisciplinary perspective. Frank has designed a number of AUC courses and is currently working to introduce a Mediterranean studies course.
The Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize, now in its fourth year, will be awarded to Joyce Ashuntantang, assistant professor of English in Hillyer College. The prize recognizes an outstanding junior faculty member in a tenure-track position who has not yet been tenured. The prize and an endowed chair for junior faculty were established through a generous gift from Belle K. Ribicoff, a longtime supporter and life regent of the University.

As a teacher, scholar, poet, and performer, Ashuntantang brings tremendous energy and creativity and a rich, multicultural background to Hillyer College and the University of Hartford. Ashuntantang is originally from the western African nation of Cameroon, where she was an actress. A recognized scholar of African literature, Ashuntantang is the author of several books, including a collection of her poetry titled A Basket of Flaming Ashes. She has been invited to participate in a number of international poetry festivals.

With her expertise in non-Western literatures, Ashuntantang opens up new worlds to her students and provides them with powerful experiences, such as Skyping with African authors and artists whose works they study. Her impact on students also extends beyond the classroom. For example, for the past two years, Ashuntantang has organized a highly successful Black History Month celebration called “Words Like Trees,” in which students read and perform speeches, songs, and poems from prominent African Americans.