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K-STATE'S WESCH AMONG FIRST FELLOWS OF NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TECHNOLOGY IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

MANHATTAN -- Michael Wesch has earned many accolades for his expertise and creativity in the use of digital technology to enhance student learning. He's received national professor of the year honors, been named an Emerging Explorer by National Geographic, and has been dubbed "the explainer" by Wired magazine.

Now the associate professor of cultural anthropology at Kansas State University can add a new title to his growing list of national honors: thought leader.

Wesch is among the three individuals specially invited to be the first Fellows of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education. The new fellowship program connects the institute and its members to selected thought leaders in higher education – thought leaders like Wesch.

Wesch knows well why creativity matters when it comes to student learning. He is internationally known for his work on the effects of new media on society and culture. His videos on culture, technology, education and information have been viewed by millions, translated into more than 15 languages and shown at international film festivals and major academic conferences around the world. His work includes such popular YouTube videos as "The Machine is Us/ing Us" and "A Vision of Students Today."

As a Fellow, Wesch will spend the next year helping his peers explore the big picture of the learning experience. He will discuss his views on how learning happens and why creative approaches to learning matter. He and the other Fellows will participate in two videoconference sessions during the year and attend the 2011 National Institute of Technology in Liberal Education summit.

"I'm looking forward to working with the institute and the other Fellows to expand our vision for 'literacy' in higher education," he said. "It is no longer enough to be able to read and write effectively in text only; we must expand our notion of literacy to include the ability to work effectively through multiple media forms, and to recognize how different media are shaping our society."

A new medium of communication emerges every time somebody creates a new Web application, Wesch said.

"A Flickr here, a Twitter there, and a new way of relating to others emerges," he said. "New types of conversation, exchange and collaboration are realized. Yet the promise of such developments is not without

disruption and peril. Familiar long-standing institutions, organizations and traditions disappear or transform beyond recognition."

While new media bring new possibilities for openness, transparency, engagement and participation, Wesch said they also bring new possibilities for surveillance, manipulation, distraction and control.

"The negative side of this ledger seems especially eminent in the face of widespread ignorance about the uses, misuses, power and sometimes unintended consequences of new media," he said. "If we as a global community do not quickly raise our digital literacy rates, we stand to lose much more than we gain from the promises of new media. I hope that my work with the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education will encourage colleges and universities across the nation to adopt higher standards for digital literacy, so that the next generation will be ready for the challenges that lie ahead."

Wesch has earned many honors for his work with new media, including a Rave Award from Wired magazine and the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Praxis in Media Ecology; and he was named one of National Geographic's 2009 Emerging Explorers. He also was named the 2008 Outstanding Doctoral and Research Universities Professor of the Year by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

A 1997 summa cum laude graduate of K-State in anthropology, Wesch earned a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Virginia. He joined K-State in 2004 and was promoted to associate professor in 2010.

The National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education helps liberal arts colleges and universities integrate inquiry, pedagogy and technology to enrich undergraduate education and strengthen the liberal arts tradition. More information on the institute is available at <http://www.nitle.org>.

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