

John Fry Individual Merit Award Dr. Charles Blocksidge, Community College of Allegheny County

The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), the largest community college in Pennsylvania, is comprised of four campuses and six college centers. Serving 280 full-time faculty and over 2,000 adjunct faculty, the mission of CCAC's Faculty Professional Development Program is to provide its faculty with the opportunities and resources necessary to improve student learning and to promote teaching excellence. Under the guidance and visionary leadership of Dr. Charles T. Blocksidge, the Faculty Professional Development Program has expanded in both size and scope. In 2007, it was nationally recognized for adhering to "best practices" by offering faculty a comprehensive program which responds to the needs of the faculty and the initiatives of the college.

Coordinated by a committee comprised of a system-wide faculty director, four campus coordinators, and representatives from key student services personnel, the CCAC Faculty Professional Development Program includes five major components. On a broad scale, the College-wide Faculty Professional Development Seminar is held twice a year, at the start of the Fall and Spring Semesters, featuring a keynote speaker who addresses the current professional development theme and break-out afternoon sessions. The New Faculty Orientation event runs every fall to familiarize new faculty with college processes and procedures. At least twice each semester, campus workshops are held on a variety of topics based on faculty feedback. The two-day Summer Faculty Institute is dedicated to strategies and techniques that enhance teaching effectiveness in a learning-centered institution. Finally, the Adjunct Faculty program encourages dialogue with full-time faculty and administration and as well as informational sessions to respond to current faculty issues.

In addition to offering a comprehensive program of learning opportunities for faculty, the CCAC Faculty Professional Development Program fosters an environment where innovation and teaching excellence are encouraged, supported, and rewarded through its Recognition and Rewards Program. The Teaching Excellence Award recognizes faculty members, both at the college and at the annual NISOD Conference for Teaching Excellence. Spirit and Innovation Awards are also presented to employees who dedicate their time and service to making CCAC a place of quality education and service. The Employee Service Award recognizes employees' service to the College. Newly implemented in 2008 was the Adjunct Faculty Award of Teaching Excellence, the purpose of which is to recognize and reward the vital contributions CCAC's adjunct faculty make to the teaching mission of the college.

Dr. Blocksidge's commitment and support of professional development at the local level is evidenced by the many initiatives he was responsible for developing at CCAC. Recognizing the critical role of adjunct faculty, Dr. Blocksidge championed their needs at CCAC by securing resources to provide for a tuition reimbursement program, an annual training seminar, and an Adjunct Teaching Excellence Award providing an economic stipend to be used for Professional Development. Another initiative supported by Dr. Blocksidge was the establishment of a consistent and systematic assessment program. All workshops and seminars are assessed. The outcomes are then published college-wide and used to assist in the planning of future programs. Data is also used to benchmark institutional performance with other outstanding community college professional development programs. Additionally, the creation of a Speakers Bureau and a number of

partnerships with community organizations such as the Heinz History Center have enriched the college's academic influence throughout the region.

Dr. Blocksidge's advocacy for professional development extends well beyond the campuses of the Community College of Allegheny County. He was instrumental in creating the Western Pennsylvania Community College Consortium (WPCCC). The consortium comprises five local community colleges in Western Pennsylvania who recognize that through sharing resources they can provide quality professional development experiences for their faculty and staff. The WPCCC offers an annual one-day professional development conference for its members. Dr. Blocksidge's active involvement with the WPCCC provides yet another opportunity for CCAC faculty to engage in scholarly dialogue with their peers at other institutions engendering an atmosphere of excitement, intellectual stimulation, and collegiality. Through his work and effort with the consortium, he has been able to improve quality, reduce costs, and expand professional development opportunities for the community college faculty in Western Pennsylvania.

At the national level, Dr. Blocksidge is working with The Landmark College Institute for Research and Training, partnering with four other community colleges on a three-year grant from the Department of Education's Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education. The grant enables these colleges to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of their ability to serve students with learning disabilities and implement a customized online professional development program. The program entitled "A Needs-based Best Practices Professional Development Program for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities in the Community College" completed its third year. Through Dr. Blocksidge's direct involvement, this project will establish a new source of professional development and training for community college faculty in the application of instructional strategies for students with disabilities.

As a result of Dr. Blocksidge's active engagement in the area of Professional Development, the Community College of Allegheny County has been the recipient of the National Council for Staff, Program, and Organizational Development (NCSPOD) institutional award and has received many inquiries from other institutions concerning CCAC's policies and practices in the area of faculty professional development. In addition, Dr. Blocksidge's reputation for offering quality professional development training opportunities has generated requests from local colleges and universities to actively participate in CCAC's training opportunities.