



NEWS

The S.C. Commission on Higher Education

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S.C. Commission on Higher Education Presents 2014 Service Learning Awards Columbia, S.C.

The thirteenth annual Service Learning Awards were presented at the S.C. Commission on Higher Education meeting on Thursday, May 1, 2014. This year, fourteen programs from S.C. public and independent colleges and universities were nominated for the award.

Presented since 2001, this award recognizes the extensive contributions made by the service learning efforts of our colleges and universities and their students. Service learning is a meaningful opportunity for students to apply acquired knowledge and skills in solving real-world problems in their communities. The annual competition recognizes three of the most commendable service learning projects from those nominated; one award is presented to a public four-year college or university, one to a public two-year college, and one to an independent college or university.

The criteria used to select the winners include the ability to resolve community concerns or address community issues; the degree to which the project enhances students' learning; the impact of the project on campus; and the integration of the project's activities into academics. Commissioner Hood Temple, who chaired this year's selection committee, remarked in introducing the awards at the meeting that it was exciting to learn more about the outstanding community service activities of our state's institutions of higher education and that the selection committee was impressed again this year with the quality of the nominations and value provided to students and communities. The Commission congratulated each of the winners who were presented plaques in recognition of their outstanding efforts.

For public four-year institutions, **Coastal Carolina University** received the award for the **Service Learning in Accounting to Assist Local Not-for-Profit Organizations** project directed by Dr. Karen Maguire. Dr. David DeCenzo, President, joined Dr. Maguire in accepting the award and stated that he was very proud of Dr. Maguire and the students involved in the project. This on-going service learning project, which has continued in multiple accounting courses, impacts local not-for-profit organizations (NPO) as students help them achieve best practices in governance, transparency, and financial accountability. The first step of this project was a research project to determine the practices and programs NPOs had in place, areas of weaknesses, and steps to achieve more efficient accounting and stewardship practices. Then, students determined the policies applicable to NPOs on the basis of size and provided a menu of policies for four different sized organizations. Next, students

conducted a financial asset mapping and gap analysis of all NPOs in Horry and Georgetown counties in order to assess the potential to form coalitions, centralize backroom operations, and create financial efficiencies. With this project, students apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in the classroom, reflect on the material they have learned, gather any additional material needed to conduct the analyses, and present the material to NPO executives.

For public two-year institutions, **Williamsburg Technical College** received the award for its **First Annual Health Fair** directed by Mrs. Judy Coker. Dr. Patricia Lee, President, and Ms. Sha'Rhonda Blair, President of the College's Alpha Sigma Gamma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (an honor society for two-year institutions) accepted the award on behalf of Mrs. Coker. For this service learning project, nursing students at Williamsburg Technical College worked with several other groups on campus, including Phi Theta Kappa, to organize a Health Fair. The nursing students provided health screenings and disseminated information about common health issues to residents of Williamsburg County. In doing so, they practiced many of the skills they have learned directly for the nursing program as well as the problem solving, teamwork, and leadership skills necessary to make a meaningful contribution to the community. Dr. Lee stated that project was well-received by the community and is just one of the College's efforts to show how "education is life changing."

For independent institutions, **Columbia College** received the award for its **Sophomore Seminar on Diversity, Gender, and Social Justice with Service Learning at Ebenezer Lutheran/Community CME TASC After School Program** directed by Dr. Christine Hait. Dr. Elizabeth Dinndorf, President, joined Dr. Hait in accepting the award and described the on-going efforts of the institution to serve the local community. For this service learning project, college students work individually or in teams to create enrichment lessons and activities for first grade to high school students participating in the after school program. The program is designed to ensure a safe, after school environment for the students, provide homework assistance, offer enrichment programs and activities, and provide the students with positive role models. Through this program, the college students apply knowledge from their field of study to assist the students in the after school program. As a group, the college students also use this experience to discuss diversity and gender in the context of social justice, and consider the ways these issues factor into the construction of a just society.

The Commission congratulates these outstanding educators and their students for their excellent service learning projects and would like to thank them for their invaluable contributions to the state.

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) serves as the state's coordinating board for higher education. Its mission is to promote quality and efficiency in the state system of higher education with the goal of fostering economic growth and human development in South Carolina. Information about current activities of CHE and higher education in South Carolina can be found on the agency's website: www.che.sc.gov