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Faculty Members Selected for Their Dedication to Excellence

Winthrop University

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Faculty Members Selected for Their Dedication to Excellence

Quick Facts

- Winthrop will give faculty awards to Stephen Smith and Adolphus Belk Jr.
- Undergraduates will receive their diplomas on May 9 at Winthrop Coliseum.
- Faculty member Brad Witzel will be honored May 7 at graduate commencement.



Stephen Smith

ROCK HILL, S.C. – Winthrop University will recognize three faculty members for their teaching, scholarship and service during upcoming graduation exercises.

During the May 9 [undergraduate ceremony](#), President Anthony DiGiorgio will bestow the Distinguished Professor Award on **Stephen Smith**, professor of political science, and Outstanding Junior Professor Award on **Adolphus Belk Jr.**, assistant professor of political science. The ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. at the Winthrop Coliseum to confer bachelor's degrees to more than 560 students.



Adolphus Belk Jr.

On May 7, DiGiorgio will present the Graduate Faculty Award to **Brad Witzel**, an associate professor for curriculum and instruction in the Richard W. Riley College of Education. The presentation will occur during the 7 p.m. [graduate ceremony](#) at the Winthrop Coliseum where master's degrees will be given to more than 160 students.

The highest honor Winthrop can bestow upon a faculty member is the title of **Distinguished Professor**. The selection indicates exceptional skill in teaching, significant research or creative efforts, high standing among professional colleagues, and general service to the university and community.



Brad Witzel

A faculty member since 1990, **Smith** teaches courses on policy and public administration, political theory and American politics. A nationally known scholar of education politics and prolific writer, Smith is the author of a highly touted book on desegregation and development in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System. He also has published works on the notion of social capital, on Rock Hill's desegregation efforts and more recently, has started research on radical antiwar movements of the last century.

To his Winthrop peers, Smith stands out for his unwavering commitment to academic integrity, his long-time support of the Honors program and for undergraduate research. He helped create a new internship for the town of Fort Mill, S.C., served as advisor to several student groups, worked as consultant for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, provided expert witness testimony in the reopening of the historic Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg court case, and contributed to the African American studies program.

Smith has worked as an operating engineer, an assembly line autoworker and full-time union steward, and as a community organizer. Smith holds a B.S. in biology from Haverford College and a M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University.

The **Outstanding Junior Professor Award** recognizes excellence among assistant professors. Selection indicates a reputation for inspired teaching, research or creative excellence, and dedication

to the welfare of students.

Belk joined the Winthrop faculty in 2003 to direct the African American studies program. Through music, poetry, simulated sit-ins, “big question” discussions, substantial reading and writing, Belk has increased the number of students interested in the African American studies minor and successfully piloted a course last fall on “Race and Ethnic Politics,” which will become a permanent offering.

His research focuses on the “prison-industrial complex,” which refers to the government policies and corporate interests in the country’s large prison systems. Belk is in the process of revising a book manuscript on the topic and has written for peer-reviewed journals on social policy and race. He also has helped with groundbreaking Winthrop/ETV Polls to survey African Americans in the South on a host of topics.

Belk earned a B.A. in the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University and a M.A. and Ph.D. in government and politics at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The **Graduate Faculty Award** is being awarded this year for only the second time. The award is given to a graduate faculty member who holds the rank of associate or full professor, has a record of outstanding teaching at the graduate level, and has made a significant contribution to the quality of graduate education at Winthrop.

Witzel, the director of the masters of education program for special education program, works with his students to encourage their engagement with research, innovative classroom practices and conference presentations.

He has been instrumental in major curriculum changes in the undergraduate program, as well as the master’s program. Witzel’s area of specialization is elementary math for learners with special needs, and he emphasizes the need for special education teachers to be fully competent in the mathematics content subject matter. In 2008, he published a book with Pearson Publications on mathematics intervention.

In his seven years at Winthrop, he has published more than 15 articles in reputable national and state journals and reviewed manuscripts for 12 journals on his area of expertise. A former president of the S.C. Council for Exceptional Children, Witzel has worked with many school districts around the Palmetto state to help bolster teachers of students who struggle with mathematics.

Witzel holds a B.S. in psychology from James Madison University and a M.Ed. and Ph.D. in special education from the University of Florida.

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