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## K-STATE CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST FINALIST FOR INSPIRE INTEGRITY AWARDS

MANHATTAN — A Kansas State University professor whose students' work has been viewed online by millions is a finalist for the Inspire Integrity Awards from the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.

Michael Wesch, assistant professor of anthropology at K-State, is one of 15 finalists for the awards, which recognize faculty who have had a significant impact on their students' lives and instilled a high degree of personal and academic integrity.

Undergraduate members of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, an honor society for high achieving freshmen and sophomores, nominate faculty members who inspire integrity through their classroom lectures, activities and curriculum. The nominees then write a brief essay on the concept of integrity and its meaning to them personally.

Competition is conducted at a regional level, with three finalists from each of the society's five regions selected to advance to the national competition. Wesch was among the finalists from the society's region four and receives a \$250 stipend for the regional honor. A national selection committee will choose the national winner and one runner-up in June. The national winner receives a \$3,000 personal stipend and \$2,500 for his or her university's general scholarship fund; the national runner-up will receive \$750.

"Integrity is not something one has or knows," Wesch said. "It is a practice and a constant struggle. It is not simply standing by one's principles. It is wrestling with them, questioning them, and reshaping them in the face of constant change. It is, quite simply, the most important and most difficult thing we do as human beings. And those that we recognize as 'living with integrity' are engaged in a constant, quiet and complicated inner struggle that inevitably manifests the most simple and admirable traits of humankind: empathy, intelligence and adaptability.

"We can't just tell our students what integrity is and expect them to 'have it.' We can't just model integrity and expect them to 'know it.' We have to build authentic learning environments where their own integrity can flourish so they can live and practice integrity as part of the learning process. I inspire integrity by building authentic learning environments that pose real and relevant problems to students that transcend the artificial game of grades and discipline," he said.

(more)

Wesch is a cultural anthropologist and media ecologist who explores the impacts of new media on human interaction. His short video "Web 2.0 ... The Machine is Us/ing Us" was released on YouTube in 2007 and has been viewed by several million people. The video received a Rave Award from Wired magazine and the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Media Praxis from the Media Ecology Association.

As a teacher, Wesch has earned multiple honors for his work with students and is active in developing innovative teaching techniques. For example, an assignment for Wesch's spring 2007 cultural anthropology class led to the students' creation of the video "A Vision of Students Today." The video has been viewed by millions and prompted others to respond with their own videos. In Wesch's digital ethnography class, students create their own videos to learn what attracts viewers to a video, what is the culture of the video world and how to tap into it.

Wesch earned a bachelor's in anthropology from K-State and a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Virginia.

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