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Purchase College, SUNY Celebrates Arts, Culture and Education by Honoring Performer Audra McDonald, Artist Fred Wilson, Dancer Jacques d'Amboise and Philanthropist Lawrence B. Benenson

Artists and Art Patron Receive Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity in Recognition of Lifetime Achievement

New York, New York | April 2, 2015: The New York Historical Society was bustling with many of the country's top artists and benefactors last night as Thomas J. Schwarz, President of Purchase College, State University of New York, presented four honorees with the prestigious **Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity**.

Purchase College is among the nation's preeminent public arts and liberal arts institutions educating the creative thinkers of tomorrow. The award and its presentation ceremony were established by President Schwarz in 2007 to pay tribute to the vital role of art in positively shaping society and culture.

Nearly 175 guests—themselves representing a broad cross-section of award-winning performers and artists, well-known benefactors, and business and political leaders—joined in the March 30 dinner celebration to honor creative excellence in the arts. Film, stage and voice actor Jay O. Sanders '76, Purchase alumnus, served as Master of Ceremonies.

Four medals were presented to:

- **Audra McDonald**, an actress and singer who has won six Tony awards and two Grammy awards. She will appear in Disney's upcoming live-action remake of *Beauty and the Beast* and will return to Broadway in 2016 in the backstage historical tribute *Shuffle Along*. Ms. McDonald is currently on tour; her acceptance remarks were delivered via video.
- **Fred Wilson**, a ground-breaking and award-winning conceptual artist and curator whose practice includes painting, sculpture, photography and mixed-media installations. His recent work as an installation artist frequently focuses on social justice through his medium, museology; his new large-scale installation—a part of the show *The Order of Things*—opens in Philadelphia's Barnes Museum on May 16.
- **Jacques d'Amboise**, one of the finest classical dancers and choreographers of our time. A former principal of the New York City ballet, he founded the world-renowned National Dance Institute in 1976; in the years since, he has invited millions of young people—regardless of economic status or physical ability—to “come dance with me” ... thus introducing them to the magical beauty, discipline and wonder of dance.
- **Lawrence B. Benenson**, a partner and member of the executive leadership team at one of the nation's premier owners of net-leased properties. His selection as an honoree recognizes his passion and lifelong



(l to r) Honoree Lawrence B. Benenson, Honoree Fred Wilson, Purchase College President Thomas Schwarz, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, Honoree Jacques d'Amboise
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commitment to charitable giving, civic responsibility and fostering creativity.

“This year’s honorees are driving forces who nurture and stimulate arts and culture in New York City and beyond,” said President Schwarz. “Through their art and support of the arts, they motivate, empower and inspire excellence in the lives around them. Their vision and their practice is aligned with the mission of Purchase College ... we are proud to honor them with this award.”

Twenty medals have now been presented since the Rockefeller Award for Creativity was established in 2007. The award is named for Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller, 41st Vice President of the United States, 49th Governor of New York State, businessman, philanthropist, ardent champion of the environment, visionary patron of the arts, and founder of Purchase College.

For complete biographies and more information about the Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity, the 2015 honorees and past recipients, please visit www.purchase.edu/Rockefeller.

High-resolution image available upon request. Shown in photo above (l-r): *Honoree Lawrence B. Benenson, Honoree Fred Wilson, Purchase College President Thomas Schwarz, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, Honoree Jacques d’Amboise.*

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About Purchase College

Purchase College, part of the State University of New York (SUNY) network of 64 universities and colleges, was founded in 1967 by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. His aspirations for Purchase were to combine on one campus conservatory training in the visual and performing arts with programs in the liberal arts and sciences. Today, Purchase College–SUNY is a community of students, faculty and friends where open-minded engagement with the creative process leads to a lifetime of intellectual growth and professional opportunity.

Located just outside New York City in Purchase, New York, the College cultivates the talents of actors, artists, dancers, filmmakers, musicians, and other artists with the same integrity and discipline that is devoted to students in the humanities, environmental and social sciences. Among the 18,000 Purchase College alumni are Oscar, Emmy, and Tony Award winners, prominent research scientists, journalists, academics, CEOs of international corporations, and more. The campus includes world-class facilities in the Neuberger Museum of Art and a Performing Arts Center with four theatre halls.

For more information about the College, visit www.purchase.edu.

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