The Graduate Dean’s Award (GDA) promotes diversity of views, experiences and ideas in the pursuit of research, scholarship and creative excellence within graduate education at Kent State University. The GDA seeks to enhance Kent State’s recruitment and support of academically excellent graduate students with diverse backgrounds. Each GDA recipient is awarded $5,000 from the Division of Graduate Studies, an enhancement of a full-time graduate assistantship stipend. The GDA is a reflection of the wide range of students and disciplines at Kent State.

The Division of Graduate Studies names 10 Graduate Dean’s Awards annually, to students beginning graduate school in the fall semester. Nominations must come from faculty within the academic program of the student. For more information about the Graduate Dean’s Award and the nomination form, please visit www.kent.edu/graduestudies/gda.

**Graduate Dean's Award 2014 Recipients**

**Dulcinea Avouris**  
Ph.D., Applied Geology  

The number of women in geosciences is increasing; however, they are still underrepresented compared to their male counterparts, receiving only 43 percent of doctoral degrees. Avouris’ nominator describes her as the top applicant to the geology program, with an exceptional work ethic, as well as outstanding GPA and test scores. Avouris’ background in research, variety of interests and high intellectual ability make her an ideal selection for the GDA.

**Jennifer Cooks**  
Ph.D., Clinical Psychology  

African-American are underrepresented in the field of psychology, making up only 7 percent of the graduate student population in the discipline. Cooks’ area of interest is the etiology and prevention of depression, and her longterm goals are to expand knowledge and treatment of depression in young adults in low-income communities. Her nominator describes her as a highly qualified student who is sure to enhance the department, making Cooks an ideal selection for the GDA.

**Kenton Butcher**  
M.A., English  

In the field of English, African-Americans are significantly underrepresented, earning only 4 percent of doctoral degrees, which is Butcher’s ultimate goal. Butcher taught English as a Second Language in China for four years, and his experiences speak as to why he is an excellent selection for the GDA. His research, which will focus on various genres of African-American literature, will contribute to diversity of scholarship within the department.

**Charisse Harris**  
M.F.A., Drawing and Painting  

In fine arts, African-Americans are often underrepresented in graduate programs. Harris is a driven, talented artist who is described by her nominator as a valuable asset to the department. Her strong GPA, extracurricular involvement and professional experiences will surely enable Harris to succeed. She looks forward to immersing herself in the program and expanding her fluency across mediums. Additionally, Harris hopes to become a teaching artist and help students develop their voice.
Ryan Marx
M.A., Philosophy

Marx is a disabled veteran, having served in the army during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His experiences in the military led Marx to the study of ethics, particularly utilitarianism, pragmatist feminism, global justice and sustainability. Ultimately, Marx wants to merge philosophy with activism, and his diverse experiences, determination and outstanding GRE scores indicate that he will be successful in that endeavor.

Megan Hornyak
M.A., Geography

Women in geosciences receive only 43 percent of doctoral degrees, and African-Americans make up only 3 percent of the Association of American Geographers. Hornyak plans to focus on urban geography, planning and the environment with an interest in creating stable and healthy environments for cities. After receiving a master’s, Hornyak plans to pursue a Ph.D. in geography, and her commitment to service and exceptional leadership ability will help her lead a positive and productive career.

Karen M. Martinez
Ph.D., Sociology

In the field of sociology, less than 5 percent of all doctoral degrees are awarded to Latinos. A second-generation Mexican-American, Martinez is dedicated to conducting research that will focus on systems of inequality in relation to race, gender and class. Specifically, Martinez is interested in urban planning and legislation reform. Martinez’s passion for sociology will surely result in positive additions to the field and changes in society.

Jessica Ransome
M.Ed., Health Education and Promotion

In the health sciences, African-Americans are significantly underrepresented. Ransome enters the Health Education and Promotion program with enthusiasm and experience. During her undergraduate studies, she passionately worked with youth in her community on leadership development. Her nominator describes her as a determined individual who will be a great asset to the program. Ransome hopes to work with African-Americans regarding premature birth issues.

Karla Rodriguez
Ph.D., Biomedical Sciences

Latino students are underrepresented in biological/biomedical sciences, earning fewer than 4 percent of research doctoral degrees. A first-generation Latina student, Rodriguez is determined to become a research scientist with the goal of helping to cure conditions like heart disease. Rodriguez’s strong research background and passion for the field demonstrate that she is an outstanding student who will contribute to the diversity and advancement of biomedical research.

Michael Weatherford
Ph.D., Counseling and Human Development

Although counselor education has made strides to increase diversity in the field, individuals with physical disabilities are underrepresented. A visually impaired student, Weatherford is dedicated, and his experience makes him an ideal selection for the GDA. Weatherford aspires to be a counselor educator with a focus on multiculturalism and human development, and he hopes to train future generations of counselors to become well-rounded, culturally sensitive professionals.