

Elizabeth Coleman Visionary Leadership Award

The **Elizabeth Coleman Visionary Leadership Award** was established in honor of Bennington's ninth president and former director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) to recognize a living distinguished Bennington alumna/alumnus, faculty or staff member, or an individual from the larger Bennington community whose innovative and inspirational leadership is advancing civic and cultural life and improving the lives of others.

The selected individual will be an engaged citizen who has successfully demonstrated the willingness to step forward and take risks in order to solve problems and achieve results in the areas of education, government, the arts and sciences, or industry.

Established by parents of a Bennington alumna from the Class of 2000, the annual \$5,000 award has no restrictions on how it may be used. Nominations will be open in September 2016. The honoree will be announced in early 2017 and will be invited to campus in the spring to meet with current students, allowing them to connect with an exceptional leader who is affiliated with the College.

Previous Recipients

- Sheila Lewandowski '97, the 2016 award recipient, is a long-time arts advocate and cofounder of The Chocolate Factory, an award-winning incubator of experimental performance in Queens, NY. At The Chocolate Factory, at the Queens Council for the Arts, and as founder of Taste of Long Island, Lewandowski has long recognized that cultural development goes hand in hand with community development, and that the arts are an integral part of a community fabric that extends to transportation, schools, affordable housing, and the people who go about their daily lives in the neighborhood.
- Victoria Sammartino '99, the 2015 award recipient, is the founder of Voices UnBroken. Inspired by her experience teaching poetry readings on Rikers Island while a student, she began the nonprofit dedicated giving vulnerable young people opportunity for creative self-expression, one year after graduating from Bennington.
- Holly Block '80, the inaugural recipient in 2014, is the Executive Director of the Bronx Museum of the Arts and recently served as the co-commissioner of the United States Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. Under her leadership, the museum has not only earned international acclaim but become an engine for community revitalization.