



Leading area college teachers honored

By Justin Vick
jvick@independenttribune.com
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The Cabarrus College of Health Sciences and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College announced the recipients of their annual teaching awards.

Cathy Cook and Kim Little earned the highest teaching honors awarded by their respective colleges. In addition, Lois Branning recently received two awards from the N.C. Real Estate Educators Association, most notably, the 2008 Educator of the Year.

These college instructors recently shared their classroom approaches and why they went into teaching:

Kim Little of Mooresville

Assistant professor of nursing, Cabarrus College of Health Sciences

Award: Cabarrus Bank and Trust Educational Excellence Award

Employed since: This is her seventh year with the college.

Classroom approach: She tries to use an open, student-centered approach. "It really has been my goal to make students feel comfortable in my classroom," Little said. She said she doesn't expect students to have all the answers, because they are still learning.

Why teaching?: "I went into teaching to encourage the students to let them know it is doable to make a difference and to foster their lifelong learning. I worked as a nurse prior to going into teaching and enjoyed the patient education aspect. Working with new nurses in the hospital setting made me realize I really enjoyed seeing their growth."

Lois Branning of Concord

Real estate program head, instructor, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

Award: The N.C. Real Estate Educators Association's 2008 Educator of the Year

Employed since: She's worked part-time since 1995 and as real estate program head since 2000

Classroom approach: "It's a learning centered environment at Rowan-Cabarrus," Branning said. "That's very much how I teach - an active learning classroom. I try to talk less." She also tries engage students in classroom participation by incorporating technology into her lessons. "We use several different methods and techniques to appeal to all the different learning styles students may have," she said.

Why teaching?: "Back in 1995 when I started teaching, it was shortly after real estate commission required continuing education. They didn't have instructors. It seemed like an opportunity. I continued to do brokerage, sell real estate and teach. To do teaching and do it well, I was going to have to do it full time."

Cathy Cook of Concord
English and communications instructor, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

Award: Outstanding Excellence in Teaching Award

Position: English and communications instructor

Employed since: She's worked full-time since August 2005, after a year-and-a-half of part-time teaching.

Classroom approach: Cook describes her classes as settings for "personal and professional transformation," as she fosters an environment where her communication classes become "teams of encouragers." She also believes in lifelong learning, taking additional career development opportunities and coursework so she can better reach students.

Why teaching?: Cook said her parents told her that she's taught ever since she learned how to talk. "As a child, I often coerced my younger siblings into playing school; they even did the homework I assigned until they grew a little older and wiser," she said. "I have always loved school. And, as a adult, teaching has always been an important part - and my favorite part - of every career position I have held."

- Contact Justin Vick: 704-789-9138