

NURTURING SUCCESS

Parkland faculty members join in UI program developing entrepreneurial skills

By ANNE COOK
acook@news-gazette.com

CHAMPAIGN — Heidi Leuszler wants her students to think more carefully about their impact on their environments so they can become problem-solvers.

Toni Burkhalter wants her students to experience success by inventing a tasty, nutritious snack and turning it into a commercial product.

The two Parkland College faculty members are the first from the community college to participate in a University of Illinois program designed to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit in faculty and students no matter what their major may be.

It's called the Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership, and faculty members use up to \$15,000 fellowships to underwrite the costs of buying materials for classes, attending conferences, and other expenses associated with making curriculum changes. Burkhalter and Leuszler also pay stipends to Parkland teachers who help them develop their classes.

"New faculty members never get money for contributing to curriculum," said Leuszler, who teaches environmental biology. "I did some five-hour workshops in the spring; we had some amazing discussions and I gave people stipends for attending. It's everyone's curriculum."

Burkhalter, who will teach her honors students this fall semester all about nutrition so they're on the right track for their snack project, is sharing her fellowship with graphic artist Paul Young who will put his students to work designing packaging and marketing for the snack.

"His students will work with their clients — my students," she said. "My students are mostly nonscience majors, and I'm hoping for a lot of business students."

Burkhalter said after her students have the facts about proteins, carbohydrates and fats, they'll design a new snack or tweak a recipe to make it healthier. She plans to take the finished product to the UI for professional analysis.

"We'll compare where we wanted to go with the actual outcome," Burkhalter said.

She said students will do taste tests and she believes the result can become a product with commercial potential.

"In a commercial setting, research and development for a product can take years," Burkhalter said. "We'll see a product in four months. These students can set themselves apart and they can see how four months can have a long-term impact."



Vanda Bidwell/The News-Gazette

Parkland College faculty members Heidi Leuszler, left, and Toni Burkhalter are participating in a University of Illinois program designed to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit. Burkhalter's class will create and do marketing for a nutritious snack food. Leuszler's class will do personal environmental assessments for clients.

Academy encourages teaching, learning in new ways

URBANA — The University of Illinois' Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership was founded in 2004 to serve as a national model for programs developing those skills in students and faculty members in many different departments.

The academy offers programs and mentoring opportunities for faculty members and students, and each fall, it grants fellowships up to \$15,000 to faculty members who submit proposals for revising or creating entrepreneurial programs in their disciplines. Last fall they were awarded to 13 UI faculty members and, for the first time, two Parkland

College faculty members.

"To me, this program is one way to engage students in learning and faculty members in teaching," Fay Rouseff-Baker said.

"I love everything about this program," said Rouseff-Baker, Parkland's associate vice president for teaching and learning, who identified the opportunity, spread the word at Parkland and collected proposals from faculty there.

"It encourages faculty members to deliver learning in ways that continue to engage students and to design curriculum asking students to think in entrepreneurial ways,"

she said.

Rouseff-Baker said the UI offered one fellowship, and Parkland liked the idea so much, Parkland Foundation head Carl Meyer provided foundation money for a second fellowship.

"You get financial and academic support from the UI faculty, who make themselves available so we can bounce ideas around," said Toni Burkhalter, who's participating with faculty member Heidi Leuszler. "They want you to think outside the box, but they're available for questions."

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Leuszler said her students will start their project by taking a close look at their own interactions with their environment.

"It's about assessing their own environmental impact, how much do they use and waste and spend on stuff they throw out," she said.

"The honors class this fall will be

doing the same thing and toward the end, they'll be doing a service project so we can take it to the community. Clients will let us assess their homes and students will do it."

Leuszler's using a book called "WorldChanging: A User's Guide to the 21st Century." "It includes vignettes about people all over the world

making a difference," she said. "I want them to think, let's start a business. Let's fix that problem. Let's come up with solutions."

"Students have no idea what they can do," Leuszler said. "They tend to think, 'I can barely pay tuition and day care. How can I make changes?' It's empowering."