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ECU professor honored by American Society of Safety Engineers

GREENVILLE (7/16/2009) – An East Carolina University professor has received the President’s Award from the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE).

Michael Behm, an occupational safety professor in the Department of Technology Systems, received the honor at the ASSE’s annual Professional Development Conference held in San Antonio, Texas June 28.

The award recognizes Behm’s work towards organizing virtual meetings of the local ASSE chapter and ECU student chapter. The local chapter includes members from Interstate 95 to the Outer Banks. Recognizing that it would be problematic to have members commute from all over the region, Behm suggested to Chapter President Wesley Thigpen, an ECU graduate, that meetings be held virtually.

“The number of attendees for the local ASSE meetings had dropped in recent meetings,” Behm said. “So we decided if the people can’t come to us to attend the meetings, then we need to find a way to deliver the meeting to them. Mr. Thigpen was supportive of the idea of virtual meetings from the start.”

Behm received help from ECU’s Office of Academic Outreach. Using Centra, a web-conferencing program that provides a virtual classroom, anyone with an Internet connection and the proper password can now attend the chapter meetings.

Though Behm received the President’s Award, he was quick to note that this was a team effort. “We have conducted five meetings so far in the last two years and they wouldn’t have been the success they were if not for the efforts of people like Sharon Collins and John Southworth in Academic Outreach. They help establish connections, passwords and even sat through an early meeting to help troubleshoot user problems.”

The ASSE award was given by Society President Warren Brown who said ECU’s idea of virtual meetings, which helps augment face-to-face encounters, is the future of professional meetings. ECU plans to host more meetings in the 2009-2010 academic year for the local ASSE and ECU chapters.

Presenters at recent meetings have included Fred Manuele, a National Safety Council Hall of Fame member who spoke to the local chapter from Chicago, and North Carolina’s Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry, who participated from her office in Raleigh.

For more information, please contact Chris Stansbury, communications coordinator with the ECU College of Technology and Computer Science at (252) 328-9611.