

Distinguished Professor Program 1996-1997

Carl Anthony Wege, Regents' Distinguished Professor, Assistant Professor, Political Science, Coastal Georgia Community College

The Governor and General Assembly have supported a Regents' initiative to create and fund a Distinguished Professor program in each of the University System's colleges and regional universities. The purpose of this program is to enhance quality teaching at colleges and universities throughout the state.

The enhancement of quality teaching is, I believe, best accomplished by providing resources directly to the classroom teacher, as classroom teachers have greater familiarity with real students than others. If the events and resources we provide are only marginally related to the day-to-day experience of real classroom teachers we may, in fact, undermine quality teaching by using time otherwise employed for class preparation to attend events or administer procedures only of marginal utility to the real world classroom.

We are all aware that academic disciplines are different. Methods that are quite successful at teaching public law may not be as successful at teaching art. Beyond this, we all realize that teachers, students, and class sections are also different. There is no "one-size-fits all" approach to enhancing quality teaching. One professor might be very successful at teaching a class primarily through lecture, while another would be equally successful teaching the same discipline by emphasizing active learning. Teaching a 100 level class is not at all the same as teaching a 400 level class in terms of the background knowledge and analytical abilities expected of students.

Our college decided that a theme for the Distinguished Professor Program events would link our activities with a coherent purpose. The theme for the 1996-1997 series of programs at Coastal Georgia Community College is "Education for Citizenship 2000." This theme is derived from the role education has played in the Western tradition. Socrates taught us that education is a means by which citizens may improve themselves and it is a way to examine our lives as Aristotle instructed us. The twenty-first century will see the human questions raised anew. Education prepares us to live in this new world.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In this first year of the Distinguished Professor of Teaching and Learning, a variety of events for the 1996-1997 academic year have been planned at Coastal Georgia Community College. The planned events will further our objective of promoting quality teaching. Some ways in which the quality of teaching is enhanced are through the effective use of new technologies and improvements in our relationship with the communities in our service region. Both initiatives increase our ability to serve students. Specific activities listed below are also being planned and implemented to achieve our objectives:

Citizenship 2000

This event familiarized faculty with the specific skills and expectations of both employers and four year schools for students successfully exiting Coastal Georgia Community College. It addressed the question of how our teaching is relevant to those skills and expectations and how we can better prepare students to enter the work force or pursue further academic study. Since all students must work throughout their lives, this event was particularly meaningful for faculty who are expected by the community to teach students in a way that they become productive workers. This program was held in October 1996.

Local Candidate Forum

This forum familiarized faculty, students, and members of the local community with the positions of local candidates for public office on relevant public issues. This program provided a real world environment where students could exercise the craft of citizenship. This is an outreach event normally covered by the local media enhancing the status of the college in the community. This event also was held in October 1996.

Coastal Georgia Community Scholars Program

This is a series of events intended to enhance our relationship with communities throughout our service region and provide additional resources for students. The evening lecture series will highlight faculty resources available at Coastal Georgia Community College, while *simultaneously promoting both academic enrichment and a positive public image*. The first of these events was held in November 1996. Dr. Don Mathews did a presentation titled "What's True and What's Not True About the American Economy." This program series will enhance quality teaching by providing additional academic resources for classroom instructors.

Technology Integration Brownbags

Learning technologies such as distance learning, Internet access, and video technologies are changing the way we learn and the way we teach. Ultimately these technologies should be transparent and used to enhance teaching and not get in the way of teaching. Programs involving students who have been taught with these technologies, vendors who supply them, and teachers who have been successful using them will help faculty incorporate learning technologies into the classroom to enhance the learning experience. Events are scheduled in February and May of 1997 for this program.

Senior Academic Lecture

This is a capstone activity intended to enhance the academic environment for faculty and students in the promotion of quality teaching. A senior and distinguished faculty member in the University System will prepare a program of faculty members that emphasizes the meaning of academia. Participants will focus on what it has meant in their lives to be teachers. They will discuss some of the ways in which they have been successful in teaching students. This event is scheduled for April of 1997.

Coastal Georgia Community College Web Page

Coastal Georgia Community College will establish a presence on the World Wide Web. Information concerning the college will be published on the Internet and continually updated. This provides literally global exposure for our campus. The web page is now up and running and is updated monthly (we are currently using an IP address 131.144.98.73).

Our campus has taken a collaborative approach to the Regents' Distinguished Professor Program in order to enhance teaching effectiveness. Additional events intended to supplement and enhance the programs listed above are currently being planned through the Distinguished Professor Events Committee. •