

2107 Conference Keynote Speakers

Friday, May 19:

Dr. Eric W. Kaler, President, University of Minnesota



Since taking office in 2011, President Eric Kaler has focused on core priorities: academic excellence, access for qualified students, stewardship of tuition and public dollars, diversity and a welcoming and respectful campus climate, a world-class research enterprise that aligns with the needs of the state of Minnesota and its industries, and a deep commitment to public engagement and outreach, locally and globally.

Kaler received his Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University in 1982. He went on to become one of the nation's foremost experts on "complex fluids," which have applications in drug delivery, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing.

Before coming to the U, Kaler served from 2007 to 2011 as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, New York. Previously, he was dean of the University of Delaware's College of Engineering. He also taught at the University of Washington. He received his undergraduate degree from the California Institute of Technology in 1978.

Kaler and his wife, [Karen](#), have two adult sons.

George Weiblen

College of Biological Sciences Professor George Weiblen is the recipient of the University of Minnesota's 2017 President's Community-Engaged Scholar Award. Selected from a field of eight system-wide candidates, Weiblen was chosen for his community-engaged research and partnerships in Papua New Guinea which has helped advance the field of biodiversity on the global level.

A professor in the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, Distinguished McKnight University Professor Weiblen is the scientific director and curator of plants at the University's James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History and a teacher in his "Flowering Plant Diversity" and "Minnesota Flora" courses.

In 1997, Weiblen and his colleagues founded the New Guinea Binatang Research Center by working with scientists, local governments, and tribal leaders to develop a conservation area, public school, and the Swire Station Research Facility near the Papua New Guinea village of Wanang. Weiblen's team of citizen scientists have identified 250,000 species of woody plants and more than 500 new species, culminating in *WIAD Conservation: a Handbook of Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity*. Training and salaries provided by Weiblen and his colleagues continue to leverage native knowledge of regional biology to promote research and environmental conservation in the region.



Sunday, May 21:

Rhiannon Crain, Habitat Network Project Manager, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Rhiannon earned a B.S. in Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona and a Ph.D. in Informal Science Education from UC Santa Cruz's Center for Informal Learning in Science.

She became project leader of [YardMap](#) in January 2010 and has shepherded the development of the YardMap application, our socially networked habitat mapping project designed to promote and study the potential impacts of crowd-sourcing conservation practices in backyards, on farms, in parks, and on lands set aside for conservation.

YardMap is the first citizen science project to fully integrate data collection with social networking, rendering it a compelling tool for studying and supporting environmental discourse and behavior. Rhiannon is an extension associate at Cornell and co-PI of the NSF Cyberlearning grant for YardMap research funded in 2014.

