Smith receives top national honor

WANDA LAUKKANEN | If it hadn’t been for a stint in a hospital cancer ward with dying patients, Pacific University professor Dennis Smith might have chosen a different field.

Smith, who has taught in the College of Optometry since 1991, was honored for his teaching career this past fall at annual meeting of the American Academy of Optometry, receiving the Michael G. Harris Family Award for Excellence in Optometric Education.

The national honor is given to only one faculty member from among the 20 optometry colleges in the United States and two in Canada, effectively declaring the recipient the national professor of the year for optometric education.

Originally from the Southeast, Smith did his undergraduate work at Towson University in Maryland, majoring in biology and chemistry. At the same time, he worked full time in a teaching hospital’s emergency ward.

“I was working my way through college,” he said.

“I was basically a nurse’s aide, basically a glorified janitor, doing the nasty stuff nobody else wanted to do.

“I was fortunate to work with a lot of docs and nurses who were used to teaching and training residents. I guess because I was a student they took a shine to me, and I was really thinking I wanted to go into some medical field.”

However, Smith said, his outlook changed a bit after he worked about two weeks on a cancer ward while someone was on vacation.

“I thought, ‘Oh my god, I can’t do this.’ … The emergency room was great, but the slow death on the cancer ward was emotionally draining.”

So, when Smith got back to work in the emergency room he talked to other employees about medical fields and had an
Smith: ‘I love interacting with the students’

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ophthalmologist tell him that if he had to do it all over again, he would be an optometrist.

Smith started at looking at the possibility.

“I decided that was what I wanted to do, and the rest of it is history,” he said.

Being sent to the cancer ward, he said, was a definite turning point.

“It was one of those really fortunate events,” he said with a rueful laugh. “I’m grateful for that miserable experience.”

The aspect of optometry that really captured Smith’s heart has been its focus on the human element, he said.

“I like that it’s a profession where you work very closely with your patients. It demands that you take time and develop good relationships with your patients. And that’s the thing that really appealed to me after working in the hospital where you really never had the opportunity to know someone particularly well. In optometry, you have to. I think it’s the profession for those of us who just like people,” he said.

Smith earned a doctor of optometry degree in 1981 from Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tenn., after obtaining a scholarship from the U.S. Air Force that paid for his schooling.

He served 23 years in the Air Force, 10 active duty and 13 in the reserves, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

He came to Pacific while in the Air Force and earned two master’s degrees at the university, one in physiological optics and one in clinical optometry, then returned in 1991 and has taught at Pacific ever since. Currently he teaches courses at the College of Optometry in systemic disease, physical diagnosis and advance case analysis. Smith also lectures in the School of Physical Therapy.

His teaching has garnered him many awards at Pacific, including the Junior Faculty Award in 1993, Optometry Faculty Merit Award in 1995, the Didactic Faculty of the Year in 2004 and the Teacher of the Year in 1992, 1993 and 1995.

“I love interacting with the students,” Smith said. “Students always make you think, and they always make you stay right on the edge of the profession, because that’s where they are. It’s always new for them.

“I like that it forces me to stay very current,” he added. “But, most of all, I like dealing with students. They’re excited, they’re excitable, they make everything exciting. It’s just a lot fun.”

Outside of Pacific, Smith is involved with a number of eye care programs. He has been a consultant for the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, which has several facilities in Washington County.

He also is a senior fellow for the World Council of Optometry and traveled to Brazil with his wife, Nada Lingel, also a Pacific professor of optometry, for six weeks to help develop college optometry curricula at several universities.

Smith also enjoys guitars and has built several from scratch.

“That’s been a life-long love,” he said, adding that once he retires, he hopes to be a full-time luthier.

Get your Pacific University gear online

It’s easier than ever to purchase official Pacific University products through the new online Boxer Nation Store.

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Don’t miss a special open house at the University Bookstore, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 25. There will be refreshments, giveaways and demonstrations in using the Design Your Own Store.
Former Pacific University Professor JAY THOMAS has been posthumously honored for his contributions by the American Board of Professional Psychology.

The organization recently awarded the 2013 Russell J. Bent Award for Distinguished Service and Contributions to the American Board of Professional Psychology to him posthumously. Thomas spent more than 13 years as a member of the Pacific University faculty before retiring in 2012. He helped found Pacific’s master’s degree in counseling, mentored students and led student teams in a variety of community service activities. He also served as an assistant dean of the School of Professional Psychology and was director of the school’s counseling program.

Thomas was named Distinguished University Professor in 2010, one of the University’s highest honors. In that year, he also was appointed secretary to the executive committee of the American Board of Professional Psychology.

causes a group of diseases known as Leishmaniasis. More than 12 million people currently have the diseases, which are most prevalent in tropical climates and poverty stricken areas. The grant was awarded through from the Medical Research Foundation at Oregon Health Science University.

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Center offers fellowships for Pacific employees

Pacific University faculty and staff are invited to apply for the 2013-2014 Berglund Center for Internet Studies Faculty Research Fellowships. All projects selected will be related to the use of the Internet.

The deadline for completed applications is April 1. Up to three successful applicants will be named as Berglund Fellows for the 2013-2014 academic year. They will have access to the facilities of the Berglund Center, including student assistance based on availability and needs.

The fellowships are $3,500 each and are awarded jointly to the fellow and his or her school or department. The Berglund Center is willing to participate in forming proposals in the early stages.

For more information, email floydta@pacificu.edu and put “Berglund Fellowship” in the subject line, or go online.
February Birthdays

1 Carole Londeree
1 Heidi Garner
1 Shilpi Banerjee
1 Lori May
1 Richard Whiteley
2 Sylvia Aust
2 Christie Norbury
2 James Swain
3 Monica Marvin
3 Brandy Peer
3 Lindsey Blem
3 Joseph Hromco
4 Mark Johnson
4 Lesley Hallick
4 Amanda Duncan
4 Ashley Kemper
5 Gregory Boone
5 Shelley Washburn
6 Kimberly Whitney
7 Alison Santoro
7 Ken Schumann
7 Monique Grindell
7 Sharon May
8 Adam Fine
9 Lidia Rodriguez
9 Sruthi Rothenfluch
9 Heidi Hanson
9 Thomas Oommen
9 Rick Wilkes
9 Ken Eakland
9 Jennifer Hockema
9 Edwardo Rojas
9 Karen Hall
10 Karen Peront
10 Lindsay Zaborowski
11 Bob Thomas
11 Kaia Sand
12 Melissa Shillington
14 Alec Webster
14 Kazuko Osada
14 Simone Giess
14 Jimmy Short
15 Jerry Lesch
15 Shelley Smolnisky
15 Pamela Jacobs
16 Rebecca Tengs
17 Shay Mooster
17 Bradley Coffey
17 Sally Hess
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17 Windy Stein
18 Leslie Crandell Dawes
18 Milo Holden
18 Alex Bove
19 Kim Short
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20 Karli Zearley
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21 Kevin Faulk
21 Leslie Green
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22 Lori Rynd
22 John Siemsen
23 Keely Hoban
23 Molly Westmoreland
23 Jana Hernandez
23 Michelle Cowing
23 Adam Rafalovich
24 Kim McAuliffe
24 Janelle Rainer
24 Roxana Ciocchina
24 Ronald Narode
24 Susan Boucher
24 Gyorgyi Nyerges
24 Ann Gibney
25 Brad Fujisaki
25 Lisa Rowley
25 Ingrid Unterseher
26 Annie Nelson
26 Charles Bentz
26 Rita Barton
26 Marisela Mejia Gaona
26 Debby Frisica
27 Bruce Hepler
27 Stephanie Hennisgen
27 Kyle Palmer
27 Felicia Taylor
27 Jim Brazeau
28 Gregory Blaisdell
28 Kevin Greenwood
28 Yoko Sakurauchi

52% of Pacific faculty and staff have given to Pacific so far this fiscal year, as of Jan. 24. Your gift supports the University and our students. Consider a gift or a payroll deduction today. pacificu.edu/giving

VALENTINE DAY BOXER BOOST
Pacific staff is welcome to join staff senators for coffee and refreshments at Valentine Boxer Boost events from 3 to 4 p.m. Feb. 14. The Forest Grove Campus event takes place in the Alumni Room at the University Center, and the Hillsboro campus event will be held at HPC2 in Room 430.

NEW EMPLOYEE MILEAGE RATE
The standard mileage rate for employee’s use of a personal vehicle for business miles has increased by a penny, to 56.5 cents per mile, effective Jan. 1.

FREE FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS
Pacific’s Center for Languages and International Collaboration (CLIC) is offering free access to employees to Livemocha, an online language learning community. The program offers vocabulary starter courses in 38 languages, with advanced courses in English, Spanish, German, French and Italian.

Create an unlimited access Pacific-sponsored Livemocha account with the Livemocha link on the UIS Online Tools webpage. Contact Erica Andree at andree@pacificu.edu with questions.