

Henry L. Alder Awards

Lauren Keough

Grand Valley State University

Dr. Lauren Keough earned her PhD from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln in 2015. During the five years since her arrival at Grand Valley State University, Dr. Keough has taught 11 different courses at all levels in the curriculum. In all her classes, she uses research-based practices to build community. Activities on the first day of class ask students to think about what they need “from one another and from their instructor” in order to collaborate and engage in class. Professor Keough demonstrates to her students that she is interested in them, that she cares for their well-being and success, and is doing everything she can to help them become better students of mathematics. Dr. Keough uses standards based grading and ungrading principles (also centered in research) in order to focus her students on persistence, growth, development, curiosity, and understanding. By holding office hours in a public space where many of the mathematics majors work and collaborate, Dr. Keough makes herself accessible not only to her own students, but to those in other courses. Students know that Prof. Keough is responsive to them and is interested in their experience. Her influence in using these practices extends to her peers: Dr. Keough has been particularly influential regarding the use of mastery grading and ungrading. Many colleagues share that they have gotten advice, counsel, and material from Dr. Keough.

Dr. Keough has become a prolific mentor of undergraduate research, having worked with 42 students already in the past 5+ years while at GVSU. Dr. Keough extends her support of student development beyond her classroom by taking students to conferences, and by co-leading grant-funded programs that support women in mathematics. She disseminates best practices through presentations at JMM, Project Next, and MAA MathFest. We enthusiastically recognize Dr. Keough’s achievements as teacher, colleague, and mentor with the 2022 Henry L. Alder Award.

Response

I am honored to be among the incredible teachers and mentors who have won the Alder Award. I am thankful to the MAA for creating environments through MAA MathFest and Project NExT for us to learn from each other. My teaching is a product of the million little things and several big things I have learned from everyone I’ve ever met. Thank you to all of the people who took a chance on me mathematically including my teachers at Hofstra University and at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. I am a believer in having a “Board of Directors” for one’s career and I am grateful to mine—Dr. Feryal Alayont, Dr. David Austin, Dr. Matt Boelkins, Dr. Jessalyn Bolkema, Sarah Clark, Marcia Frobish, Dr. Kelly Goldberg, Dr. Rachel Kirsch, Dr. Jamie Radcliffe, Dr. Nora Youngs, and many others at different points in my career. I am especially thankful to my colleagues and students at Grand Valley State University. GVSU is a magical place to work—my colleagues are doing inspiring work in their classrooms and always encouraging me to do my best for my students. Thank you for trying new things with me and listening carefully to the successes and failures to pick out the important bits to keep doing. Thank you to my students for showing up and working hard even when everything feels impossible. I am lucky to have had students who have trusted me with their development. Last but certainly not least, I’m extraordinarily thankful to the people in my life who have helped me to have the time and energy to listen to and care for my students. My family, my partner Josh, and my health coach Kelly over the last several years have taught me to take care of myself by doing little things like exercising, taking time off, and getting away from email. I hope we will all continue to prioritize mental and physical health for ourselves, our students, and our loved ones in the years to come.

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Lauren Keough is an assistant professor of mathematics at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. Her favorite activities as a child in Rhode Island were those that allowed room for creativity. In fact, she thought she was cheating when she used her creativity to find patterns to do timed multiplication tests. Her love for math developed as an undergraduate at Hofstra University where she learned she could be creative in her math courses. Lauren completed her PhD in 2015 at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln under the supervision of Dr. Jamie Radcliffe. Her research is in graph theory, and she especially loves areas where she can involve undergraduates. After graduate school, Lauren spent a year at Davidson College as a visiting assistant professor before moving to Grand Valley State University in 2016. At GVSU, Lauren has tried to teach as many classes as possible, started a math circle with an MAA Tensor grant with co-PI's Dr. Feryal Alayont and Meghan VanderMale, and mentored many undergraduates in research experiences. In 2018 she received a Center for Undergraduate Research Mathematics grant with co-PI Dr. Austin Mohr and has been awarded an NSA REU grant for summer 2022 with co-PI Dr. Michael Santana. She looks forward to continuing to mentor and learn from her students. Beyond math, Lauren likes to do crossword puzzles and is learning to embrace winter sports.