



Friday, July 10, 2009

Another 'Step Up' with PLF Award

The School of Social Work's Mike Eichler received a President's Leadership Fund Award.

Story Highlights

- Helping high schoolers get a 'Step-Up'
- Consensus organizing and the law
- The President's Leadership Fund

Provost Nancy Marlin presents Mike Eichler with a plaque.

Page Tools

  Text Sizes  Print  **SHARE**  RSS

By **Libba Jackson-D'Ambrosi**

Mike Eichler, distinguished lecturer in the **School of Social Work**, is a **2009 recipient of The President's Leadership Fund Awards for Faculty and Staff Excellence**.

Each of the five honorees is given \$5,000 to reinvest into their work.

Eichler brought the Consensus Organizing Center to SDSU in 1999, to educate a new generation of grassroots community leaders.

"For social work to be effective it's practical to get people involved to help their own communities," Eichler said. "Too often that talent base is being ignored, and the resulting underemployment hurts society."

Helping high schoolers get a 'Step-Up'

The COC uses an eight-step "talent pipeline" starting with **Step-Up**, which brings high school juniors to campus to take an introductory course in social work. The goal is to encourage higher college enrollment from capable students in lower-income communities.

"The big advantage to SDSU is they're comfortable because there are people just like them. That makes them feel that they belong here," Eichler said.

Eichler is quick to add that he tells his Step-Up students college is not for everyone.

"I use a scarcity model," Eichler said. "Prepare, compete. The relationship has to be reciprocal. Each year, some fail because they don't meet standards."

Eichler wants more Step-Up courses, encouraging "any professor in any discipline" to teach a Step-Up class for high school students.

The eight steps in the model culminate with a master's of social work graduate returning to the community, to put education into action.

Consensus organizing and the law

Eichler and California Western School of Law have developed a course that integrates law and social work. This innovative course gives students field experience in the community.

In a new offshoot, Eichler and the Bar Association are designing a mentoring program for law students.

About the PLF

Each of the five recipients of the second annual PLF Award for Faculty and Staff Excellence is given \$5,000 to be reinvested into their important work for

the university.

Other PLF investments are funded twice a year. Learn how to become a PLF partner or apply for a PLF investment [here](#).

Story **President's Office, University Relations and Development, Faculty, Staff, Philanthropy, Research, Social Work, News, People**
Keywords: