

FEATURES

Faculty Honored For Teaching Excellence

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Sometimes the achievements of teachers can be overlooked by the public because of the achievements of their students.

Since 1995, the WSSU Teaching Awards Committee has honored faculty members who excel in teaching with Teaching Awards. Last month, four members of the faculty were honored for their "excellence in teaching," at a luncheon held in the Multipurpose Room in the Thompson Student Services Building.

Dr. Ike Okonta, associate professor of philosophy, was awarded one of the 16 UNC Board of Governor's Excellence in Teaching Awards. This is the third year that the award has been given.

One recipient from each of the 16 schools in the UNC system received the award. Each recipient received \$7,500 and a bronze medallion with their names on them.

"I felt very honored and appreciated in my efforts in being a good teacher. My biggest reward comes from my students becoming more educated, better critical thinkers and more knowledgeable in general," said Okonta. "But, it's nice to be recognized by other faculty members, the administration and the whole UNC system."

He is a native of Nigeria in West Africa and has been a philosophy professor in WSSU's Social Science Department for 10 years.

Dr. Donald MacThompson, associate professor of political science, received the Wachovia Excellence in Teaching Award.

MacThompson, a native of Sierra Leone, West Africa, has been teaching at WSSU for 11 years.

"I was very happy and glad to be able to receive the award," said MacThompson. "It made me feel good about myself. I knew I was appreciated by my students and colleagues."

Two other faculty members received named teaching awards.

Dr. Udaykumar Vyas, professor of mathematics, received the Joseph Patterson Master Teacher Award.

He feels that math is not a memory oriented subject but one that requires logic. "I am honored to have been selected to receive this award," said Vyas.

He has spent 13 years expanding the mathematical potential of WSSU students.

"Young people come here with a dream, a plan in mind," said Vyas. "A teacher helps them strive to make their dreams come true."

Dr. Michael A. Brookshaw, associate professor of Spanish, was awarded the Wilma Lassiter Master Teacher Award.

Brookshaw, a native of Kankakee, Ill., was nominated for the award by one of his colleagues. The idea to nominate him came from a former student.

"I was pleased and gratified to receive the award because it publicly validated me, my students and my efforts to do the best that I can to make it work," said Brookshaw.

He also feels "teaching is a shaping of minds, pointing students in the right direction, coaching and a facilitation of the learning experience."

Brookshaw, a member of the Department of English and Foreign Languages' faculty, teaches upper-level Spanish courses and World Literature I. He has been teaching at WSSU for 11 years.

The outstanding professors were nominated by colleagues or students. The selections were made by the Teaching Awards Committee, which was chaired by Dr. Elva Jones.

The nominated faculty members presented a teaching portfolio which included a videotape of them teaching a class, their teaching philosophy statement, letters of recommendations from students and colleagues, teaching evaluations from students and other documents supporting their teaching. Committee members also visited one of the nominees' classes.

Also at the award's luncheon, Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider, WSSU's chancellor awarded two additional awards, one for research and one for community service.

Dr. Wilveria Atkinson, a member of the Life Sciences faculty, received the award for outstanding research.

She is the first recipient of the award which was named in her honor, The Wilveria B. Atkinson Distinguished Research Award.

A retired member of the faculty, Rev. Cedric Sidney Rodney, is the first recipient of the community service award. The award, The Cedric S. Rodney Distinguished Service Award, was named in his honor.



Dr. Ike Okonta and Vice Chancellor Witherspoon



Dr. Udaykumar Vyas and Vice Chancellor Witherspoon



Dr. Michael Brookshaw and Vice Chancellor Witherspoon