



Higgins Named L&C Emerson Excellence In Teaching Award Recipient

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GODFREY – English Professor Steve Higgins is Lewis and Clark Community College's 2020 Emerson Electric Excellence in Teaching Award recipient.

Higgins, 43, from Centralia, Illinois, teaches English 132, British Literature I and II, Comic Books as Literature, and has taught English 131 and Non-Western Cultures at Lewis and Clark.

He is chair of the faculty Curriculum/Instruction Committee and is faculty advisor to LC Pride, a student organization for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

“Steve is an exceptional teacher and is well liked and respected by both his students and fellow faculty members,” said Professor of Sociology Paula Kelso, Higgins’ colleague. “Not only is he passionate about teaching his students to become better writers, but he truly cares about seeing them reach their highest potential and become their best selves in general.”

Higgins has a Bachelor of Science degree in education and a Master of Arts in English from Southeast Missouri State University. He got his start as a writing center tutor while in graduate school, then taught for three years at Olney Central College following his graduation.

In Summer 2005, Higgins began teaching at Lewis and Clark as an adjunct, and by fall, he became a full-time faculty member.

“I began reading at the age of two, so I’ve had a passion for stories all of my life,” Higgins said. “I also had excellent teachers during high school and college who were a very positive influence on me, fostering my love of learning. They inspired me to do the same for others.”

Higgins lectures, leads class discussions and facilitates learning through small group work and one-on-one conferences, changing his methods frequently to reach a wide variety of learners and avoid monotony.

“I love working with students one-on-one to help them with their writing, showing them how they can improve their communication skills by going over a draft with them during individual conferences,” Higgins said. “I also truly adore being in front of a classroom and sharing my passion for literature with them, getting students to see how the stories and poems they read can relate to their everyday lives and the world around them.”

Higgins enjoys popular culture and works his knowledge and references into his coursework to help students relate to the content.

“I’m also not afraid to make myself look foolish or silly in order to help them learn,” he said. “I’m a natural-born performer and a total extrovert, so being in front of a room full

of students and engaging them with the material in a fun and interesting way is totally my wheelhouse.”

One of the most challenging parts of his job also makes it very rewarding, he said. Community college students are often busy with full-time jobs and extracurricular activities, and some even have families to take care of, so time management is incredibly important.

“Helping these students with their very busy lives to navigate all of those obstacles and then educating them on top of that is an absolute joy and pleasure,” he said. “The students who are so proud that their children get to see them graduate and be inspired by that, the students who have come back to school so they can earn a promotion or seek out a new career and now are able to live up to their full potential, they make teaching worthwhile. To know that I guided them along that path in life and played a small part in their actualization is incredibly fulfilling.”

Higgins said his courses offer valuable education and experience, no matter a student’s career path. Composition courses teach students how to effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas, and literature courses teach life lessons and help students connect to a shared experience.

Still many students are anxious about taking English courses.

“Oftentimes, they don’t love to read and they’ve been told they’re bad at writing, usually because of mechanical issues,” Higgins said. “I would advise them not to give up. There are stories out there that you will be engaged by; you just have to find them. The rules of grammar will come with practice, but they are less important than having something worthwhile to say.”

Beyond telling other people’s stories, Higgins has stories of his own to share. He’s been creating his own comics, with the help of artistic friends, over the past 10 years and hopes to continue expressing himself in that way.

Each year, the Emerson Electric Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize more than 100 educators in the St. Louis metropolitan area – from kindergarten teachers to college professors – who are examples of excellence in their field. This is the 27th year Lewis and Clark has participated in the recognition program.

“Steve is a dynamic, energetic, and dedicated faculty member who cares deeply about his students’ learning,” said Interim Chief Academic Officer Jill Lane. “Our students are lucky to have him.”