

National Center for the Biotechnology Workforce

SCITECH – Bringing Science & Technology to the Community!

They say that many business deals are sealed on the golf course. Well this is not the case with the SciTech Lecture Series at Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem. It was created and planned at an informal faculty and staff weekly morning coffee. Not knowing how popular the series would be, the Forsyth Tech team began in earnest the task of putting together two trial SciTech speaker events that would capture the imagination and bring in the work and passion of others to a college community.



Amy Greeson

During the initial planning process the thought was to develop a platform for which our instructors could speak to a broad-based audience, interested in science and technology, about their work at the college. The lectures would be held once a month during the fall and spring terms to maximize the attendance of students and to include other participants from the community and other colleges.

To gauge the interest levels within the educational institution, the SciTech steering committee brought into the college two guest speakers. One was Amy Greeson (pictured), a pharmacist, educator, lecturer, writer and world traveler and the producer and host of Healing Seekers. Her topic “Searching for a Cure” gave our audience a look at the crossroads between medicine and the healing traditions of indigenous cultures. The other was Dr. Ski Chilton, the founder of Gene Smart, a wellness and prevention company. His topic of discussion was obesity, chronic inflammatory diseases in America and malnutrition and other urgent issues affecting children in Africa.

Both events were hugely successful for a number of reasons. Attendance at both events was between 70-90 people. The feedback received after each event was extremely positive and it was during these two presentations that many of our faculty saw the advantage and opportunity to showcase their talents in their teaching field. Dr. Dwaine Davis, Department Chair of Physical Sciences, is quoted as saying, “I could not be more pleased with the results of this year’s SciTech Lecture Series. The quality and

ForsythTech

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content of the presentations were second to none. The support from our school and the community was outstanding. I hope that we can use this year as a cornerstone for the future of the Series. ”



Chris Sowers

During the spring term 2010, three more SciTech lecture series were scheduled. Three of Forsyth Tech’s faculty volunteered to talk about topics related to subject matter that was of special interest to them or for which they had a passion. Dr. Kevin Conley, founder of our Nanotechnology Associate Degree Program, gave a highly interactive overview of the world of nanoscience with a special emphasis on its application to biotechnology. Forsyth Tech biology instructor Chris Sowers (pictured) introduced his master’s thesis research and data on a rare plant species indigenous to the southeast as he posed questions about our future on a sustainable Earth. Judith Ginn,

Forsyth Tech biology instructor, and Dr. Tom Ginn, Judith’s husband, talked about their health care work in rural Kenya. It is interesting to note that all of these programs were advertised and open to the general public free of charge.

October 2010 will bring a new semester, new students and a new opportunity for the SciTech speaker’s series. During the semester, we will have a highly honored guest speaker, Dr. Mark Wainberg, a Canadian AIDS researcher and activist. He is the Director of the McGill University AIDS Centre at the Montreal Jewish General Hospital and Professor of Medicine and of Microbiology at McGill University. In 2008, Dr. Wainberg was named a Chevalier de Légion d'honneur, the highest honor given by the country of France. In 2001, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, which is Canada's highest civilian honor, for his "major contributions to the study and treatment of HIV/AIDS." In 2005, he was made an Officer of the National Order of Quebec, an order of merit bestowed by the government of the Province of Quebec. In 2000, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.



Dr. Mark Wainberg

Russ H. Read explains, “Having a SciTech speaker like Dr. Mark Wainberg gives us the opportunity to hear about the technology associated with the race to treat HIV. The space race gave us LEDs and light weight computers. The technology of the war against HIV has given us rapid PCR, drugs that effect DNA polymerase and protease inhibitors, viral cultures and clinical trials and a whole new set of guidelines on drug development. All of this science and technology contributed to a bench and clinical science revolution in biotechnology.” Read added, “Dr. Wainberg is one of the best in the world to describe this phenomenon.”

Imagine the multiplier effect if every community college across the country was to hold their own SciTech series. To date we have reached over 350 people in only five lectures. If all the colleges across the country embraced a SciTech program we could reach thousands. What is really great about the program is that it is carried out with internal resources, so the costs of running it are minimal. SciTech gets people excited about science and technology and demonstrates what a great talent resource we have within our faculty and our community of contacts.