



Summer 6-12-2006

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Winthrop University

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Winthrop University, "Two Faculty Members Take on Additional Duties July 1" (2006). *Winthrop News 2006*. 69.
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06/12/2006


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Two Faculty Members Take on Additional Duties July 1

Quick Facts

- Jennifer Leigh Disney, political science, is the new director of Winthrop's Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (ONCA).
- Keith Benson, health care management, will direct Distinction in Leadership, a new program for students.



Jennifer Disney

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Two Winthrop University faculty members will take on additional duties this fall in newly created positions to promote academic excellence and leadership by students.

Jennifer Leigh Disney, assistant professor of political science, will become the director of the **Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (ONCA)**. **Keith Benson**, associate professor of health care management, will take the title of director of leadership studies overseeing a new program offering for students called the Distinction in Leadership. Both directors will begin their new duties on July 1 and report to University College.



Keith Benson

"These are two dynamic and innovative faculty members who are already deeply engaged in student learning and development," said Brien Lewis, dean of University College. "I am very excited about the ideas and energy that Dr. Disney and Dr. Benson will bring to these initiatives."

The goal for the **Office of Nationally Competitive Awards** is to encourage and assist students and faculty in identifying and being selected for distinguished scholarships, fellowships and other opportunities for distinctive recognition. **Disney** will work closely with outstanding students and faculty through the application process, including preparing for interviews.

"I have had the opportunity to mentor some of the best students at Winthrop, including Catherine Luepkes, winner of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Graduate Scholarship," **Disney** said. "I look forward to familiarizing myself with the vast array of scholarships and fellowships available for our students, and working with faculty to disseminate this information easily and effectively."

Disney has distinguished herself since joining the Winthrop faculty in 2002. She won the Faculty Service Learning and Community Service awards this past year. She completed her Ph.D. with distinction at The Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York. She is working on a book manuscript based on her award-winning dissertation entitled "Women's Activism and Feminist Agency in Mozambique and Nicaragua."

In an effort to expand the leadership experiences at Winthrop, **Benson** will guide students through a new leadership development program. He also will work with a Leadership Studies Advisory Board made up of faculty, student life professionals and alumni or community leaders.

Benson will meet with freshmen interested in pursuing the designation and design an individualized plan based on interests and career choices. Students will take additional courses and be encouraged to interact with alumni and high profile leaders from all segments of society. Many students will be involved in various projects to help develop their leadership skills.

"It is an honor to work with students to help them develop their leadership skills," said **Benson**, who teaches leadership principles in his management classes and developed and teaches a new leadership course for the Executive M.B.A. program. "Our goal is that many of these students will go on to be leaders in their professions, organizations and communities."

An advocate of service-learning in the classroom, **Benson** has served in leadership positions with volunteer groups in the community. He also brings international experience to the job after having lived in Japan for three years.

Hired in 1999, **Benson** was selected as the Outstanding Junior Professor in 2002. He holds a Ph.D. in health policy and administration from Penn State University.

For more information, contact Lewis at 803/323-3900.

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