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Frost honored by Board of Regents

AUGUST 29, 2007

An associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at Georgia Southern University has been honored by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG).

Laura Frost received the 2007 Award for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. She was recognized for being a leader in her department for the incorporation of process-oriented, guided-inquiry learning into introductory chemistry courses.

Frost's scholarship focuses on increasing student interest in chemistry, enhancing student learning, and enhancing students' perception of learning.

Only seven faculty members and one academic program in the entire USG were selected to receive Teaching Excellence and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Awards presented by the Board of Regents.

"Teaching and research represent the key missions of the University System of Georgia," said Lisa Rossbacher, the USG's interim chief academic officer and executive vice chancellor. "These awards strengthen the commitment of USG faculty to student learning and achievement. We salute these outstanding faculty members and programs as models of excellence."

Since joining Georgia Southern's faculty in 1999, Frost has taught courses in general chemistry, allied health chemistry, organic chemistry and biochemistry.

Frost uses process-oriented, guided-inquiry learning as a way to get her students to take a more active role in the classroom and the lab.

"Learning is easier with a frame of reference, and each student comes into a classroom with their own set of previous experiences," Frost said. "Guided-inquiry learning is discovery-based learning where students are asked to explore a model and construct knowledge for themselves based on the model and their previous experiences."

"In my class, students are not given scientific facts to memorize. Instead, they are asked to construct facts from a situation, or model, thereby understanding its application."

Frost's classes are process-oriented because the work is done in groups, and each student has a defined role that rotates every class period.

"This helps students to develop a range of key process skills as they learn how to work in teams to solve problems," Frost said. "In this setting, I act as a facilitator to their learning as opposed to an endless font of knowledge."

Since many of her students are nursing or nutrition and food sciences majors, Frost has increased their interest in chemistry by focusing on topics that are relevant to those fields of study.

To that end, she is co-authoring a chemistry textbook with Georgia Southern Professor Todd Deal and Karen Timberlake, who has written several highly respected nursing chemistry textbooks.

In addition, Frost has enhanced her students' perception of the learning process by creating a natural critical learning environment in the classroom.

"It's a safe space for students to construct ideas naturally through the development of habits, skills and attitudes that allow them to think critically by reasoning," she said.

The Board of Regents awards program recognizes and rewards individual faculty members and academic programs. The awards honor outstanding teaching that significantly improves student achievement, and they also honor commitment to student-focused research on effective teaching.

The award recipients are selected from nominations submitted annually by the presidents of USG institutions. Each of the award winners will receive \$5,000 and a certificate of achievement.

Frost received a B.S. in chemistry from Kutztown University and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania.