

# The Wu Yi-fang Junior Faculty Award

*Honoring a Legacy of Educational Excellence and Global Leadership*

## About Wu Yi-fang (1893-1985)

[Wu Yi-fang](#) 吳貽芳 represents one of the most remarkable stories of educational leadership and international diplomacy in the 20th century. Born in 1893, she overcame profound personal tragedies and cultural barriers to become a pioneering figure who bridged Chinese and American educational traditions.

As a [Barbour Scholar](#), Wu earned both her Master's degree (1924) and Ph.D. in Biology (1928) from the University of Michigan, becoming one of the first Barbour Scholars to complete doctoral studies. The Barbour Scholarship program, established in 1917 by University of Michigan Regent Levi Barbour, was designed to support exceptional women from Asia and the Middle East in pursuing advanced education, with the vision of empowering them to return home as leaders who would advance knowledge and opportunity in their communities.

Upon her return to China in 1928, at the age of 35, Wu became the first Chinese woman to serve as a university president when she assumed leadership of Ginling Women's College (金陵女子大學) in Nanjing. During her 23-year presidency (1928-1951), she demonstrated extraordinary leadership through some of China's most turbulent periods, including the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War.

Wu's influence extended far beyond the realm of education. In 1945, she served on China's delegation to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, where she became one of only four women among 160 delegates to sign the UN Charter. She advocated for the inclusion of women's rights in the UN's founding document and believed deeply in human rights for all people. In recognition of her extraordinary contributions, Wu received the University of Michigan Alumnae Athena Award in 1979, "in recognition of her professional distinction and dedication to the cause of education and the rights of women during turbulent times for her country."

Wu Yi-fang's legacy embodies the transformative power of education, the promotion of scholarly excellence, the importance of cross-cultural understanding, and the courage to lead during challenging times. Her story continues to inspire educators, scholars, and leaders worldwide.

## Mission Statement

The University of Michigan's [Office of the Provost](#) and the [Association of Chinese Professors \(UM-ACP\)](#) are honored to announce the [Wu Yi-fang Junior Faculty Award](#). This award recognizes junior faculty across all University of Michigan campuses who embody Wu Yi-fang's spirit of academic excellence, cultural bridge-building, and transformative leadership that made her such an extraordinary figure in both Chinese and American educational history. Nominees must demonstrate exceptional potential in their scholarly contributions and a commitment to promoting cross-cultural exchanges and understanding between Greater China and the United States.

## Award Categories

The Wu Yi-fang Junior Faculty Award recognizes five U-M faculty members with a monetary award of \$5,000 each, in the following categories:

1. Business, Humanities, Law, and Social Sciences
2. Engineering and Applied Sciences
3. Life Sciences and Medicine
4. Mathematics, Information, and Natural Sciences
5. Theoretical and Performing Arts, Architecture, and Design

## Eligibility Requirements

1. Academic Position: the nominee must be an Assistant Professor or equivalent rank in the tenure, research, or clinical track at any University of Michigan campus as of January 8, 2027.
2. UM-ACP Membership: the nominee must be a current member of the UM-ACP. Membership in the Association is open to all University of Michigan faculty who have an interest in Chinese culture, heritage, and academic pursuits, regardless of their ethnic background, country of origin, or citizenship status. [Join us today!](#)
3. The award is open to faculty members who are scholars making significant contributions to their respective fields, advancing understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture, heritage, and scholarship, and/or who pursue research that creates bridges between the cultures and academic traditions of Greater China and the USA.

## Submission Process

Applicants must submit the following materials:

1. Cover Letter (no more than 5 pages long) describing the nominee's research/scholarly interests, career goals, past and ongoing work advancing cross-cultural understanding between Greater China and the United States through research, teaching, service, or community engagement, and their commitment to continuing this mission.
2. Research and/or Scholarship Achievement Summary (1-page limit) highlighting key accomplishments and future impact potential)
3. Current Curriculum Vitae
4. Two Letters of Recommendation (including one from department chair or unit head)

Applications must be submitted using the [online submission form](#).

Deadline: January 8, 2027, 5:00 PM EST

## Award Terms and Recognition

Award Amount for each recipient: \$5,000 in flexible research funds

## Award Ceremony:

Wu Yi-fang Junior Faculty Recipients will be recognized at a formal award ceremony and dinner, hosted by UM-ACP and the Office of the Provost.

Date: Saturday or Sunday in February 2027

Time: 6:00-8:30 PM EST

Location: NCRC Building 18 Dining Hall, U-M Ann Arbor's north campus

RSVP