



Focus on Learning

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Spring 2019 Issue

Office of
Institutional Effectiveness

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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

HLC Updates!

Year-4 HLC Assurance Review

Three Rivers College successfully achieved our reaffirmation in 2018 with regional accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The College is evaluated under the HLC Open Pathway review cycle. Unique to the Open Pathway is a Year-4 Assurance Review. Three Rivers College is scheduled for this review sometime during the 2021 academic year. The Year-4 review differs from the decennial visit and involves an electronic filing of a prepared narrative and evidence of continued compliance. The Year-4 filing must demonstrate a continued commitment to compliance with the HLC Criterion for Accreditation, and the College must provide evidence of any new institutional activities, programs, policies, initiatives, or newly implemented procedures that have an impact or potential impact on college operations and their outcomes since the last Assurance filing in April 2018. Additionally, the Year-4 filing must document ongoing activities that support the Mission of the College, such as strategic planning, assessment, program review, teaching and learning, and financial management. These updates must also provide evidence of compliance with any previous recommendations from the final decennial report created by the peer review team in 2018, and include documentation on accomplishments that demonstrate the continuation of quality improvement through practice. All updates must be fully supported with new evidence.

Revised HLC Criteria for Accreditation

At its February 2019 meeting, the Higher Learning Commission's Board of Trustees adopted revisions to the Criteria for Accreditation, which will go into effect on September 1, 2020. HLC is required to initiate a review of its Criteria for Accreditation every five years. Last year, HLC published alpha and beta draft versions of the revised Criteria and received feedback from the membership and peer reviewers. The final version includes minor adjustments based on comments submitted after the Board accepted the beta version on first reading at its November 2018 meeting. The revisions primarily provide clarity of the criterion language and seeks to eliminate several areas of redundancy. The specific criterion categories and intent remains the same. The new language will be in effect for the next filing of the Three Rivers College HLC Open Pathway Year-4 Assurance Review that is scheduled to begin during the 2021 academic year. A transition plan includes preparation for our next Open Pathway Review; the College will transition to the new criteria template during spring 2020. An update to the Federal Compliance Report is not due again until the next decennial review in 2028.

Another improvement in process from HLC is the revision of the Federal Compliance Report filing requirements. This is in an effort to simplify the language as well as the redundancy that will reduce the burden from 23 to 3 sections, and will be integrated into the HLC Assurance System for our next filing.

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HLC Updates!

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HLC Terms and Glossary Updates

Along with the review of its Criteria for Accreditation, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) updated its 2013 Glossary of HLC Terminology. As a significant improvement, the glossary now explains how the terms are used within the Criteria for Accreditation. This change allows for a context in which institutions are provided a way in which to derive meaning. The HLC terms and glossary updates will be reflected in the terminology section of Three Rivers College Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) as appropriate.

HLC Policy: Student Consumer Protection/Recruiting, Admissions, and Related Institutional Practices

New policy language will be added to the HLC Policy Book when it goes into effect September 2019. The HLC Board of Trustees adopted the policy on second reading at its meeting on November 2–3, 2017. The purpose of the policy relates to student consumer protection based on HLC Assumed Practices. The policy requires honest and fair treatment of students and attempts to protect students against unfair marketing and recruitment practices at institutions. The policy also provides clarity regarding the unfair use of high-pressure tactics to get a student to enroll or matriculate. Three Rivers College employees should familiarize themselves with the policy language; Higher Learning Commission Policy Title: Recruiting, Admissions, and Related Institutional Practices (CRRT.C.10.010, Effective September 2019), since the College operates with integrity and complies with Commission standards.

Key Insights of the HLC Comprehensive Evaluation

During the 2019 Higher Learning Annual Conference an emphasis was placed on colleges within our region that lacked evidentiary documents in support of proof that Results and Use of Results was used for improvement in planning and assessment processes. According to the Higher Learning Commission Staff Liaison, the most cited Core Component of the Criterion for Accreditation was Core Component 4.B: “The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.” According to the HLC, over 40% of institutions either “met with concerns” or “did not meet” the criterion for 4.B. during all of the HLC’s 17-18 Comprehensive Evaluation visits. The Staff Liaison further cited several key insights from this last review period that includes the following lack of evidence regarding compliance with Criterion 4.B: absence of a systematic process to inform/improve student learning, lack of assessment, no systematic collection of program learning outcomes across departments, inconsistent/incomplete submission of annual program outcomes reports, no assessment of intuitional data on SLOs, no follow through to planning for improvements on Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), no evidence of action plans to improve student learning, no processes in place for collecting and storing SLO and Program Review Data, and lack of infrastructure of all aspects of the planning and assessment process.

Although Three Rivers College met all the Criterion for Accreditation with no concerns during our 2018 Decennial review, we must continue to be diligent and further develop our processes and procedures in these areas. During the 2019-20 academic year, the focus will be on documentation and the processes used to follow-through with Results and Use of Results in areas of academic assessment and planning for student learning improvement. The process of follow-through in this area must be further developed and maintained in an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement, or “closing the loop.” Future steps include the implementation of the Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) Assessment and Program Review Modules, as well as the development of a rigorous review and approval process for these aspects of academic planning.

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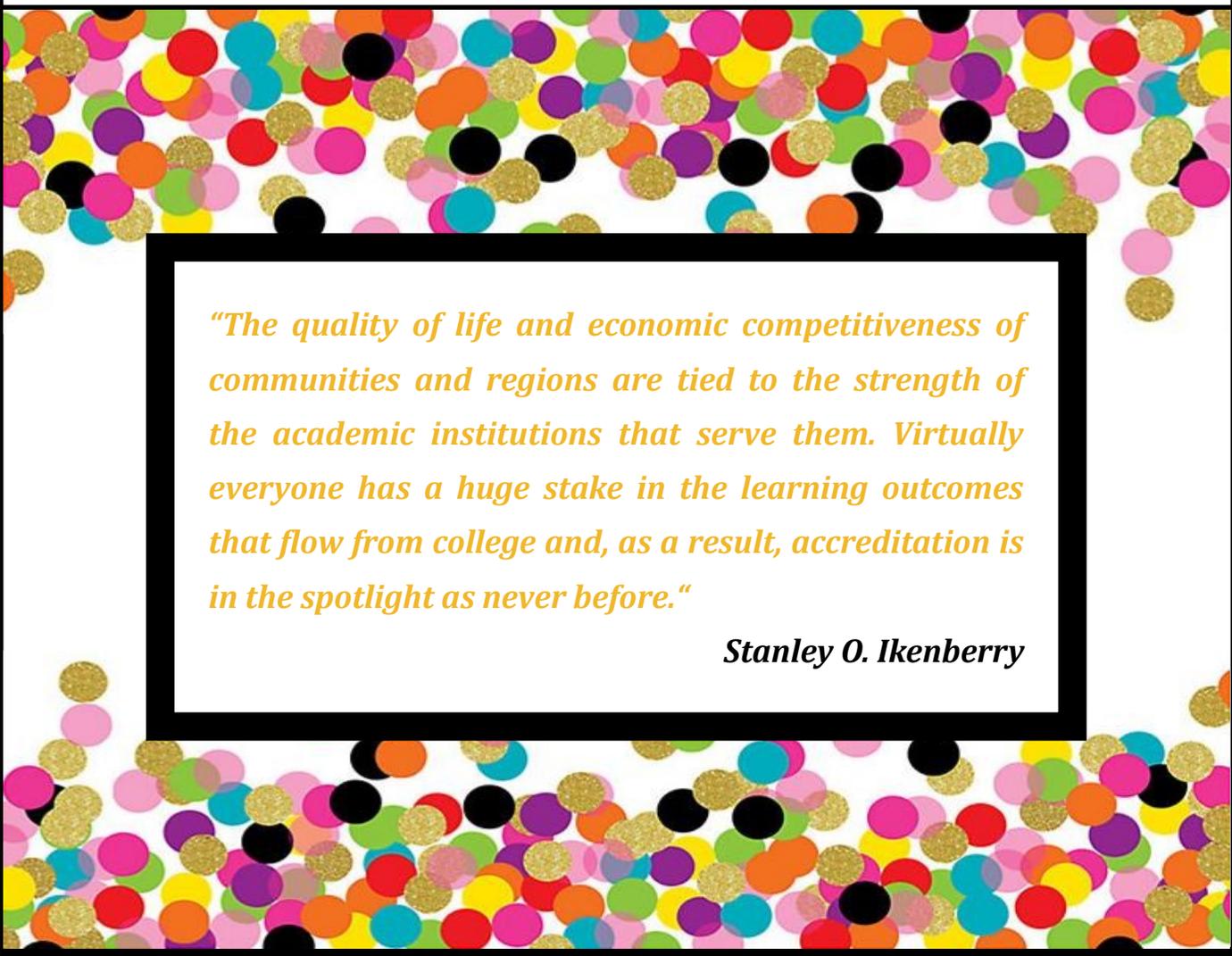
HLC Updates!

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HLC Approval Process for New Programs

Three Rivers College has an obligation to report new programs, and in some cases seek HLC approval. For consideration of a new program, please be aware that planning must begin early. The HLC Review Board requires prior approval of new programs before any actions such as advertising, hiring new faculty, or committing institutional resources can take place. According to HLC, there was a significant increase (40%) in new programs seeking approval during the 2017-18 period. During this same period, HLC rejected 40% of all new program applications due to lack of a sustainability plan or supporting evidence for the need of the proposed program. For a new program to be considered by HLC, it is now required to have more detailed information regarding any anticipated challenges and the impact a new program may have on institutional resources.

The following are examples of items HLC is requiring in a new program proposal: a three-year budget with return on investment (ROI) data that must demonstrate the institution anticipates a profit, market evidence of the program, an impact report that must include any additional faculty, facilities, and equipment needs, as well as a description of the program assessment plan. There are many factors involved with a new program proposal that would determine if HLC approval is required. Changes requiring prior HLC approval must go through several processes, depending on the type of change and complexity. To determine if prior approval is required, the first step is to contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.



“The quality of life and economic competitiveness of communities and regions are tied to the strength of the academic institutions that serve them. Virtually everyone has a huge stake in the learning outcomes that flow from college and, as a result, accreditation is in the spotlight as never before.”

Stanley O. Ikenberry

Students Connect through ACAD

Lisa Gray, Instructor of Reading

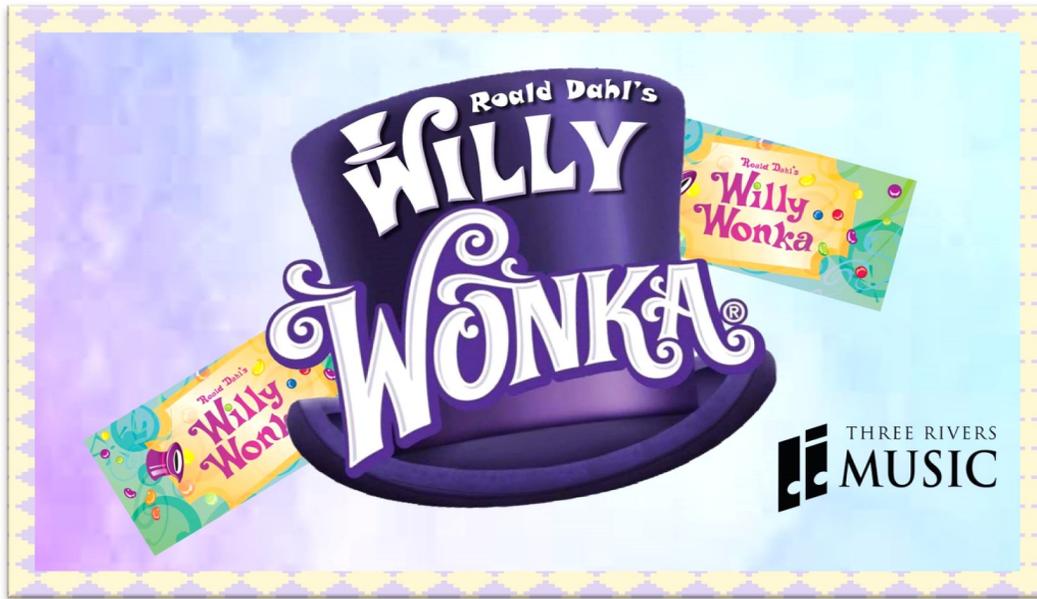
Students who are active in campus groups take advantage of college resources and make connections with their peers, instructors, and staff. They also tend to stay more engaged with their academic coursework and feel comfortable in the college environment. ACAD is a required class intended for students to have during their first semester, and one of its main objectives is to help students acclimate to the college environment. The course is designed with activities in place such as a campus-wide scavenger hunt, a diversity project, presentations over available resources, and participation in college events. Students complete these activities as part of designated groups, and throughout the semester, this provides them with the opportunity to get to know their peers on an academic and personal level and, for many, create the network they need to form a positive connection to the campus and build friendships that will last well beyond the end of the semester.

During Spring 2019, my ACAD class went above and beyond on two of the activities that were intended to strengthen the connection between the students, the classroom, and the campus. The first group activity was the ever-popular campus-wide Scavenger Hunt. In groups of 4-5, students must follow the clues and find each student-significant spot on campus. This activity gives them a fun, creative opportunity to visit the offices and buildings that are here to serve them. Students are encouraged to talk to the staff and instructors they meet at each location, as well as get some fun, group photographs.

The annual Poetry Slam provided students with another very interactive way to get involved in the class as well as a campus event. The class groups were able to choose which task they wanted to be responsible for, and then they planned, created, and put their collective projects together. They chose a theme of space to go along with our annual *Confluence* edition, and groups formed with ideas for wall decoration, table centerpieces, props, etc., and did a fantastic job of working within their own group, but also coordinating with the other groups involved. The end result was an amazing entry, refreshment area, and backdrop to the poetry readings. Many students attended the event because they were proud of their hard work, and many came as friends who had gotten to know each other through the class.

Getting students involved and active on campus is not always an easy task, but I believe when we take time to build in some class activities that nudge students toward the abundance of resources and activities we offer, we're helping those students create a positive relationship with the campus and their peers, and making them feel that they truly are part of the 3R community.





Enhancing Student Learning: Willy Wonka the Musical

Cindy White, Professor of Music

The Three Rivers College Music Department presented Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka, a family-friendly musical, from May 3-5, 2019 in the Tinnin Fine Arts Center on the Poplar Bluff Campus. The production featured only Three Rivers College students and students completing their Baccalaureate of Music Education through Central Methodist University. The group included the Swingsations, Three Rivers' premiere student vocal ensemble. These students formed the cast and crew, which included presenting the musical, as well as painting the sets and creating the props. Not only did the students learn the show, they gained valuable knowledge of theater, music, and life skills like sewing, painting, and climbing a ladder! These skills learned in a humanities-focused course are important for any success in life and are desirable in any profession.

Quotes from students that participated:



"Willy Wonka taught me how to work with others. It taught me to make a team out of a few people and do things for ourselves."

"The most important lesson to me was that I can handle any stress, any problems that come my way as long as I believe I can."



"I learned how to make friends and to work together as a team. I learned how to use critical thinking to solve problems."



"I learned lessons about being professional, confident, healthy, and dependable."



"I learned time management skills, communication, and conflict resolution with peers."

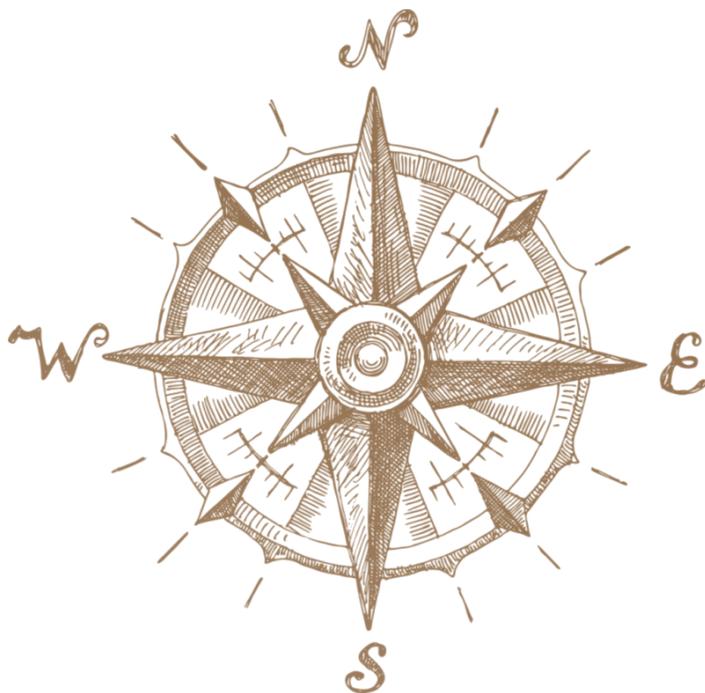


Engaging the Student Community

Dr. Ryan Bixby, Instructor of History

It is hard to believe that my first year at Three Rivers College has come to a close. It seems that it was just yesterday that I was attending my first August convocation. Although I taught at several other institutions before coming to TRC, those opportunities never allowed for me to truly become a contributing member to those institutions, as I was either a visiting full-time or adjunct faculty member. In my short time here at the College, I have had the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities, including helping to develop better online courses, and host a local history talk.

One of the biggest challenges for the history profession is trying to engage the public and make history more interesting and relatable. Professional historians often like to talk amongst themselves rather than trying to convey history to the general public. When presented with the opportunity to have Rick Mansfield come to the College and talk about his experiences of retracing the steps of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, I thought this was a great opportunity to start making connections with the Poplar Bluff community. We had nearly forty people attend the talk with many audience members eagerly asking Mr. Mansfield questions during the Q&A portion of the presentation. Mr. Mansfield also was kind enough to donate several books to the College. By hosting this talk, it sparked discussions about the possibility of having additional historical talks in the future. I am thankful for this opportunity, as I truly believe that one of the important components of teaching at a community college is becoming more involved in the community.



Educational Talent Search—Girls in STEM!

Brandi Brooks, Director of Educational Talent Search

The Educational Talent Search (ETS) program has been in existence at Three Rivers College since June 1991 and over the last twenty-eight years, has developed into a comprehensive service working with approximately one-thousand 6th-12th grade students in ten area school districts including Campbell, Dexter, Doniphan, East Carter County, Greenville, Naylor, Neelyville, Poplar Bluff, Southern Reynolds County, and Twin Rivers.

ETS is a part of the federal TRIO program (along with Upward Bound and Student Support Services), which was created in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson to help fight poverty through education. We seek to identify and provide services to students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds including low-income and first-generation students. Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of ETS participants who graduate from high school and enroll in and complete their postsecondary education by addressing and eliminating some of the barriers to higher education. The TRC ETS program has been extremely successful in our pursuits. For example, in the 2017-18 school year, ETS graduated 100% of our senior participants while 65% enrolled in postsecondary education. Of those students that enrolled in postsecondary education, 60% enrolled in TRC.

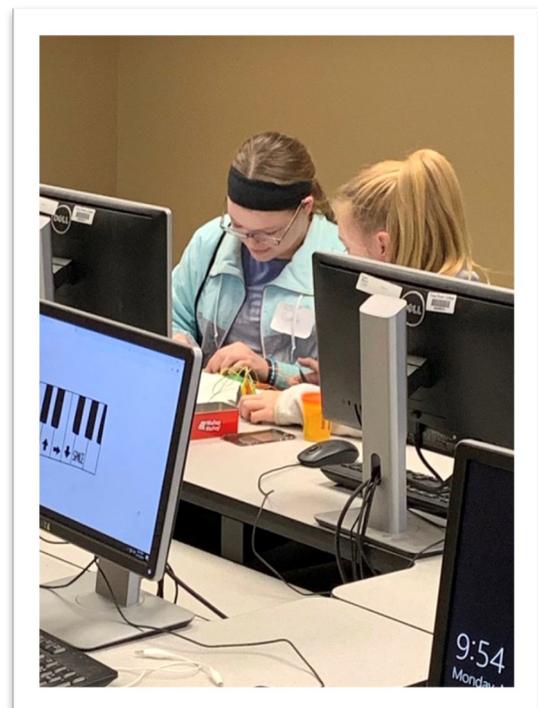
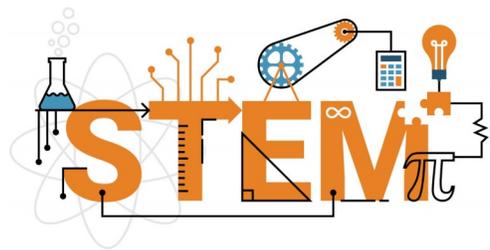
ETS provides academic, career, and financial aid counseling through monthly in-school workshops, college campus tours, tutoring (face-to-face and distance), and cultural enrichment trips. This year alone, we visited Arkansas State University, St. Louis Community College-Meramec, and the National Association of College Admission Counselors National College fair in St. Louis. We cover topics including goal setting, career and college planning, soft and interview skills, and FAFSA completion, among many others. We also provide numerous mentoring and leadership opportunities to students.

Because we administer such a wide range of topics, it is incredibly important that we collaborate as often as possible with supporters from the communities we serve, including here at TRC. This year, we had the privilege to participate in the “Girls in STEM” event held on TRC’s campus this past March. Seventy area 8th grade girls were able to spend the day on campus-learning more about science, technology, and agriculture through hands on activities taught by TRC faculty.

Department Chairs Dr. Leslie Gragg and Dr. Melissa Davis, as well as Heather Carlton, Assistant Professor of Information Systems Technology, helped with the orchestration of this event. Of their experience they said, “We wanted to provide these girls with an experience to remember, and we did so through activities such as viewing and manipulating models, computer coding using everyday objects, and DNA extraction. By introducing them to women who focused on STEM careers, we hope these girls will be confident to explore avenues they might not have considered.”

We are so incredibly proud of the hands-on experience each student was able to receive through events such as this and we are looking forward to continued collaboration with on-campus and off-campus communities! For more information on the Three Rivers College Educational Talent Search program, please visit trcc.edu/studentservices/trio.php or call 573-840-9532.

TRIO
EDUCATIONAL
TALENT SEARCH



Teacher of the Year Awards

Article compiled from TRC Press Release dated April 23, 2019

Kristy Niblock, Assistant Professor of Social Science, has been selected by Three Rivers College as the 2019 recipient of the **Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching**. Carol Davis, Adjunct Instructor of Communication & Languages, was named by the College as its **Adjunct of the Year Award for Excellence in Teaching**. Ms. Niblock and Ms. Davis were honored at the Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce Teacher of the Year Banquet on April 24, 2019.

"I am very lucky to teach sociology, an inherently interesting and constantly changing field," said Kristy Niblock, who has taught at TRC for seven years and holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a Minor in Communication and Master of Arts in Sociology with a specialization in Criminology. "We get to talk about really fun things in class, and the students enjoy our conversations." To keep her students engaged, she incorporates a range of teaching styles within the classroom, including lecture, short videos, class discussion, and group activities. "It's all about engagement," she adds. Ms. Niblock says she also concentrates on teaching her students critical thought and analysis—something that's expected in higher level courses.

To help Three Rivers improve the quality of online courses, Ms. Niblock has served as a Quality Matters Certified Course Designer and Quality Matters Peer Reviewer. The special training she received as part of the Quality Matters program has filtered into her face-to-face classes as well. "Now on-campus students have the same resources available to them in our learning management system as the online students," she said.

Carol Davis, the 2019 Adjunct of the Year, teaches English and Speech classes. She holds a Bachelor of Science in English Education from Missouri State University, a Master of Arts in Teaching from Webster University, and earned additional credit hours from the University of Central Missouri and Southeast Missouri State University. "Teaching has been my dedicated ambition and my delighted accomplishment for well over two-thirds of my life," said Ms. Davis. "I have attempted to show students of all ages the value of listening and learning in the classroom and beyond. Their success is my success; therefore, most of all I want all of my students to achieve that success and be able to move to the next level of their education with confidence as well as knowledge."

Ms. Davis is known among faculty and staff as someone who goes above and beyond, both for her students and the College. She was nominated for the award by Mark Sanders, Associate Professor of English. "She's taught a number of different courses and locations, and her primary concern is always for both student learning and student welfare. She cares about her students like they're members of her own family," said Sanders.



Kristy Niblock (right), Three Rivers College recipient of the Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Carol Davis (left), recipient of the Three Rivers Adjunct of the Year Award for Excellence in Teaching, with Dr. Wesley Payne, President of Three Rivers College.

"We're extremely proud of the work that Ms. Niblock and Ms. Davis have done in our classrooms. They are examples of the excellence that all of our instructors display and the kind of high-quality education that our students receive."

-Dr. Wesley Payne, President of Three Rivers College.

"Both of these instructors are committed to providing the best educational experience possible for our students. They have a passion for helping students achieve their dreams and goals for college, career, and life."

-Dr. Justin Hoggard, TRC Dean of Instruction.

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