Saddleback College Dean of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering Named Administrator of the Year

Mission Viejo, CA – Dr. James Wright, Dean of Saddleback College’s Division of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering, was named the South Orange County Community College District’s Administrator of the Year. The award was presented by Chancellor Raghu P. Mathur, Ed.D.

Dr. Wright has worked at Saddleback College for 15 years. He started teaching at the college in 1994 as a chemistry professor and in 1998 was named Interim Dean of the Divisions of Mathematics, Science and Engineering and Health Sciences and Human Services. During his first two months in this position, Dr. Wright continued to teach full time. It was in 1999 that Dr. Wright was named the permanent Dean of the Division of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering.

During his presentation of the award to Dr. Wright, Chancellor Mathur stated, “Dr. Wright is described as being a well-grounded balance for colleagues who benefit from this administrator’s experience, tact and caring manner. Division faculty and staff describe a professional who is always available, exceeding expectations and hard working with integrity. Outside of regular duties, this administrator has dedicated many hours to the Veterans Memorial, job fairs, show and tell demonstrations to youth groups, raising funds for student scholarships, working on the basic skills initiative, and attending college events such as parents’ night and football games. This administrator also makes an effort to visit sick and injured employees, regularly comes in on Saturdays to check on classes, and fills in for absent instructors.”

Dr. Tod A. Burnett, President of Saddleback College, stated, “Dr. Wright is highly respected throughout the college for his intelligence, integrity, and compassion for his co-workers and students. An esteemed chemist and patriot, Dr. Wright is a beloved member of our team who truly deserves this honor. Anyone who has had the pleasure of working with Dr. Wright knows that he is a kindhearted person with an unmatched love of Saddleback College that is shown every day through his leadership and hard work.”
Dr. Wright stated, “It was truly an honor to receive the award. I’ve loved working with our students, faculty, and staff, and my fellow deans, who are a wonderful and talented group of people. It’s a humbling experience to be nominated for such an award by your peers and staff and I am touched by their generosity in nominating me.”

Dr. Jim Wright came to Saddleback College as a retired United States Air Force Colonel. During his 27 years in the Air Force, Dr. Wright held many notable positions, including Commander of the Air Force Academy Preparatory School in Colorado Springs, CO, and Director of the McClellan Central Laboratory at McClellan Air Force Base, CA, whose mission was to monitor the Nuclear Test Ban Treaties. In this role, Dr. Wright led a team that analyzed nuclear debris samples from Chernobyl in the mid 1980’s.

After retiring from the Air Force and before beginning his tenure at Saddleback College, Dr. Wright spent two years leading a team of WasteChem/Fluor Daniel engineers and scientists on the sampling and analysis of nuclear waste in the proposed U.S. Department of Energy Hanford Waste Vitrification Plan clean up facility at Richmond, WA.

Dr. Wright earned three degrees from the University of Idaho: a doctorate in biochemistry, and a master of science degree and a bachelor of science degree, both in chemistry.

Dr. Wright lives in Trabuco Canyon with his wife, Janice.

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 over 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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