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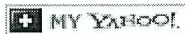
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Daley College's numbers man gets highest honor

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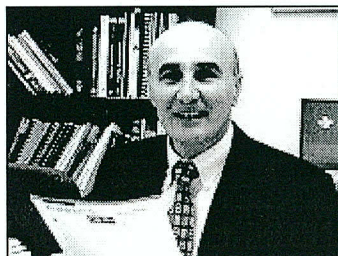
February 22, 2009

BY GUY TRIDGELL Staff writer

Richard J. Daley College professor Vali Siadat has joined the likes of colleagues at Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Chicago.

Siadat, a longtime math instructor at the community college in Chicago's Ashburn community, is the latest winner of the Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award for Distinguished Teaching of Mathematics.

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Vali Siadat teaches math at Daley College.
(Supplied photo)

The award, the Mathematical Association of America's highest honor, typically goes to the country's brightest and brainiest schools.

Siadat is the first winner from a two-year institution.

"Teaching at a community college is a big challenge with the diverse population we have here," said Siadat, a native of Iran. "Everyone comes from different backgrounds, different learning styles."

Siadat is noted in education circles for his development of the Keystone Mathematics Project.

The method of learning encourages teachers to abandon the lecture model in favor of an interactive approach with frequent quizzes and tests. Stronger students often help tutor weaker ones, providing instruction to struggling classmates while helping to reinforce their own knowledge of math.

"Everybody wins," Siadat said.

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He added that the skills picked up by his students transfer to other areas.

"We find people who do well in our classes see improvements in our reading tests," Siadat said. "Mathematics is a very precise discipline. Students will carry those skills to other subjects."

Siadat, 63, arrived at the college in 1974 after a stint as an electrical engineer in California. He since has earned two doctorates, one in pure mathematics, the other in mathematics education.

Siadat, the father of three grown daughters and a resident of Chicago's Lakeview community, estimates 10,000 students have passed through his classroom.

He said offers for teaching gigs at bigger schools with more prestige are not uncommon. But he has rejected all of them.

"I have been able to do a lot more here," Siadat said. "This is my contribution to society. I have had the privilege of teaching all of these young people."

The satisfaction he feels is bigger than any award.

"When you see your students graduate and move on to jobs or when they call you to tell you they feel the reward," he said. "It's better than any sum of money."

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