Joycie Wawiye

NEW RIVER FACULTY MEMBER SELECTED FOR CARNEGIE MELLON’S COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPEN LEARNING INITIATIVE

[BECKLEY, WV] Joycie R. Wawiye, assistant professor of Biology on the Beckley Campus of New River Community and Technical College, has been selected by Carnegie Mellon University as one of five community college faculty members who will help develop Anatomy and Physiology courses for its Community College Open Learning Initiative (OLI).

OLI instruction differs from other online learning programs in that OLI courses are designed so that both students and teachers receive continuous feedback, allowing the instruction to be modified mid-course if necessary to better facilitate learning, according to OLI Project Director Cadace Thille.

In collaboration with community college faculty across the country, Carnegie Mellon will blend the best of learning science and technology to create, evaluate and continuously improve
virtual learning environments that support teachers and accelerate students’ academic progress.

Wawiye is honored to be involved in the project. “Carnegie Mellon has done a lot of work on interactive self-help sites. The original ones were mostly developed by their own faculty. In this initiative, they are inviting community college faculty to help them develop several ‘gate keeper’ courses to help more community college students achieve success,” Wawiye said. “They have identified people who have really mastered the subject matter to work on these courses. Anatomy and physiology are very challenging, and they are essential in science education. Nationally, the average pass rate is only around 50 percent. Our goal is to improve the national rate to 70 percent or more.

The team met in Pittsburgh for an initial face-to-face meeting in February. They will continue to converse online throughout the year as they develop chapters for the course. A website has been opened to post material for team members to critique.

Wawiye was impressed that the team all had very different learning styles, which meant they were representative of the various students who will use the site. Their learning styles are also reflected in their teaching styles, she said.

“We sat and shared ideas to see how we could blend our experiences. You’d think you would find a clash of minds, but that wasn’t the case. It was more like it provided checks and balances and made the whole interaction more rich,” she commented. “This group is now my support team, not just to build the site, but to support each other in our classes. Working with people of like mind who can mentor and help you is the best part of this experience.”

Wawiye joined New River as an adjunct faculty member in 2002 and has been full-time since 2004. Last year she received the Teaching Excellence Award from the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD). She was also selected in 2009 to participate in the Chancellor’s Leadership Institute, a program sponsored by the West Virginia Community and Technical College System to prepare faculty and staff to assume future leadership positions within their institutions.

Wawiye earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Andrews University. She is currently working on a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Marshall University.

The Community College Open Learning Initiative is funded with a total of $4 million in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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