Academic Coordinator Helen Kathleen Cook, PhD, received the 2014 Gloria W. White Distinguished Service Award on May 19 for her work serving the students and faculty of the Department of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis.

The service award presentation is part of WUSTL’s annual Staff Day celebration, held May 19 to recognize and thank the nonacademic staff who keep the university running smoothly all year.

Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton presented Cook with the honor at the recognition ceremony in Edison Theatre. Wrighton called Cook, a 16-year veteran of WUSTL, a positive influence on the lives of both students and faculty.

“She keeps track of the smallest details, from a struggling student’s progress to helping new faculty members brainstorm about syllabus ideas to organizing faculty-student lunches and department-wide celebrations,” Wrighton told hundreds of WUSTL staff and faculty members. “She is certainly a key reason behind the growth and vibrancy of anthropology as a department.”

Cook said she was both honored and humbled by the recognition.

“I couldn’t do my job without all of the colleagues across campus who help me,” Cook said. “Here’s how it works for me — when I need to know something I don’t know, which happens frequently, I pick up the phone and I find out that answer. I get a cordial voice the other end of the line every time. These small conversations that we have form links among us, and links create relationships and community.

“At the other end of the line is a colleague who offers advice, information, a funny story when you need one, the odd bit of gossip and a sympathetic ear. It is a huge privilege for me to part of this university community, and I want to thank you all for being my warm and trusted colleagues.”

The Gloria W. White Distinguished Service Award comes with a $1,000 prize plus the opportunity to have the recipient’s nameplate added to 10 books in Olin Library. The award was established in 1998 and celebrates the legacy of Gloria White, a campus leader for some 35 years until her death in 2003. The award recognizes a nonacademic staff member for exceptional effort and contributions that have resulted in the betterment of the university.

Source: Record, May 27, 2014; article by Diane Toroian Keaggy