



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

OFFICE OF  
THE PRESIDENT

**Wednesday, Nov. 1, 2017**

**To:** Campus Community

**From:** Karen S. Haynes, President

**Subject:** 2017/18 Harry E. Brakebill Distinguished Professor Award – Dr. Jill Watts

Upon the recommendation of the Faculty Awards Selection Committee, I am pleased to announce that Dr. Jill Watts, professor of History in the College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences, is the recipient of the 2017-18 Harry E. Brakebill Distinguished Professor Award.

Dr. Watts embodies the principles of the Brakebill Award through her excellence in teaching, research and service.

With an international reputation in her fields of African American History and American Social and Cultural History, Dr. Watts combines her love of research and teaching by engaging students in research that serves the local community. Students are provided a unique sense of community. They are active learners, participating in group discussions, multimedia projects and oral presentations. She makes history more informative and engaging by using cutting-edge digital history curriculum. Dr. Watts describes her teaching style as “a mix of storytelling and the Socratic method.”

Dr. Watts’ scholarly work appeals to both historians and the general public. She has authored three highly regarded books (“Hattie McDaniel: Black Ambition, White Hollywood;” “Mae West: An Icon in Black and White;” and “God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story”), two of which are optioned for film production. Her fourth book, “Black Cabinet, White House: African American Brain Trusters in the Age of Roosevelt,” will focus on Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Black Cabinet” – a group of African American policy advisers to the president from 1933-1945.

Dr. Watts was one of the first History faculty hired at CSUSM, and has helped shape the department’s curriculum over the past 25 years. She was a member of the initial curriculum committee that laid the foundation for CSUSM’s first catalog. She has

served as the program director for History and Film Studies, as co-director for Women's Studies, taught over 25 different courses, and served as the departmental graduate studies coordinator for seven years. Dr. Watts is also a member of the founding team that continues to sustain the History Graduate M.A. program.

Dr. Watts has and continues to support her department by not only engaging and teaching students, but by mentoring the faculty who teach them. She is a "go-to" resource for her colleagues, investing her time and energy into ensuring the success of the entire History department.

She exemplifies the values and principles of Cal State San Marcos and epitomizes what it means to be a faculty member committed to sustained excellence in teaching, research and enhancing student learning. Please join me in congratulating her on this well-deserved honor.