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GENEROUS ECU ALUMNUS PROVIDES QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

GREENVILLE, N.C. (March 10, 2009) — The pride felt for one's alma mater is enhancing the educational experiences of not only students but also educators throughout the Southern U.S., and especially in eastern North Carolina. In collaboration with East Carolina University's Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Math, Science and Instructional Technology in the College of Education, Charles and Nancy Bedford are improving the quality of education through their keen vision and generous gifts to the university.

As former Program Officer for the College Board with responsibility for the Advanced Placement Program in the Southern Region, Charles Bedford was aware that Advanced Placement teachers in the east lacked educational growth opportunities. He felt that East Carolina University had the ability and obligation to play a role in meeting the needs of regional AP teachers through numerous venues, such as graduate course work, AP workshops and faculty mentoring.

Bedford, who is a '55 graduate of ECU's Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences and a '57 graduate of the College of Education, was instrumental in establishing the first officially endorsed College Board Advanced Placement Program at ECU. He recognized the important role that the university could play in establishing an AP Institute in eastern North Carolina.

"The APP [Advanced Placement Program] has done more to enhance academic excellence in the South than any other individual endeavor," Bedford says. "By the College Board providing curricular guidelines for secondary teachers to teach college-level courses to able students, many students have been challenged and encouraged to pursue excellence. Consequently, teaching and learning become more exciting, and the APP prevents good students from becoming bored while retaining outstanding teachers."

The ECU Advanced Placement Summer Institute began training teachers under its official title during the summer of 2005. Prior to the opening of the Institute, local educators had to travel 3 ½ to 7 hours to Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and even Virginia or Georgia, to take other AP courses. The closest institute was located at North Carolina State and only offered two AP courses each summer.

"I think their vision and generosity opened the door to accessible professional development for our many Advanced Placement teachers in eastern North Carolina," says Margaret Wirth, director of the program at ECU. "The Bedfords understand that by raising the bar in educating our local youth – through providing Advanced Placement courses – helps improve the entire quality of life in the region."

The AP Summer Institute, which is housed in the Department of Math, Science and Instructional Technology in the College of Education, prepares teachers to teach Advanced Placement curriculum with confidence. Participants, who are taught and mentored by professors in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, learn about the goals and concepts involved in teaching AP courses. They examine pedagogy, the uses of technology, assessment

practices, pacing guides, and course structure and content, while sharing their ideas and experiences with others in attendance.

“The AP Summer Institute is a wonderful collaboration between our faculty in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences and our colleagues in the College of Education,” says Alan White, dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences. “I am extremely pleased that we can provide local educators the tools necessary to better prepare students in AP classes for a rewarding and productive educational experience.”

Each year, the Institute attracts between 40 and 120 teachers from across the U.S., including professionals from Maine, Florida and Texas. In its first summer, the Institute registered 98 teachers.

A bargain registration fee, made possible because of donations from the Bedfords, makes the Institute an accessible option for many teachers.

“It is truly the best deal around,” Wirth says. “It is filling a real need for area AP teachers by providing quality professional development in high stakes courses, at a reasonable price, in an accessible location. What could be better than that?”

Wirth says the Institute receives many letters, emails and glowing evaluations from participants each summer.

One participant in the AP English Literature and Composition sessions wrote, “I am excited about how much information I can use. This session gave me real information and materials to take to my class.”

An AP Statistics session attendee noted, “This was a wonderful workshop. This will be my first year teaching AP Statistics and I feel very well prepared after attending this workshop.”

Finally, one AP Calculus attendee admitted, “I have learned all the mistakes I have been making and will not make again.”

According to Wirth, teachers leave the Institute confident in their knowledge and eager to teach. They have attended sessions appropriate for the courses they will teach, and each participant leaves with notebooks, course manuals, subject texts and College Board test preparation manuals and materials that will assist them in their teaching of AP courses.

Wirth knows first-hand how convenient the AP Summer Institute is for local educators. Prior to coming to work at ECU, she taught AP Calculus and AP Statistics at J.H. Rose High School in Greenville. She had to travel to Atlanta, Ga., to be trained to teach AP Statistics, because this was the closest institute in the southern region to offer the course.

Thus, it became one of Wirth’s career goals to establish AP training workshops at ECU, and with the wishes of the Bedfords and their kindhearted financial support, the dream has become reality.

“The Bedfords are truly special people, and I am thankful everyday they have cared enough about ECU to help fund this institute each year,” says Wirth.

In discussing future goals for the AP Institute, Wirth says she hopes to increase the number of AP course offerings; encourage more ECU faculty to become AP exam readers and consultants; establish a relationship with area superintendents and principals who influence which courses need to be offered; encourage and increase the number of Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences faculty who mentor the AP teachers; and develop course offerings at ECU that recognize AP institute participation as part of the course credit.

For more information about the ECU Advanced Placement Summer Institute, or to register for this summer’s sessions, visit www.cofed.ecu.edu/csmte/AP_Institute/index.htm.