For his outstanding contributions to the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, the MSU Faculty Emeriti Association awards an FEA Individual Award to Dr. Donald Ricks. Dr. Ricks has been deeply involved in research involving the cherry and apple industries. He continues to work with graduate students and faculty on developing seminars and other opportunities to further the knowledge and training of graduate students in extension work. Dr. Ricks has stayed active at the national level with the organization, development, and implementation of a Graduate Student Extension Competition sponsored by the Extension Section of the U.S. Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA). The competition has been conducted for the last three years and has contributed to the growth of young professionals across the country as effective future extension economists.

Dr. Ricks has also developed and taught MSU Freshman Seminars, one of which led to the creation of a 3-credit course for upper classmen on leadership and related people-skills. His enthusiastic teaching of freshman seminars also led to his recognition as the "Kappa Kappa Gamma Professor of the Year, 2009." One student wrote, "I am thankful for the opportunity to be involved in such a stimulating course which has positively affected my life to make it better." As a member of the MSU Extension project "Work Group on Scholarship of Extension," Dr. Ricks helped in the development of key elements, guidelines, and expectations for scholarship of MSU Extension faculty and ways to evaluate and reward it.