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Faculty Member Awarded Thompson Scholar to Conduct An Emotional Intelligence Project

Winthrop University

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Faculty Member Awarded Thompson Scholar to Conduct An Emotional Intelligence Project

Quick Facts

- Barbara Burgess-Wilkerson, an associate professor of management and director of student professional development in the College of Business Administration, said her research will help millennials identify their areas of strength and weakness as they prepare for their professional lives.
- Millennials—the largest population in the workforce—have hyper-socialized online lives but feel increasingly alienated in their real lives.
- Students said that among the factors that contributed to a successful integration from college to a career were having professors who cared for them and having mentors who talked with them about their futures.



Barbara Burgess-Wilkerson

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA - Winthrop University's newly appointed **Thompson Scholar Barbara Burgess-Wilkerson** will spend the next year developing an emotional intelligence project to help prepare students for the workforce.

Her appointment was announced in the College of Business Administration's opening meeting on Aug. 16 by **Debra Boyd**, Winthrop's provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Boyd has high hopes for the project, adding that it "will have a positive and wide-ranging impact on Winthrop students."

Burgess-Wilkerson, an associate professor of management and director of student professional development in the **College of Business Administration**, said her research will help millennials identify their areas of strength and weakness as they prepare for their professional lives.

In her **Thompson Scholar application**, Burgess-Wilkerson said that **millennials**—the largest population in the workforce—have hyper-socialized online lives but feel increasingly alienated in their real lives. Students said that among the factors that contributed to a successful integration from college to a career were having professors who cared for them and having mentors who talked with them about their futures.

Burgess-Wilkerson said that **millennials are receptive to coaching** and don't see advice as a weakness but as a path to greatness. Millennials say coaching helps with their job performance, while employers say that coaching develops the skills of top talent, minimizes conflict, creates loyalty, and improves employee engagement. "With a trend toward career advising, universities are better served when faculty and staff are armed with skills to assist students in understanding how emotional intelligence impacts academic and career success," she said.

Burgess-Wilkerson administered a prototype test for students at Winthrop in 2014 called the **Wilkerson Emotional Intelligence Test for Academics and Careers (WEITAC)**. It needs to be refined, she said.

The Thompson project will allow her to:

- * Develop a new prototype of the WEITAC test.
- * Create a database to store, manage and analyze data and to generate student summary reports from the revised prototype.
- * Create a comprehensive student report to provide more detailed information for individuals who are

- working with a coach and need more specific strategies for development.
- * Provide training to professionals on campus as part of a workforce readiness strategy.
- * Complete the comparative analysis research and publication of the WEITAC test.
- * Begin writing a training manual for coaches and students to be used as a supplemental tool.

Burgess-Wilkerson came to Winthrop in 2006 and has worked on emotional intelligence research since 2009. She said that, once the WEITAC is finalized, it can impact the campus across disciplines. Students would engage in a self-directed plan beginning in their freshmen year so they could identify weaknesses and then be retested at the end of their college days.

In addition, the project will provide a template for strategies for student academic and career success for other institutions of higher learning.

Burgess-Wilkerson earned a B.S. in social work-psychology from Edinboro University, an M.S. degree in educational administration from Gannon University, and a Ph.D. in administration and policy studies-social and comparative analysis from the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to coming to Winthrop, she was an organizational consultant for 18 years serving the greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and surrounding areas.

This is the **11th awarding of the Thompson Scholar Award**, created by **former Winthrop Board of Trustees member Bob Thompson and his wife, Norma**, of Rock Hill. The fund provides for reassigned time for two classes per year for a faculty member.

"Norma and I congratulate Dr. Burgess-Wilkerson on her selection as the 11th Thompson Scholar," Thompson said. "Her focus on strengthening the future prospects of millennials not only meets our goal of faculty development, but it will help improve the abilities of a younger generation to cope successfully with change. That dual impact is the true intent of our Scholar program and reflects Winthrop's approach to teaching and learning."

The **Robert and Norma Thompson Endowment** was established during the university's first capital campaign. Other Thompson Scholars are: Phil Moody, photography; Pedro Muñoz, Spanish; Carol Marchel, education; John Bird, English; David Bradbard and Barbara Fuller, business; Padmini Patwardhan, mass communication, David Stokes, design; Trent Kull, math; Tomoko Deguchi, music; and Shawna Helf, education.

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