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## 1996 Researcher of the Year

Dr. Benjamin S. Lawson has effectively combined the teaching and research aspects of a professor's work. His career at Albany State College has included notable successes in both these areas, and his research and teaching have also involved him with advanced study and lecturing both in the United States and abroad. He does not consider the roles separate, and notes that "research, writing and publication not only affect one's ability to impart specific knowledge; a commitment to scholarship also communicates to students a vision of the significance of knowledge as an element of character, a reminder that what one does is more important than who one is."



His own commitment has resulted in his receiving five awards for summer study from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the School of Criticism and Theory as well as a Fulbright lecturing award to the University of Helsinki in Finland, which invited him to return for the Fall term of 1994, as the university's first professor-level lecturer in English-language literature. Earlier this year, Dr. Lawson served as Visiting Professor of American Literature at University College London, the oldest unit of the University of London. He belongs to several professional organizations and has presented many academic papers on American literature in the United States as well as in Finland and England.

Dr. Lawson has published a monograph in the Western Writers Series and articles and reviews in many books and journals, including the *South Dakota Review*, the *Southern Literary Journal*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, *Intertextuality in Literature and Film*, the *Liberian Studies Journal*, *American National Biography*, the *Garland Companion to American Nineteenth-Century Verse*, *Updating the Literary West*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Utopian Studies* and the *Journal of Southwest Georgia History*. *Rereading the Revolution*, a book about American Revolutionary War Novels, will be published by the Borgo Press in California within the next year.

## 1996 Teacher of the Year



Dr. Marva O. Banks is a professor of English. This honor is one bestowed by students; they elected Dr. Banks Teacher of the Year.

Dr. Banks teaches a wide range of courses both undergraduate and graduate levels and coordinates research activities for students in the department of English as well as for students in other departments. Under her guidance students have participated in 11 conferences since 1992.

A veteran educator, Dr. Banks began her career as a student teacher at Peabody High School in Alexandria, Louisiana. She continued her career in the public schools of Orleans and Lincoln Parishes in the Grambling State University Laboratory Schools. Her tenure in higher education began with her appointment to the English faculty at Grambling State University. She has held teaching and administrative positions at Louisiana Tech University, the State University of New York at Albany, Schenectady County Community College, and the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore before coming to Albany State College.

As a Fulbright Senior Scholar, Dr. Banks taught American Literature and African-American Literature to intermediate and final year students at Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, 1993-1994.

Dr. Banks has also taught in the state prison system of New York, Maryland, and Georgia. Dr. Banks believes that students must be challenged and that they must be guided toward achieving their goals. This process involves a partnership between teacher and students, a partnership which is viable only when the teacher and the students cooperate in identifying, pursuing, and achieving realistic goals. She also believes that students generally perform at a level consistent with what the teacher expects. If very little is expected of students, they typically perform minimally. If, however, teachers expect a higher level of performance, students generally perform to that expectation.

Dr. Banks's research has been published by John Hopkins University Press, The Oxford University Press, and the American Library Association.

Dr. Banks holds memberships in a number professional organizations including the American Studies Association, the Georgia Association of Teacher Education, the College Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Undergraduate Research, the Georgia Council of Teachers in English and the Middle Atlantic Writers Association.

Dr. Banks is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and has been featured in *Who's Who in America* and *Outstanding Young Women of America*. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Grambling State University in French and English and a Masters of Science degree from Louisiana Tech University in English Education. Dr. Banks earned a Ph.D. degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Communication and Rhetoric, the first African-American female (at RPI) to earn this degree.