

2018 O.WL. Award Winner



Dr. Loren K. Ammerman, Professor of Biology, Angelo State University
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Biography

I am interested in using molecular data to reconstruct evolutionary relationships of organisms and to investigate species boundaries in mammals. I also am interested in community structure and the ecology of bats, especially in Big Bend National Park. Projects on roosting ecology of bats and molecular investigations into the diets of bats are currently underway. Much of what I have learned about bats in Texas has been incorporated into the book “Bats of Texas”

that I coauthored with David Schmidly and Christine Hice and is published by Texas A&M Press.

Nomination by Laramie L. Lindsey, Erin Adams, Dana Lee, Molly M. McDonough, Marie Tipps, Krysta D. Demere, Stephanie G. Martinez, Alexandra Shaffer, Citlally Jimenez, Katie Kuzdak, Roxy Pourshoushtari, Virginia Jaquish, & Sydney Decker

Researchers topping the list in grants acquired or papers published are often touted as leaders in their field. However, defining accomplishment in these terms eclipses the true meaning behind such an influential position. A successful leader can also be measured by the legacy they leave behind in those they have taught, trained, mentored, and impacted. By either definition, Dr. Loren Ammerman is a leader and an outstanding role model to women in science.

We live in a time when women are earning more than 50% of the degrees in the STEM fields, yet consist of only 25% of the total STEM workforce, indicating low retention for women in the STEM fields. Data indicates that the primary reason that female scientists leave is because of sustained challenges including discrimination, sexual harassment, and even retaliation. Loren has been a model representative of a leader within the STEM field that recognizes the disparity of females in science and thus values and

promotes female scientists, a quality often unrecognized but certainly not unappreciated by her female mentees.

Loren is a Professor in the Department of Biology at Angelo State University, the Curator of Frozen Tissues for the Angelo State Natural History Collection, the former Managing Editor of *The Southwestern Naturalist*, and a past President of the Texas Society of Mammalogists. She has 30 years of valuable teaching and research experience, and more than 45 peer-reviewed publications. She co-authored *The Bats of Texas*, which is the foremost authority for bats in the state. Loren encourages independent thinking in a supportive atmosphere, and as a result, Loren and her students have contributed to advancements in multiple branches of biology including natural history, ecology, and molecular biology. She works with other researchers in Texas, nationally, and internationally. Because of her nationally-recognized expertise encompassing many aspects of bat biology, state and federal agencies regularly seek her for their consulting needs. Furthermore, Loren has collaborated with researchers internationally, particularly researchers in Mexico. Her hard work, selflessness, and determination have allowed her to successfully serve in all these roles and professional affiliations.

Loren has mentored many women and men throughout her career. Among those that have graduated, 17 of her 26 Master's students have been women, as were 16 of her 17 undergraduate researchers. She has selflessly dedicated herself to the academic and personal growth of her students by lending support, often by sharing her own life experiences, at both professional and personal crossroads. By these means, Loren has paved the way for women to excel alongside their male counterparts. As a mentor to predominantly female students, Loren has been known to share a great number of her personal experiences relating to women working in the field. Perhaps some of the more empowering stories (at least 5, to be exact) involve Loren hiking the tallest mountain in Big Bend National Park while ceaselessly encouraging pregnant researchers along the way. However, Loren's natural storytelling ability extends beyond motivating women solely within the scientific community. She is also gifted with the ability to effectively communicate with mixed audiences of all backgrounds.

Whether teaching a group of 4th graders about mammals, Girl Scouts about DNA extraction, or a group of Master Naturalists about bats, Loren never hesitates to share her expertise in a way the community can understand. This passion that Loren has for educating and motivating community members demonstrates that she is more than just an outstanding woman leader in her scientific field – she is an ambassador for all women, regardless of their scientific prowess. Loren's collective knowledge, experience, and communication skills give her a natural authority that is highly respected within the biological community and by the general public. Her level of involvement within the community serves to dispel

outdated stereotypes surrounding women working in STEM fields: Loren proves that raising a family and having a fulfilling career in biology are not mutually exclusive. Although her accomplishments rank her among those leading the field of academia, the true impact she has had as a leader can be seen through the legacy she has instilled in her students. Collectively, we nominate Dr. Loren Ammerman for the Outstanding Women Leader in Science Award.