SSU professor receives prestigious 2013 Georgia Professor of the Year Award

SAVANNAH—Mulatu Lemma, Ph.D., professor of Mathematics at Savannah State University (SSU), was named the 2013 Georgia Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

The U.S. Professors of the Year awards program celebrates outstanding educators across the nation. It is the only such national program that recognizes excellence in undergraduate education. Lemma was selected from nearly 350 top professors in the United States, including many from Georgia public and private institutions.

An SSU faculty member since 1994, Lemma is a widely published author and currently serves as the principal investigator for the $1.5 million PRISM – Proactive Recruitment for Introductory Science and Mathematics – Scholarship Program funded by the National Science Foundation. In 2010, the mathematician published seven papers in refereed journals. In 2011, he described and introduced the Mulatu Numbers, which includes an integral sequence of numbers with distinct mathematical properties and patterns comparable to Fibonacci and Lucas series. An attentive and generous educator, Lemma’s “early warning system” for his classes and willingness to spend weekends offering students extra help have earned him accolades near and far, including the 2010 SSU Distinguished Faculty Award and the 2012 University System of Georgia Board of Regents’ Teaching Excellence Award for regional and state university faculty members.

Lemma received the Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics education and a Master of Science degree in applied mathematics from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. Subsequently, he received the Master of Arts and doctorate degrees in pure mathematics from Kent State University.

“We are very proud of Dr. Lemma’s professional accomplishments,” says Cheryl D. Dozier, SSU president. “His record of research and student engagement exemplifies the qualities of this prestigious award.”

CASE and the Carnegie Foundation have been partners in offering the U.S. Professors of the Year awards program since 1981. Additional support for the program is received from Phi Beta Kappa, which sponsors an evening congressional reception, the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education and other higher education associations.
This year, there are 36 state Professor of the Year honorees. CASE assembled two preliminary panels of judges to select finalists. The Carnegie Foundation then convened the third and final panel, which selected four national winners. CASE and Carnegie select state winners from top entries resulting from the judging process. Lemma was selected from faculty members nominated by colleges and universities throughout the country.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent policy and research center that supports needed transformations in American education through tighter connections between teaching practice, evidence of student learning, the communication and use of this evidence, and structured opportunities to build knowledge.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in London, Singapore and Mexico City, CASE is a professional association serving educational institutions and the advancement professionals at all levels who work in alumni relations, communications, fundraising, marketing and other areas.

Established in 1890, Savannah State University is the oldest public historically black college or university in Georgia and the oldest institution of higher learning in the city of Savannah. The university’s 4,800 students select majors from 26 undergraduate majors and five graduate programs in three colleges – Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Business Administration and Sciences and Technology – and the School of Teacher Education.

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