

Woods Wins Bernhardt Award at SWOSU

04.03.2009

Dr. John Woods (third from left) won the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award for 2009 at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. The award for exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship and service is made possible by Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt (left). Next to Woods is SWOSU President Dr. John Hays.

Dr. John Woods won the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award for 2009 during a banquet held Thursday night (April 2) at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford.

Woods, chairman and professor in the SWOSU Department of Mathematics, won the prestigious award at a banquet held in the Memorial Student Center Union on the SWOSU campus. For winning the award, Woods received a \$2,500 cash award, Waterford crystal clock and engraved pen set.

SWOSU alumni Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt of Midwest City are sponsors of the annual award that goes to an outstanding faculty member who exhibits exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship and service.

Dr. John Woods is passionate about three things: family, teaching math, and improving math/science education across Oklahoma.

When Woods was a senior in college, he was encouraged to submit an application for a Prize Award Fellowship for Master of Arts in Teaching studies at Harvard. There were 20,000 applicants for the 35 fellowships available. The math professor on the selection committee had Dr. Woods rated at the bottom of the list, saying that Woods would not be able to keep up with the graduates of schools like Harvard, Princeton and Berkeley, for example.

One man convinced the committee to give Woods a try. Woods completed 52 graduate hours (40 in pure math) in his one year at Harvard and received the "outstanding graduate student award." After teaching for four years, Dr. Woods returned to graduate school to gain a doctorate. The Danforth "Kent" Fellowship had never before been awarded for math studies, but he was awarded one.

Declining a full fellowship offer from Harvard, he instead chose Florida State University, completing his PhD in June 1973.

After teaching 21 years at Oklahoma Baptist University, Woods moved to SWOSU in 1988. He began a series of innovative projects, starting with summer institutes in math and computers for high school teachers and their students. Woods became involved in two new projects, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education academies for students, and a grant to provide two-week math/science institutes for K-8 teachers. His 15th year of math/science institutes for K-8 teachers was recently funded once again.

In 1994, Dr. Woods wrote a National Science Foundation grant to offer five-week "Young Scholars" Math Institutes at SWOSU. The Institutes were heavily publicized in rural schools that had a total school enrollment of 250 or less. Each summer for two years, 35 students from all over the United States attended the institutes. Woods and Dr. Radwan Al-Jarrah co-taught the program.

Dr. Woods often recruits new math/math education majors for all freshman level courses. He believes mathematics is compatible with all subject areas and has recruited as majors or double majors students from nearly all disciplines on the SWOSU campus. He has also led efforts to attract more math/math education majors from around the state of Oklahoma.

Previous winners of the Bernhardt Award are (in order by year): Dr. Vilas Prabhu, Dr. Stuart Burchett, Dr. Gary Wolgamott, Dr. Terry Segress, Dr. James Hunsicker, Dr. Jill Jones, Dr. James Breckenridge, Dr. John Ludrick, Dr. W. Steven Pray, Dr. Les Crall, Dr. Peter Grant, Dr. John Hayden, Dr. Virgil Van Dusen, Steve Strickler and Dr. Mary Aspedon.