For Immediate Release

LSU Women’s Center Announces 2017 Esprit de Femme Award Recipients

BATON ROUGE, January 31, 2017– The LSU Women’s Center will honor Women’s History Month on Thursday, March 30th, at its fifth annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration. This year’s awards ceremony will be held at Boudreaux’s in Baton Rouge, beginning at 8:00am. All proceeds will support the mission and initiatives of the Women’s Center. 2016 Esprit de Femme honoree, Dima Ghawi, is serving as the 2017 Esprit de Femme honoree chair for the Sunrise Celebration.

Established in 2009, the Esprit de Femme award is an annual acknowledgement of a person who has made exceptional efforts toward the advancement of women in Louisiana. This award honors individuals who elevate the status of women in the community through their contributions to the arts, education, healthcare, business and industry, charity, and civic engagement.

This year also marks the second year that the Esprit de Femme Student Leadership Award will be given. This award will honor and recognize LSU students who exemplify the ideals and principles of the Esprit de Femme award. Esprit de Femme Student Award recipients will receive financial support to further their academic pursuits. The award recipients will be selected in February and will be recognized at the Sunrise Celebration.

“We are excited about all of our honorees and look forward to the opportunity to recognize their phenomenal contributions at the fourth Annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration,” said Summer Steib, LSU Women’s Center director. “These women have made lasting impacts on the lives of countless women in our state and blazed trails for other women. Our 2017 honorees represent diverse backgrounds and accomplishment—our honorees are leaders and trail-blazers in government, the arts, the business sector, nonprofits, academics, and civic engagement.”

In 2017, the Esprit de Femme award will be presented to eight deserving women. The honorees are Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, Dr. Gresdna Doty, Del Dugas, Alsie Dunbar, Dr. Saundra McGuire, Aimee Simon, Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, and Tanya Whitney. The 2017 Men Who Champion Women honoree is Dr. Calvin Mackie.

Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome is the first African-American woman to be elected to the Louisiana State Senate from East Baton Rouge Parish, and the first African-American woman to be elected Mayor-President of Baton Rouge. During her tenure in the Legislature, Broome focused on bills related to children and families, giving subsidies to struggling grandparents raising their grandchildren, and making it easier for domestic violence victims to break leases to escape abusers. Broome has authored significant pieces of legislation, such as the Children’s Trust Fund Bill, Saturday
Academy Program, Kinship Care Subsidy Program, Social Work Practice Act and the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family.

A native of Iowa, Dr. Gresdna Doty received her university education in Iowa, Florida, and Indiana. She began her professorial career at Texas State University, San Marcos, and moved to LSU in 1967. She served for two years as national Chair of the American College Theatre; she also was elected to the National Theatre Conference and the College of Fellows of the American Theatre, in which she served as Dean. She was designated Alumni Professor in 1984, served as chair of the Department of Theatre, and retired in 1996. She is married to James G. Traynham, LSU Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus.

Del Dugas has the distinction of being the first African-American female to graduate from Louisiana State University (LSU) with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and is also among the first African-American female Chemical Engineers employed by ExxonMobil Baton Rouge. As a project business planner, she is responsible for developing and executing multimillion-dollar capital investments. In addition, her collaboration on strategic initiatives with LSU has led to record increases in minority and female engineering graduates, allowing them to capitalize on state, national, and global opportunities. Her numerous contributions include receiving several professional and service accolades, and local, state, and national recognitions.

Alsie Dunbar has over eighteen years in the chemistry industry as a scientist and engineer. In 2013, Dunbar used her vast personal and professional experience to launch THE STEMS GEMS Mentoring Project. Working in conjunction with the Ascension Parish School Board, the program has provided STEM mentoring to over 300 girls, with three participants receiving Student of the Year distinctions. In 2015, Dunbar was recognized by the GBR Business Report’s Top 40 under 40. She has also had a proclamation issued in her honor by the City of Gonzales. Dunbar currently serves on several local, state, and national non-profit boards.

Dr. Saundra Yancy McGuire is the Director Emerita of the Center for Academic Success and retired Assistant Vice Chancellor and Professor of Chemistry at LSU. She is a passionate advocate for increasing student learning, especially for minority students. Some of her recent awards and recognitions include, the American Chemical Society Award for Encouraging Disadvantaged Students to Pursue Careers in the Chemical Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science Lifetime Mentor Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. A proud Baton Rouge native, she received her undergraduate degree from Southern University. Her book, *Teach Students How to Learn*, was released in October 2015.

For the past fifteen years, Aimee Simon has served as president of Bengal Belles, an organization that provides support to student-athletes at LSU. Bengal Belles was founded 20 years ago and in that time, over one million dollars has been raised to support the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student Athletes. Bengal Belles has over 800 members who work to promote and raise public awareness concerning the education process of all student athletes. Through the support of the Bengal Belles, LSU has one of
the highest graduation rates in the South Eastern Conference and exceeds the national average for NCAA Division-I schools.

Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas is the Founder and President of Baton Rouge’s Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX.) The Center has assisted 30 communities/parishes across Louisiana in urban, rural and regional planning efforts. The premiere program is Plan Baton Rouge, a plan to redevelop downtown into a viable center for all citizens to experience: to work, to play, and to live. Thomas previously served as the first Executive Director of Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance. Thomas is a graduate of LSU’s Master’s Landscape Architecture program, is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and received their 2009 Olmsted Medal for “incredible leadership and vision for the future.”

Tanya Barnett Whitney, of Sorrento, LA retired in 2010 as a Master Sergeant in the Army after serving nearly 28 years. Since then, she volunteers with and holds leadership positions in local and national level veterans’ organizations. As a member of Women Veterans of Louisiana, Whitney gives educational presentations to schools, civic organizations and other public groups promoting the service of women in the military and within aeronautical fields. She also serves as Honor Guard at the funerals of women veterans. Tanya earned a Masters of Aeronautical Science with a dual major of Operations and Safety from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2000.

The 2017 Men Who Champion Women honoree is Dr. Calvin Mackie. He is a current managing partner at Channel ZerO Group, LLC, and a former associate professor of mechanical engineering at Tulane University, a former member of Louisiana Recovery Authority, and a partner at Golden Leaf Energy. Mackie has won numerous awards including the 2003 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, in 2002 the Black Engineer of the Year Award for College Level Educator, the 2002 New Orleans Data News Weekly Trailblazer Award, and the Pi Tau Sigma/ASME Excellence in Teaching Award in Mechanical Engineering for 2000 and 2002.

Online registration for the 5th Annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration will begin February 1st at www.lsufoundation.org/edf. Tickets, tables, sponsorships, and honorees recognitions can be secured through the registration portal.

The LSU Women’s Center provides support, referral and information to students, faculty and staff on issues and concerns related to women. The center also promotes the advancement of gender equity issues and wellbeing through its services, educational programs and advocacy efforts. For additional information about the programs and initiatives of the Women’s Center, visit our website at, http://www.lsu.edu/diversity/womens_center/

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Director, LSU Women’s Center