“He is a silent hero,” wrote a colleague, “... an example of a professor who cares; who takes the initiative to reach across organizational boundaries; who builds bridges among state government, academia and the private sector; and who creates an academic experience that not only educates our students, but also prepares them for lifelong success.”

As teacher and scientist, in the classroom and the world at large, Gregory J. Gangi is a powerful advocate for the environments that shape life. In 1999, he earned his Ph.D. in ecology from Carolina and joined the faculty in 2000. Now with dual roles as Associate Director for Education in the UNC Institute for the Environment and Associate Teaching Professor for Environment and Ecology, he connects scientific curiosity to intellectual capital across campus and in our state, nation and world.

In recognition of Greg’s influence in the classroom and dedication to his students, Carolina has honored him over the years with numerous advising and teaching awards, including the prestigious Tanner Teaching Award. For more than a decade, he has served as Faculty Mentor and Faculty Coordinator for the University’s Scholars Program, and the National Academic Advising Association recognized his innovative approach to mentoring in 2007 and 2015. He leads students on environmental field studies around the world, including his spring “Coral Reefs” course in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Greg also refined the Institute for the Environment’s field sites to support specific careers and specialized programs key to their success. “His goal is to create a learning environment that extends beyond the classroom,” wrote a colleague. “He blends teaching and advising to become a more effective mentor. He is an agent of institutional change at Carolina.”
Among his most significant contributions, Greg created transformative collaborations on campus and off. The schools of media and journalism, information and library science, government, and public health now offer five-year combined bachelor’s/master’s degree programs, and he helped launch curriculum initiatives in the School of Law, Kenan-Flagler Business School and several departments. With visionary leadership, he established the UNC Clean-Tech Summit to link students, their ideas and energy to industry leaders. Now in its fifth year, the Summit has grown from a moderate conference with 300 attendees to a flagship event hosting more than 1,000 participants, including innumerable executives interested in hiring UNC graduates. In the words of a colleague, “The Clean Tech Summit is the brainchild of Gangi and is his best work in helping our state become a leader in clean energy. The potential for internships, apprenticeships, employment and leadership has already been realized.” The Summit also supports and helps fulfill the University’s commitment to the people of North Carolina. As a colleague wrote, “By focusing on rural and urban areas, the Summit brings energy to economic development through critical issues such as next-gen manufacturing, smart cities, clean water and military partnerships.”

In recognition of his extraordinary achievements; for advocating innovation in this University and beyond; for believing in the power of education to resolve environmental challenges and influence lives; and for his exceptional contributions to Carolina’s mission of teaching, research and public service, Gregory J. Gangi receives the 2018 C. Knox Massey Distinguished Service Award.