



Press Release

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NUWC Division Newport scientist, team win 2025 Etter Top Scientists and Engineers of the Year Awards

Michael Warnock, a scientist in the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) Division Newport's Undersea Warfare (USW) Platforms and Payload Integration Department, and the Surface Ship Undersea Warfare In-Service Support Team from the Sensors and Sonar Systems Department, recently won Assistant Secretary of the Navy Research, Development and Acquisition (RD&A) 2025 Dr. Delores M. Etter Top Scientists and Engineers of the Year Awards.

Winners in this program have demonstrated technical excellence with their achievements and contributions resulting in significant benefits to the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense and national defense.

Warnock, of Newport News, Virginia, a winner in the Emergent Scientist category for those with less than 10 years of experience, was recognized for his outstanding contributions to quantum computing research at Division Newport. He is the lead scientist in quantum computing research within the USW Platforms and Payload Integration Department.

Quantum computing has the potential to exponentially improve the way the U.S. Navy operates, the award states. One possible improvement could be in processing time, with machine learning and autonomy efforts quickly advancing. Quantum computing could also help to remove noise clutter that would optimize sensing or encryption methods, making them virtually impenetrable, the award states. He has executed three successful internal research projects in the field, while continuing to explore Navy applications for his work.

"Warnock has a pivotal role in developing collaborations across industry, academia and government in the area of quantum computing," the award states. "His work in developing quantum-inspired algorithms has been critical to advancements in this application area for the Navy, paving the way for increased opportunities for quantum computing applications within the U.S. Navy."

The Sensors and Sonar Systems Department's Surface Ship Undersea Warfare In-Service Support Team ensures the fleet's sonar systems remain up and running in three main ways: through training and maintenance, by providing distance fleet support, and identifying and resolving software issues.

Sensors and Sonar Systems Department engineering team members include Melodie Grasso of Exeter, Rhode Island, team lead; Jesse Cobb of Chicago, Illinois; Jeffrey Kobza of New Bedford, Massachusetts; Matthew Cordes of Bristol, Rhode Island; Mason Machado, of Fall River, Massachusetts; Matthew Puterio of Richmond, Rhode Island; and Steven Fastow of Mohnton, Pennsylvania, a support contractor.

##More##

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“With an unwavering commitment to do the job and vast level of knowledge, these talented engineers answered the call again and again in 2024 and earned great praise from the program office and the fleet,” the award states.

Team members traveled to Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona Division in California to support a collaboration event between the regional maintenance centers and the in-serving engineering agents (ISEA). The purpose of the meeting was to get all fleet users, program office members, trainers, maintainers, installers and ISEA personnel together to discuss current AN/SQQ-89 fleet issues, supportability, maintainability, training and upcoming system enhancements.

“Whether it was a technical insertion, troubleshooting issues or briefing the program office, each member of this team had a specific role and executed that role flawlessly to ensure the product remained functional,” the award states.

The award winners will be recognized during a virtual awards ceremony on June 25.

NUWC Newport is the oldest warfare center in the country, tracing its heritage to the Naval Torpedo Station established on Goat Island in Newport Harbor in 1869. Commanded by Capt. Chad Hennings, NUWC Newport maintains major detachments in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Andros Island in the Bahamas, as well as test facilities at Seneca Lake and Fisher's Island, New York, Leesburg, Florida, and Dodge Pond, Connecticut.

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