



NEWS

The S.C. Commission on Higher Education
Garrison Walters, Executive Director
1333 Main Street, Suite 200
Columbia, SC 29201

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2008

Contact: Rita Allison
Director of Communications
803-767-8352 ©
rallison@che.sc.gov

The distinguished winners of the 2008 Governor's Professor of the Year award were announced today at a press conference held in the Rotunda of the State House.

Selected from a total of 36 candidates nominated by their respective institutions, the recipients of this prestigious award exemplify excellence in teaching and student advising.

Dr. Sharon Howell Thompson, Professor and Coordinator of Health Promotion at Coastal Carolina University, has been named the Governor's 2008 Professor of the Year for four-year institutions of higher education.

Dr. Thompson was born in Greenwood, raised in Florence, and earned a baccalaureate degree from Clemson University. Later, she earned a master's degree, an educational specialist in administration, and the doctoral Ed.D. degree from the University of South Carolina-Columbia. She began teaching as an adjunct professor at Coastal Carolina University in 1991, began full-time in 1993, started a minor in Health Education in 1995, and helped establish a major in this field in 1997.

Dr. Thompson credits her parents and her late husband as role models for becoming a teacher, an advisor, and a contributing member to family and community life. The mother of two daughters and a member of the Myrtle Beach First Presbyterian Church, she was named by the Myrtle Beach Sun News as Volunteer of the Year in 2003. She has also chaired the Waccamaw Youth Center and the Horry County School District Comprehensive Health Education Advisory Committee.

Her work as a teaching faculty member has been universally admired on the campus. Since 1998 she has received several campus awards of distinction, including the 1998 Student Affairs Award and the 2004 Distinguished Teacher-Scholar Lecturer Award. A full-time teacher and advisor to 80 students annually, she still has found time since 2001 to sponsor students at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, (NCUR). She has been co-author of 20 published manuscripts and/or proceedings with students. She is also the University's Faculty Athletic Representative and advisor for the health promotion honor society.

Students are enthusiastic and expressive about her work with them. They speak of the time she takes to listen; her constant looking for opportunities for her students to succeed; her knowledge, kindness and sincerity – and, above all, her commitment. “As a part of a Coastal Carolina University awards ceremony,” said one of them, “I was asked, ‘What is the best thing about Coastal Carolina University?’” Without hesitation I replied, “Dr. Sharon Thompson!”

Charles Wilson of Greenville Technical College has been named as 2008 Governor’s Professor of the Year for two-year colleges.

Born the youngest of ten children and raised on a small family farm in Union County, SC, Mr. Wilson graduated from Union High School, and worked in local industry for 23 years. He earned his A.S. from Spartanburg Technical College in Machine Tool Technology and attended Clemson University’s program in Human Resource Development/Vocational Technology.

Wilson credits several people in his life for his becoming a successful teacher. Several of his older brothers had dropped out of school to help with the farm work so that the others in the family could attend school. His first Union County schoolhouse was three rooms. “We had small classes, and the teachers really cared for each student,” he remembers. At Spartanburg Technical College where he excelled, his instructor, Aubrey Owens, took the time to mentor and encourage him to pursue his studies rather than join the Navy. Wilson has carried the legacy of caring for students into his classrooms at Greenville Technical College, where he has been on the faculty since 1989. Many students whom he has taught, advised, and mentored attest to his strengths in all these capacities. One of these students had lost his job when he was working on a degree. Learning about this situation, Mr. Wilson contacted an industry representative with whom he worked on an advisory committee and was able to get the student tested and into a new position immediately. “It has changed my life,” says that student, who adds that “Charles Wilson stands behind his words and instructs his students not only in the classroom, but his advice reaches no boundaries.”

Wilson has been able to help students, too, by his relentless commitment and irrepressible energy in promoting linkages with local business and industry in the Greenville area, where he engages the managers in the private sector as members of advisory committees to improve his teaching constantly. His work at the local level has gained him the attention of the US Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, who appointed him to a second two-year term as a member of the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeships. His students’ welfare always is front and center in these activities, prompting one plant manager in Greenville to say that Wilson’s efforts are preparing the workforce to the next level of excellence. Dr. Keith Miller, Greenville Technical College’s president, has said of Mr. Wilson, “He goes above and beyond for his students because he genuinely cares about them, their futures, and the future of our country’s workforce.”

A luncheon in honor of the Governor’s Professors of the Year and the Distinguished Professors who were nominated for the award by their respective institutions was held today at the Campus Room of the Capstone Building at the University South Carolina-Columbia. The luncheon was hosted by the South Carolina Higher Education Foundation

Finalists for Professor of the Year are:

Peggy Chapman – Tri-County College

Melanie Cooper – Clemson University

George E. Dickinson – College of Charleston

Thomas J. Hilbish – University of South Carolina

Reid Holland – Midlands Technical College

Martha Macdonald – York Technical College

Robert Nerbun – University of South Carolina – Sumter

Karen A. Wager – Medical University of South Carolina

For additional information on the Governor's Professor of the Year Award, please go to: www.ches.sc.gov and click on "Professor of the Year" for a picture and a bio of each winner.



Dr. Sharon Thompson



Charles Wilson