**Afro-American Alumni Awards**

**Sarah A. Lewis Distinguished Afro-American Alumni Award**

The **Distinguished Afro-American Award** is named for Sarah Anna Lewis (1846-1939) of Fall River, Massachusetts. She was admitted to Bridgewater State Normal School on Feb. 19, 1867. According to research compiled by Dr. Thomas Turner, Professor of History at Bridgewater State University, Miss Lewis is considered to be the first African-American to graduate from the institution as a member of the Class of 1869. Dr. Turner discovered the information about Miss Lewis in October 2006 while researching a book he is writing on the history of the college. She taught for three terms in Fall River before coming to Bridgewater State Normal School, which, according to Dr. Turner, was not uncommon in the 19th century. Subsequent information about Miss Lewis, revealed that after her graduation she taught in Fall River for two years at the “1st Div. Intermediate” school level, commencing with her March 1869 appointment. In 2008, Miss Lewis was inducted into the Massachusetts Hall of Black Achievement at Bridgewater State University (<http://vc.bridgew.edu/hoba/index.html>).

Created in 2010, the award was renamed in 2016 in honor of Sarah A. Lewis. The Sarah A. Lewis Distinguished Afro-American Alumni Award is granted annually to an alumnus who has distinguished themselves professionally and through service to Bridgewater State University. This award is presented at the Annual Awards Dinner in March and the Annual Bridgewater State University Alumni Association (BAA) Awards Banquet held every September. The recipient will be selected based on the following criteria:

**Selection Criteria:**

1. The nominee must hold a degree from Bridgewater State University, whether it is an undergraduate degree, a graduate degree or an honorary degree and be a member of the Afro-American Alumni Association.
2. The nominee must demonstrate outstanding leadership in their community and/or profession and who has set a high standard for volunteerism, mentoring, and/or philanthropy.
3. The nominee must demonstrate performance at the highest levels of their profession, excel professionally, provide inspirational leadership to others, or provide service for the benefit of Bridgewater State University and the community.
4. The nominee must be present to accept the award at the Annual Awards Dinner in March and BAA Awards Banquet in September.

**Selection Process:**

1. The nominee must be nominated by a member of the Afro-American Alumni Association. Current voting members of the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association are not eligible for this award.
2. The consideration and processing of the nomination shall take place once a year.
3. Nominees will be reviewed by the Awards Committee then narrowed to two candidates for a vote by the Executive Board & Alumni Council. Nominee must receive a majority vote to be selected.
4. Nominees who are not selected may be re-nominated.