Sac State ‘Renaissance man’ wins faculty award

Sacramento State Chemistry Professor James Ritchey is the 2013 recipient of the Andreoli Faculty Service Award. The honor will be presented during the California State University Biotechnology Symposium, Jan. 3-5 at the Anaheim Marriott.

The honor recognizes a faculty member who has made outstanding contributions to the development of biotechnology programs in the 23-campus CSU system. Professor A. Andreoli (CSU Los Angeles) was committed to his students and believed the CSU has a special role to play in higher education by providing opportunities to many nontraditional students who otherwise would have fewer options for advancement.

Ritchey enjoys teaching and appreciates the fact that many of his students have been the first in their family to earn a college degree. “I was the first in mine to do so,” he says, “but was fortunate enough to receive scholarships. So many of my students are working, which makes it doubly difficult to keep up with their course work.”

The professor is something of a Renaissance man. His major fields are biochemistry, chemistry, patent law and intellectual property law. His lecture and lab assignments have combined general, organic and biochemistry courses, and various upper-division biochemistry classes. His book College Chemistry in the Laboratory is in its 10th edition.

Ritchey attended McGeorge School of Law at night, earned his degree and taught intellectual property law and patent law as an adjunct there for 15 years. He's currently a partner at the law firm of O'Banion & Ritchey LLP, which specializes in intellectual property law (patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets and unfair competition) and related litigation and licensing matters. And he advises Sacramento State’s University Enterprises Inc. on patent law.

“I enjoy doing different things, which is why I didn’t concentrate on research following my postdoctoral work at UC Berkeley,” he says. As a National Institutes of Health scholar there from 1974 to 1977, he could have landed a position at one of the country’s leading research universities.
“I came to Sacramento State because I wanted to teach,” Ritchey says. And he has done just that for the last 35 years, except for a 12-month leave in 1985 to learn how to practice patent law at a leading firm in San Francisco.

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