



*Maria L. Gini, 2015–16 Distinguished Teacher
Postbaccalaureate, Graduate, and Professional Teaching Award*

Maria Gini has earned an international reputation for her research in robotics and artificial intelligence.

Befitting her work in such a cutting-edge field, she also brings innovative teaching protocols into her classroom. New students of hers are often surprised to discover that she employs a pair of small, fully automated robots in her classroom as exemplars of state-of-the-art robotic devices—and as a sure-fire way of engaging their imaginations.

Gini is also a pioneer in recruiting women into the field of robotics and artificial intelligence. For many years she has been active in the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing (GHC) Conference and was instrumental in bringing the conference to the Twin Cities in 2013.

A few years earlier, she initiated the MinneWIC, a regional celebration of women in computing. Of the 29 Ph.D. students she has graduated, four are women.

Such a combination of imagination and dedication to her field has earned her a number of honors for her teaching, including the Morse-Alumni Award in 1987. A year later she was named a College of Science and Engineering Distinguished Professor.

In her advising and mentoring Gini sets high expectations for her students. She also encourages students to support each other. An African proverb, she says, best summarizes her message to students: “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others.” 🌳

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“We all thrive when personal aspirations and achievements are in sync. I encourage each student to dream big and to follow their own passion. At the same time, I believe we do our best when we work with others.”

