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Recommended Citation

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Chemistry Professors Get Creative

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Office of University Communications

August 23, 2011

Three Gardner-Webb Chemistry Professors Participate in National Science Foundation Workshops



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Three Gardner-Webb University chemistry professors recently participated in the National Science Foundation's Chemistry Collaborations, Workshops and Communities of Scholars (cCWCS) Program to gain valuable insight that will bolster the quality of their chemistry teaching. Gardner-Webb was one of only four schools nationwide to send three faculty members to the workshops.

Interested professors from all around the country submitted applications, including teaching qualifications and course development proposals, to participate in one of 10 different workshops at different sites around the country. Approximately 20 participants were selected for each workshop, and among them were Gardner-Webb's Dr. Stefka Eddins, Dr. Benjamin Brooks, and Dr. Venita Totten.

Eddins and Brooks explored the interdisciplinary convergences between art and science in the "Chemistry in Art Workshop" at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash. The workshop focused on the role of inorganic, physical and analytical chemistry in the world of art. During valuable laboratory experience and several field trips, Eddins and Brooks examined the scientific properties of a variety of dyes, colors, artistic surfaces and materials, and they hope to use their new insight to develop a team-taught honors-level course in Chemistry and Art during Gardner-Webb's Spring 2013 semester.

"This National Science Foundation-sponsored workshop was a great opportunity to explore the fascinating connections between chemistry, various forms of visual art, and art conservation, as well as to interact and exchange ideas with colleagues from around the country," Eddins said. Brooks added, "I'm really excited about developing the new course with Dr. Eddins. I think it will be a great opportunity to involve a broad range of our students in a truly interdisciplinary course. In particular, I am looking forward to applying the skills we learned such as paper making, dye synthesis, and cyanotype photography."

Totten, who has long enjoyed a fascination with forensics, attended the "Forensic Science Workshop" at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. She explored some of the specialized fields of forensic science and the technologies involved with them, which she says will enhance her course in Forensic Chemistry that she taught for the first time in Spring 2011.

“I’ve previously taken two advanced courses in forensics at McCrone Research Institute, and the additional techniques I gained at the cCWCS workshop will help us better utilize the equipment we already have in the department, such as polarized light microscopes and a Fourier transform infrared spectrometer, to teach our students important skills related to forensic chemistry,” she said.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction with compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.