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Faculty Grants

George Weygand

Much has been written in the past few years about the science gap in American education. International testing consistently places students from the United States at the bottom of the rankings behind our major economic competitors, Japan and Germany and even behind less developed countries such as South Korea. The problems associated with science education in the United States have served as a kind of wake up call to many teachers and administrators who are determined to reinvigorate interest and support for the study of science.

At the forefront of this process of reinvigoration is Bridgewater's George Weygand. George, who is chair of the Physics Department, recently received a \$50,000 grant from the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) to bring to the campus the most outstanding science teachers in the country. Working with the Association of Presidential Awardees in Science Education, George was able to have Bridgewater chosen as one of four sites nationally to host the science teachers. During this summer institute, the science teachers worked with a select group of thirty educators chosen by the NSTA and developed new ideas, strategies and programs to advance science education. George served as the coordinator of the program and ensured that the institute reached its goal of alerting science educators to the latest advances in the field.

Hosting summer science institutes is nothing new to George. Over the years George has coordinated ten National Science Foundation institutes which have brought over 600 science educators to Bridgewater. These institutes have been normally scheduled during the summer months with regular meetings on Saturdays during the school year. George works closely with members of the education faculty such as Professor Jack Jones who is responsible for teacher education in the sciences. George is also currently working with Earth Science colleague Bob Bou-

tilier to secure a National Science Foundation Award to continue their mission of enhancing the teaching of science at the elementary and secondary level. Both George and Bob feel that the areas of Earth Science and Physics are the science areas that exhibit the greatest weakness in our schools and thus require more teacher preparation. With the approval of the grant, George and Bob will offer a three year program of science education and continue the commitment of the college to strengthen the capabilities of the teachers in the region.

In talking to George Weygand about science education it becomes very clear that he is totally committed to, "making science enjoyable." George feels that if teachers do not enjoy science, then how can they motivate their students. At the same time, George is dismayed over the lack of resources that have been put into science education by our school systems and the noticeable "greying" of the classroom science teachers as younger educators have been unable to contribute their talents and energy in cash strapped schools.

Despite the problems in science education, George is not without hope. He recently co-chaired the National Science Teachers Convention in Boston and was impressed by the turnout and the commitment of the classroom teachers to strengthen curricula and press for more resources. Moreover, George is encouraged by the caliber of the science student that he sees coming out of our schools. At the number of science fairs that he attends, George is convinced that there has been no drop-off in talent or commitment by young scientists.

The encouraging signs of a revival of science education in the United States only make George work harder. George is now in his thirty-fourth year at Bridgewater State College. After receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard, George joined the faculty in 1958 and has been involved in science education ever since. For his years

of dedicated service, George was recently inducted into the prestigious Massachusetts Hall of Fame for science educators. As Physics Department chair he has seen the value of good science education since many Bridgewater graduates have gone on to pursue advanced degrees at MIT, Harvard and Caltech. With the continued flow of grant money coming into Bridgewater through the efforts of George Weygand and the building of the Old Colony Center for Technical Applications, it is a safe assumption that the college will be hosting summer institutes and teaching training programs for years to come. George says openly that he is invigorated by the challenge of advancing science education. With someone like George Weygand on their side, the science educators and the science students should begin to close the gap with the Japanese and the Germans very soon.



George Weygand