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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

On Saturday, April 14, 2018, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the Purdue Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff will host its 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Academic and Service Awards Program. This year's event will feature remarks by Purdue University Provost Jay Akridge, and a keynote speech by Purdue alumna Ukari Figgs, former women's basketball star, coach, and current engineer with Toyota. The Awards Program will celebrate the academic achievements, leadership accomplishments, and community service of over 150 Purdue students. The Program will be held in the Purdue Memorial Union North Ballroom, 101 North Grant Street, on the West Lafayette, IN campus. See also [http://www.purdue.edu/bcfs/news\\_events/index.html](http://www.purdue.edu/bcfs/news_events/index.html).

Provost Akridge also holds the title of chief diversity officer, and has declared diversity and inclusion as priorities for the university. Ms. Figgs, who earned her Purdue degree in mechanical engineering, played point guard for the Boilermakers from 1995 to 1999. As co-captain in her senior season, Ms. Figgs led Purdue to an NCAA national championship and was named the 1999 Final Four Most Outstanding Player. She also was named first team All-Big Ten, as well as Associated Press and Kodak honorable mention All-American. The Los Angeles Sparks of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) drafted Ms. Figgs, and she played with that team for three seasons—including their 2001 national championship season. She also played with the Portland Fire and the Houston Comets before retiring as a player. Ms. Figgs held several coaching positions after retirement—including as an assistant coach of Purdue women's basketball from 2009-2011—before leaving the game to work as a production engineer with Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky. Ms. Figgs has been a source of inspiration for Purdue students; see also <https://engineering.purdue.edu/ME/News/ukari-figgs-basketball-champion-and-mechanical-engineer>.

At the Awards Program, students meeting grade-point criteria will receive certificates and gifts; those with the highest grade-point averages will receive cash prizes. The Caucus will present one student with its "Clara Bell Award," presented annually to the African American student with the best academic record in Nursing or Health Sciences. This Award is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Clara Bell, a professor emerita from Purdue's School of Nursing. Students also will be recognized for outstanding service and leadership activities. The Caucus expects to honor a "Parent of the Year," and a "Department/Unit of the Year."

Besides its longevity, the Black Caucus Awards Program is unique at Purdue because it is the only awards program sponsored directly by faculty and staff for students, across all departments on the campus. This event attracts one of the largest gatherings of African American families at the University apart from graduation. The Purdue Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff is one of the longest continuously-functioning organizations of its type on an American university campus, and one of very few that involves both faculty and staff members.