



NEWS

The S.C. Commission on Higher Education

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S.C. Commission on Higher Education Presents 2015 Service Learning Awards Columbia, S.C.

The fourteenth annual Service Learning Awards were presented at the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education meeting on Thursday, May 7, 2015. This year, fourteen programs from 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, said the selection committee was very impressed with quality of the nominations and service our students provide to communities. The Commission congratulated each of the winners who were presented plaques in recognition of their outstanding efforts.

For public four-year institutions, **the Medical University of South Carolina** received the award for the **Community Aid, Relief, Education, and Support (CARES) Therapy Clinic** project directed by Dr. Sara Kraft. In the CARES Therapy Clinic, students from the occupational therapy, physical therapy, and health administration programs work with third year medical students to learn from each other while serving the community. The students see patients at the clinic who either have no health insurance or do not have rehabilitation as a covered service or have used all their rehabilitation benefits for that year. The clinic is open two evenings a week with one night serving patients with orthopedic/musculoskeletal problems and the other night serving individuals with neurological disorders. The clinic also receives several donated rehabilitation items such as ultra-lightweight wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and braces. When adding these donated therapy supplies with potential billable Medicare changes, the CARES Therapy clinic provided approximately \$24,409 in potential billable services over a six-month period (\$48,818 if extrapolated annually). Of patients seen for initial evaluations, 47% (8 of 17 patients) reported they would have gone to the community ER if not seen in CARES Therapy clinic, saving \$31,136 in potential ER visits over six months, or \$62,272 annually.

According to Dr. David J. Cole, MUSC President:

Our student-run MUSC CARES clinic is serving a critical public need in providing access to care for uninsured and underserved populations in our area. These students and their faculty advisors give of their time, energy, skills and heart to learn from one another and provide the excellent patient care that is central to the overall MUSC mission. These students and faculty leaders are passionate about what they do, and they are showing it by example. As a health care provider myself, it's incredibly gratifying to see the next generation of care givers and leaders doing so much to include and respond to the diverse needs of this at-risk patient population.

For public two-year institutions, **Piedmont Technical College** received the award for its **Renovation at Star Fort Historical Site** project directed by Robert Roche. For this service learning project, students enrolled in the Building Construction Technology program used the skills and knowledge gained from the program while renovating a historical cabin in collaboration with the National Park Service. "Projects such as the one completed by Piedmont Tech's Building and Construction program clearly show how committed our faculty and students are when it comes to giving back to our community," said Dr. Jack Bagwell, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Piedmont Technical College. "Not only did this project provide our students with the hands-on experience they'll need to succeed in their career, it allowed them the opportunity to revitalize a piece of history that will be enjoyed by people from across the country as they stop to visit the Ninety Six Historic Site."

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 Helen Rapoport. For this service learning project, college students learn about some of the central themes, debates, and issues that impact social justice, diversity, and gender while teaching the Healing Species Violence Prevention and Compassion Education program to elementary and middle school students at The Community CME/Ebenezer Lutheran Teen After School Program (TASC). The after school program is designed to keep the students safe, provide homework assistance, offer them enrichment programs and activities, and provide them with positive role models. Through this program, the college students apply knowledge gained from their field of study as they help the TASC students navigate the challenges they face and try to give them the confidence they need to help them in difficult situations by teaching them compassion, perseverance, and resistance to negative messages. President Beth Dinndorf praised the project director stating that "Helen is an enthusiastic educator and compassionate individual. She is beloved by our students, and we are so pleased to see her recognized for her commitment to service learning."

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.