

Teaching for Excellence

By: Sarah Price

While most students are sitting in class, students in one agricultural economics class are hitting softballs.

To teach his students how to use statistics to explain what they have seen, Bailey Norwood and his students "play ball."

"He has them all bat and then records the angle and how far the ball went," said James Trapp, agricultural economics department head. "Then he records information on the students, like height and weight, to show why the ball performed that way."

Norwood's unique manner of teaching has earned him one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's highest awards.

In November, Norwood received the National USDA Excellence in College and University Teaching New Teacher Award in the Food and Agricultural Sciences during the awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. This prestigious honor, initiated in 2005, is awarded to no more than four new teachers each year.

"Not only is this award a tremendous honor for Dr. Norwood, but it is also an honor for the college and university," said Linda Martin, assistant dean for the Oklahoma State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. "The award recognizes outstanding teaching at the national level and is considered to be one of the top teaching awards in agriculture."

The teachers honored with this award excel at teaching, make a positive impact on student learning and influence other teachers by example, according to the Web site of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

Norwood grew up in South Carolina where he enjoyed training horses, calf roping, team roping and bareback riding.

"I didn't grow up on what most people would call a farm, but we always had livestock," said Norwood. "That's where I got my interest in agriculture."

You will not see Norwood on a bareback horse today, but you might catch him playing tennis or see him watching college football.

Norwood began his college education at Clemson University where he received a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics in 1996. He graduated from Kansas State University with a master's degree in agricultural economics in 1997. In 2001, Norwood received his doctorate in economics from North Carolina State University.

Since starting his teaching career as a graduate student in 2001, Norwood has excelled in the classroom.

"Dr. Bailey Norwood demands excellence from himself in all he does," said Martin. "He seeks out every opportunity for personal growth and improvement. He is a student of how students learn."

It took one economics class to get Norwood interested in teaching.

"I never liked school when I was young and wasn't even crazy about going to college," he said. "My first two years of college were horrible, but then I took this class."

Robert McCormick, the teacher who changed Norwood's opinion on school, teaches economics classes at Clemson.

"He made me really love economics," said Norwood. "Within a month, I changed from someone who hated school to someone who wanted to be a professor."

Thanks to an amazing class and a dedicated teacher, Norwood was soon working to become a professor. Oklahoma was not Norwood's first choice for a home, but his path eventually led him to Stillwater.

"I always thought I would return to the East, but then, low and behold, an awesome job opened up at Oklahoma State University," he said.

OSU's strong emphasis on teaching and excellent faculty attracted Norwood to his position. He liked Oklahoma and the university's strong ties to agriculture.

Norwood started that "awesome" job less than three years ago.

Receiving the New Teacher Award this early in Norwood's career is truly amazing, explained Martin.

"He had tough competition nationally," said Martin. "He has received this honor prior to his third year of teaching, which is just phenomenal."

While teaching agricultural marketing and price analysis (AGEC 3333) and quantitative price analysis (AGEC 4213) in the agricultural economics department, Norwood works hard to make a connection with his students. He strives to be creative and encouraging.

"I try to make my students really understand that I feel what I am doing is important," said Norwood.

In his classes, Norwood stresses the importance of each lesson. Using examples and relating class to real-life experiences help students understand the specific goal and purpose of each lesson, explained Norwood.

"Dr. Norwood relates very well to his students," said Trapp. "He seems to always be looking for a novel way to keep things interesting."

Cole Gallaway, an agribusiness senior, said he appreciates Norwood's style of teaching.

"He has us read books that relate economics to the real world," said Gallaway.

Building relationships with students inside and outside of the classroom is important to Norwood. At the beginning of each year, he arranges a dodge ball game for his undergraduate students.

"It is a way to get to know people," said Norwood. "I try to go out of my way to get kids together, to meet them and to have fun with them."

Coaching an academic bowl team and serving as adviser for Aggie-X, an agricultural economics club, are other ways Norwood interacts with students outside of the classroom.

Kyle Hooper, an agricultural economics alumnus, said he liked having Norwood as a professor.

"Most everyone likes to have a relationship with their professors," said Hooper. "You were able to have that relationship with him because he was so personable."

At only 31, Norwood's age plays a role in building relationships with his students.

"He connects with us very well," said Gallaway. "He is not too much older than all of us."

His age helps keep class interesting. Humor plays a role in Norwood's classes.

"I have to make class fun," Norwood said, "whether it is making it into a game or playing a joke in class."

Gallaway said he enjoys each class he attends.

"He makes it fun to go to," said Gallaway. "He shows a lot of video clips and really gets us involved."

Joining in discussion and getting involved in lessons are encouraged in Norwood's classes.

"He would bring food and pop to class," said Hooper. "We were rewarded for participating in activities."

When he is not busy teaching or advising, Norwood works on agricultural marketing research projects.

His award includes \$2,000 for the purpose of strengthening instructional programs in the food and agricultural sciences, according to the CSREES Web site.

The award money will be used for research on the value employers place on various college graduate attributes, said Norwood.

Norwood said he feels honored and fortunate to have been selected for the New Teacher Award.

"We have a good administration here that helps us get these awards," he said. "Receiving this award shows that we are doing the right things at OSU."

Martin explained that having a recipient of the new teacher award shows students at OSU are taught by the best teachers in the country.

"This award reflects the culture of the college, as well as the commitment of our faculty for excellence in teaching," said Martin.

While Norwood is the first CASNR faculty member to earn this USDA award, the college's administration knows he will not be the last. The administration's helpful attitude and outstanding faculty members, guarantees future winners.

Bailey Norwood received the National USDA Excellence in College and University Teaching New Teacher Award in November. (photo by Sarah Price)

Bailey Norwood becomes both pitcher and teacher during a unique ag econ lab. (photo by Sarah Price)

Bailey Norwood (kneeling) measures the distance Nicholle Renshaw's ball traveled as her classmates wait to take their turn. Students in Norwood's classes can expect to learn inside and outside the classroom. (photo by Sarah Price)