Communication professor is Livingston honoree

Mark Stoner, a longtime professor of communication studies, is Sacramento State’s 2014-15 Livingston Lecturer.

The honor is awarded each year to a Sacramento State faculty member who has been active in the life of the University, including faculty governance, who displays consistent collegiality and a commitment to students, and who actively participates in creative and scholarly activities.

Stoner will present his Livingston Lecture, “Are Two Heads Really Better Than One? Communication, Collaboration and Coalition of Minds,” at 3 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 30, in the University Union, Redwood Room. A reception will follow.

“I am very honored and humbled that my colleagues Nick Burnett and Gerri Smith chose to submit my name,” Stoner says. “Bill Dorman (a retired professor of journalism and government) is one of my mentors. He was awarded the Livingston Lecture twice. His first presentation was about his research, and his second was a reflection on his career.

“Since I don’t expect to win this twice, like Bill, I’m going to talk about both my academic work and reflect on my career,” Stoner says.

The Livingston Lecture celebrates the life of the late John “Jack” Livingston, a professor of government at Sac State from 1954 to 1981. He was a respected scholar and a leader in developing the character of collegial governance throughout the California State University and at Sacramento State in particular.

One of the colleagues who nominated Stoner for the Livingston Lecture said the professor “is, in many respects, the conscience of our department. When our focus becomes too narrowly drawn on administrative or trivial concerns, he delicately and correctly returns our focus to the true matter at hand: the education of students at Sacramento State.”

Stoner grew up in the Pennsylvania coal-mining town of Altoona and was 12 years old during the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley – truly a world away. He was a kid fascinated by college students’ idealism and their lively protests over the university’s decision that political activities must be kept off the campus. Stoner later would write his dissertation on the seminal student uprising and “the innovation of new rhetorical visions.”

He earned his doctorate and master’s degree in communication at Ohio State University and his bachelor’s in English education at Pennsylvania State University. He taught high school English in Ohio and communication studies at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, also in Ohio, before he arrived at Sacramento State in 1989.

His teaching interests include instructional communication, rhetoric and public address, and interpersonal and small-group communication. His research ranges from
instructional communication and mediated learning to the relationship of communication to thinking, learning and teaching.

Stoner is a Fulbright Specialist and has been a visiting research scholar at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland as well as the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne and the University of Lancaster, both in Britain.

At Sacramento State, he helped found the Center for Teaching and Learning and served as its assistant director and interim director between 2004 and 2012. In 2012, he formed a committee of alumni, faculty and students to create NETS (Network: Extending Teaching and Scholarship). He served on committees for accessibility and campus education equity, and on a task force that addressed the childcare needs of student-parents. He’s currently collaborating with Diego Bonilla, a professor of communication studies, on two major projects: the first in a set of system-wide courses in information and communication technology literacy, designed by Bonilla; and Stoner’s D model of disciplinary knowledge structures.

Among Stoner’s many community involvements has been to serve as a communication consultant and trainer for the state’s Integrated Waste Management Board and Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Stoner is a fan of science fiction. His favorite author is Joe Haldeman (The Forever War). His wife, Daria, is a retired teacher. His son, Ian, is an adjunct professor of philosophy at the University of Minnesota, and his daughter, Heather, is an occupational therapist. His granddaughter, Olivia, will turn 3 on the day of the Livingston Lecture.

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