

Teaching Excellence Award goes to a BC3 prof for second time since 2017

Business educator Graves in contention for international honor

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Les Graves, center, of Zelenople, an assistant professor at Butler County Community College, has been selected as the winner of a five-state Teaching Excellence Award from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs in Overland Park, Kan. Graves, shown April 16, 2019, in his productivity applications class on BC3's main campus with students Maisie Jack, left, of Parker, and Kendra Hile, of Fenelton, is now a candidate for the council's International Teaching Excellence Award.

(Butler, PA) For the second time in three years, the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs in Overland Park, Kan., has selected a Butler County Community College business educator as the winner of a five-state Teaching Excellence Award, qualifying Les Graves for consideration as the council's international award recipient in Texas in June.

Graves, of Zelenople, an assistant professor and BC3 educator for eight years, is one of five finalists for the 2019 International Teaching Excellence Award, which will be presented during the council's annual conference in Houston from June 21-24.

BC3's business programs are nationally accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs. The council has eight national and three international regions, each divided between associate degree institutions and those conferring baccalaureate degrees or higher.

Graves is the Teaching Excellence Award winner from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs' Region 2, which has 16 associate degree institutions as members and encompasses Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia, according to Carmen Hayes, the council's member services manager.

Thirteen educators were nominated nationally and internationally among associate degree institutions, and 30 from those conferring baccalaureate degrees or higher, Hayes said. One educator in each division will be recognized with the 2019 International Teaching Excellence Award which, Hayes said, is based on five criteria – teaching and learning, weighted heaviest; professional development; institutional versatility; curriculum development; and community commitment.

As the regional selection, Graves will receive a crystal medallion that recognizes those who exemplify teaching excellence in the classroom.

BC3 president: Award “speaks volumes” about BC3’s quality

The prestigious award, Graves said, is “very special. I am very surprised. Many work hard at teaching. I am privileged to be named among them.”

Sherri Mack, of Butler, an associate professor and BC3 educator for 24 years, was the 2017 winner of the Region 2 award.

That the council has selected a BC3 educator as the regional award recipient for a second time in three years “illustrates our quality as a student-centered, teaching institution,” said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3. “We hire professionals whose emphasis is teaching. The fact that professors Mack and Graves have won this award speaks volumes about our quality.”

The continued recognition “is a testament to the professionalism and commitment to teaching here at BC3 as a whole, not just the business division,” said Dr. Christian Ola, dean of BC3's business division. “That being said, I know how hard Les works to stay up-to-date on industry trends and in tune with his students.”

Joining Graves as finalists for the 2019 International Teaching Excellence Award among associate degree institutions are, in Region 3, Christina Goodell, Florida State College at Jacksonville; in Region 4, Ramadevi Kannan, Owens Community College, Perrysburg, Ohio;

Region 5, Carole Ricke, Pratt Community College, Pratt, Kan.; and Region 8, Anita Gustine, American College of the Middle East, Al Uqiylah, Kuwait.

Educator “has gone above and beyond,” student says

Graves this semester is teaching classes such as data communications and networking, advanced networking and security, Windows server administrator, and productivity applications, and is “always energetic,” said Ronald T. Jurysta III, of Butler, a BC3 history major. “I mean every class. All class.

“He has gone above and beyond by actually thanking me for being a good student,” Jurysta said. “That really meant a lot. He didn’t have to do that.”

Graves “is really excited and passionate about what he teaches,” said Devan Powers, of Butler, a BC3 park and recreation management major, “and is experienced in the subject matter.”

Graves recognizes when a student needs help with the material, said Kendra Hile, of Fenelton, a BC3 business management major, “and he tells us what to work on in order to improve our grade.”

“He is enthusiastic with his teaching and that makes it more lively,” said Ashlee Pierce, of Butler, a BC3 photography major. “And it gets you to pay attention more.”

Graves “doesn’t move on” with his presentation, said Domenica Wardle, of Leechburg, who is studying psychology and criminology at BC3, “until everyone gets it.”

Prof: Make the “subject come alive”

Graves, who said he became an educator to “help people,” holds bachelor’s degrees in computer science, from the University of Pittsburgh, and in theology from Life Christian University, Lutz, Fla.; and a master’s degree in management information systems from the University of Phoenix.

“It’s not easy to be a student,” Graves said. “Every class being bombarded with more information. Students need someone to make the subject come alive, relieve the monotony and weightiness of the material, and show the value of learning it.”

In a day and age where being connected is trendy, personal attentiveness and energy often lag, Ola said – but not with Graves.

“Les doesn’t let that occur, but instead, marries technology with good old-fashioned passion for his subject matter and the students’ well-being,” Ola said. “It’s a rare combination, and one that our students benefit from tremendously. Students appreciate the idea that they are sitting in front of a computer screen that is supposed to provide them answers, solve mysteries, and help them in

life, when in reality, Les is doing those things and merely using the computer as another teaching tool. You can't replace passion, energy or excitement with a fancy learning management system."

Jeffrey Alderman, president and CEO of the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, said it is more important than ever for business programs to produce graduates who are ready to enter the global marketplace.

The council "has a mission to develop, promote and recognize best practices that contribute to continuous improvement of business education," Alderman said. "Recognition of teaching excellence is one way we achieve this goal."

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as a specialized accreditation agency for business education. The council is the only global accrediting body to accredit business, accounting and business-related programs at all degree levels.