

Colella honored with 2023 Lepage Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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Adrienne Colella (right), James W. McFarland Distinguished Chair in Business and professor of management, receives the 2023 Albert Lepage Faculty Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the Lepage Center Awards Gala on March 30. The award was presented by Erick Valentine (left), associate dean for EDI.

Adrienne Colella, James W. McFarland Distinguished Chair in Business and professor of management, has been named the 2023 recipient of the Albert Lepage Faculty Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The award, which recognizes Freeman School faculty members whose teaching or research significantly advances the ideals of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), was presented at this year's Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and

Innovation Awards Gala, which took place on March 30 at the Audubon Tea Room.

Colella was honored for her groundbreaking research on disability and employment. An award-winning and prolific scholar, Colella has published extensively on topics including the effects of disability on work experiences, performance appraisal of employees with disabilities, perceptions of fairness related to accommodation and discrimination in employment.

“For more than 30 years, Adrienne has studied the issue of disability in the workplace, contributing to our knowledge and understanding of the topic and helping to create a more accommodating, inclusive workplace,” said Paulo Goes, dean of the Freeman School. “One need only review her extensive publications, conference presentations, grants and invited talks to see her impact.”

Colella first became interested in the study of disability in the workplace in the early 1990s. The Americans with Disabilities Act had just passed, and Colella was working with a group of labor economists studying different types of incentives for organizations to hire people with disabilities. One of the things they found was that the incentives weren't very effective at getting people who had been disabled back to work.

“In my area, which is industrial and organizational psychology, a lot of work had been done on gender and race, but no one was looking at inclusion issues with people with disabilities,”

Colella says. “I thought maybe one of the reasons these incentives to organizations weren't working to get people back to work once they'd been injured was that no one was considering what happens to people with a disability once they're in an organization. And that started off a lot of different lines of research.”

Since then, Colella has published more than two dozen peer-reviewed articles and book chapters exploring various aspects of disability in the workplace.

“I think my early work spurred on a lot of work, so now research on the inclusion of people with disabilities is not uncommon,” she says. “I think it's done a lot to quantify and provide empirical evidence for things like stereotypes against people with disabilities, questions that shouldn't be asked in interviews, and how to introduce accommodations so that co-workers accept the accommodations and they don't impinge on the privacy of the person being accommodated.”

More recently, Colella has begun to focus her research on the subject of neurodiversity in the workplace.

“A lot of companies, especially tech and financial firms, are interested in hiring more neurodiverse people and integrating them into their organizations, but there’s a disconnect in using traditional hiring practices to hire this population,” Colella says. “Companies are working out new ways of assessing people that don’t rely as heavily on social skill, because the average job interview, whether it means to or not, is influenced heavily by social skill.”

In addition to her publications and research, Colella has served as an editorial board member of *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* and *Journal of Management*. In 2011, she served as president of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

In 2022, she received the Tulane University Provost’s Award for Excellence in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). She also received the Freeman School’s 2022 Eric Sternberg Award for Faculty Research, which recognizes business school faculty members for significant research contributions to their academic field of interest.

Colella joined the Freeman School in 2005 after serving as an associate professor of management at Texas A&M University’s Mays Business School. Prior to that, she served as an assistant professor of management at Rutgers University.