

VIRGINIA WESLEYAN PROFESSOR WINS VFIC'S H. HITER HARRIS, JR. AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA – In a highly competitive statewide program, the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC) has selected **Dr. Lawrence D. Hultgren**, Professor of Philosophy at Virginia Wesleyan College, as the 2009 recipient of *The Hiter H. Harris, Jr. Memorial Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching*. Dr. Hultgren, who has dedicated his entire forty-year career to teaching undergraduates, received the award on November 5 at the annual VFIC Leadership Luncheon in Richmond.



The Harris Award, which includes a stipend to support the recipient's scholarly research and professional development activities, was created through an endowment gift from the family of the late Hiter Harris, Jr., a leading Virginia banker and a member of the VFIC's Board from 1973 to 1998. In announcing the creation of the Award in 2008, Hiter Harris III, noted that "great teaching and a personal commitment to student development are attributes for which Virginia's small private liberal arts colleges are known nationally. Our family wishes to highlight this very special component of the small private colleges by recognizing faculty members who truly exemplify these attributes."

"Over the course of his 40 years at Virginia Wesleyan, Dr. Hultgren has carved out a record of teaching innovation and excellence, making him both our longest serving and most esteemed faculty member," notes Dr. Timothy O'Rourke, VWC's Academic Dean. A graduate of Grinnell College with a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University, he is deeply involved in the Virginia Wesleyan's academic program. Known for his outstanding work in the classroom working one-on-one to help students reach their full potential, he also serves as the Coordinator of the Department of Philosophy, Director of the College's PORTfolio Program, and Co-Director of its Environmental Studies Program. Dr. Hultgren is widely published and a regular speaker at regional/national professional and educational conferences.

"The Harris Award Selection Committee was only dealing with 'the best of the best' among faculty members at 15 of Virginia's private colleges," noted VFIC Board Chair Sandy Fitz-Hugh, former president of Bank of America - Virginia. "So it speaks volumes that Dr. Hultgren was tapped from among this elite group. It is clear that he has had a truly remarkable career and has had a major impact on the lives of generations of students at Virginia Wesleyan." In reviewing the nominees, the committee focused on four criteria – the nominee's: 1) impact on and involvement with undergraduate students; 2) scholarly approach to teaching and learning; 3) contributions to undergraduate education in the institution, community and profession; and 4) endorsements from colleagues and current or former students.

Dr. Hultgren notes, "teaching is closest to my heart. Without a doubt, my students – and teaching my students – are my number one priority. I want each of them to discover that liberal education in general, and philosophy in particular, do, in the words of William James, 'make some positive connection with this actual world of finite human lives'." Letters seconding his nomination for The Harris Award include student praise for his classes – "exciting and engaging," "fast-paced," and "a wonderful experience" – attesting to the Dr. Hultgren's reputation for providing truly vibrant classroom experiences.

The VFIC, founded in 1952, is a non-profit organization which raises funds and coordinates collaborative programs to strengthen fifteen leading private colleges and universities in Virginia:

Bridgewater College	Randolph-Macon College
Emory & Henry College	Roanoke College
Hampden-Sydney College	Shenandoah University
Hollins University	Sweet Briar College
Lynchburg College	University of Richmond
Mary Baldwin College	Virginia Wesleyan College
Marymount University	Washington and Lee University
Randolph College	

The VFIC has generated over \$125 million to strengthen Virginia's private college sector, and is nationally recognized for the innovative projects and programs it has developed for these institutions.

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