Saddleback College Recognizes Professors of the Year

Mission Viejo, CA – Saddleback College named Dr. Scott Fier, a chemistry instructor, Farida Gabdrakhmanova, an interior design and computer-aided design (CAD) instructor, and Melinda Smith, a fashion instructor in the college’s Emeritus Institute as the 2013 Professors of the Year. The professors were nominated by their students and will be honored at the April 29th meeting of the South Orange County Community College District Board of Trustees.

Dr. Tod A. Burnett, President of Saddleback College, stated, “The students’ nominations of Professors Fier, Gabdrakhmanova, and Smith speak to the dedication they have to their students and the passion they have for teaching. Saddleback College has so many exceptional instructors that it is always difficult to select our professors of the year, but it is clear that these superb professors have very positively influenced many lives.”

Saddleback’s Professor of the Year is Dr. Scott Fier, who has taught at the college since 1993 and was praised by one student as being “the greatest educator I have ever had in all my years in education.” His students also said that he is more than just a professor; he is a mentor who is there for them inside and outside the classroom.

Dr. Fier stated, “I am truly honored by this award. I feel very fortunate to teach at a school with a wonderful faculty that always puts students first, and with a great staff and administration that is always supportive. Students come to Saddleback College because they have goals and dreams, and for those in my classes I try to help them reach their potential. My favorite thing to hear from former students is how well they were prepared for university classes by Saddleback College.”

The Associate Professor of the Year is Farida Gabdrakhmanova, who began teaching interior design and CAD classes at Saddleback in 2011. Gabdrakhmanova’s nominating students used the words “compassion” and “caring” to describe her and said that they appreciate that she is tough on them when they need it. Students stated that her willingness to help promoted the success of her students.

Gabdrakhmanova stated, “I am so deeply honored to have been chosen as Professor of the Year. This award does not belong just to me. I share it with my colleagues, who were also my teachers at Saddleback. They challenged me to start teaching two years ago and continue to support and encourage me today. I share the award with my students, who inspire and motivate me every single day with their commitment and positive attitude toward learning. I teach to help my students grow, learn, and gain confidence in everything that they do. I am not an ‘easy’ teacher,
but I have high expectations of my students because I believe in them and I want them to leave college prepared and ready to succeed in the real world.”

Emeritus Professor of the Year Melinda Smith has been teaching fashion classes for Saddleback College’s Emeritus Institute since 1999. Emeritus Institute classes are developed to provide older adults personal, social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits to positively impact their lives. Smith’s classes are some of the fastest-filling in the Emeritus Institute and it’s easy to see why when her students say, “I schedule my activities around this class so that I don’t miss any days because [Smith] makes each day exciting” and “She is so respected by the students you can hear a pin drop while she is lecturing.”

Smith stated, “It is truly a pleasure to teach what I love to such creative and enthusiastic students in the Emeritus Institute. I love the interaction and exchange of ideas that take place in the classroom. My students are delightful and I am so appreciative of this award.”

Located in Mission Viejo, Saddleback College provides quality higher education and training to the greater south Orange County community. Having served more than 500,000 students since 1968, Saddleback College offers more than 300 degree and certificate programs to help students reach their personal, career, and educational goals. For more information, please visit www.saddleback.edu.

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