Carnegie Names Samford’s Fournier Alabama Professor of the Year

Samford University geography professor Eric J. Fournier has been named the 2014 Alabama Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Fournier was recognized for his superb teaching skills at the U.S. Professors of the Year awards ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Thursday, Nov. 20.

The U.S. Professors of the Year program salutes the most outstanding undergraduate instructors in the country—those who excel in teaching and positively influence the lives and careers of students. The program is sponsored by Carnegie and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.

A Samford faculty member since 1997, Fournier served as chair of the geography department for 12 years. He was recently named director of Samford’s Center for Teaching, Learning and Scholarship (CTLS), a position that will allow him to continue in his teaching role.

“Geography is the perfect discipline for people interested in a little bit of everything,” Fournier says. He also believes the geographic approach is a perfect way to explore the world’s challenges. “The world is moving towards more cross-disciplinary approaches, but crossing and connecting disciplinary limits has always been a distinguishing feature of geography,” he said.

Fournier also has taught at the University of Georgia, where he earned his Ph.D. degree, and at Kennesaw State University and Emmanuel College. A native of Biddeford, Maine, he received his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University.

Fournier said his approaches to teaching have changed over the years.

“When I first started it was all about getting through the material, and for a class like Geography 101 where your topic is The World, there is an infinite amount of material and only 15 weeks of class,” he said.

“So I have gradually given up on ‘covering’ the materials and tried to focus more on what students were actually learning.”

In his role as director of the CTLS, Fournier will oversee initiatives to strengthen and expand Samford’s commitment to faculty development and teaching excellence.

“Samford places teaching at the center of its mission,” said Fournier, “and I am looking forward to working with our faculty and administration to create more opportunities to promote effective teaching and learning across the university.”
During his Samford tenure, Fournier has been recognized with awards from Samford’s Howard College of Arts and Sciences, the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). He serves currently as board chairman of NCGE.

Fournier serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* and the *Journal of Geography*.

“Eric Fournier's selection as the Alabama Carnegie Professor of the year confirms Samford's great tradition of outstanding faculty members committed to teaching,” said Samford provost J. Bradley Creed. “He is certainly deserving of this honor, and Samford is fortunate to have such a gifted and committed colleague like Eric as a member of our community. In addition to his remarkable skills in teaching, he is making a significant contribution to our university through his leadership of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship. Congratulations to Eric!”

Fournier is the 5th Samford faculty member to be named Alabama Professor of the Year.