



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **School of Continuing Education's Barbara Bennett Named 2018 Orange County Teacher of the Year by Orange County Department of Education**

ANAHEIM, CA – It was announced Tuesday, May 2, 2017 that North Orange County Community College District's (NOCCCD) School of Continuing Education faculty member Barbara Bennett was the community college teacher to be selected as the 2018 Orange County Teacher of the Year by Orange County Department of Education (OCDE). Bennett has taught in SCE's Disability Support Services (DSS) Program for 37 years; she currently teaches DSS courses in banking, consumer skills, computers, and reading. She was one of six winning teachers selected from 62 nominated by their public school districts and the county's community colleges.

"Barbara Bennett is a pioneer in educating adult students with disabilities and is a leader in her field," said SCE Provost Valentina Purtell. "Barbara wrote original curricula for her courses and has led hundreds of students through graduation from our programs into transition opportunities such as working, living independently, and going to college," continued Purtell.

According to OCDE, the Orange County Teachers of the Year (TOTY) program provides recognition for outstanding K-12 and community college teachers in Orange County. Each school district may nominate one to three teachers (depending on district size). Each community college may nominate one teacher per accredited college. Selected winners are honored with a "golden apple" award and will be recognized at the annual banquet, held this year on October 24, 2017 at the Disneyland Hotel by the premier sponsor, SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union.

"These educators have risen to the top," said OCDE Superintendent Al Mijares, who surprised Bennett with her golden apple trophy presentation on Tuesday in front of her students. SCE's leadership team and NOCCCD Chancellor Dr. Cheryl Marshall also joined in on the surprise visit. During the presentation, Bennett's money management class cheered for their teacher. One student, Edgar Uribe, 25, raised his hand and shared, "If it wasn't for Mrs. Bennett, I probably wouldn't be sitting here."

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“When interacting with her students, Barbara wears several hats. She is a teacher, a counselor, a mentor and a friend. She sets high expectations and, at the same time, meets students where they are and walks alongside them as they work toward reaching their goals,” said Purtell. “Barbara has also mentored several generations of new faculty. It’s difficult to imagine a more deserving candidate for this high honor.”

In her statement of philosophy included in her nomination packet, Bennett shares about her principles and expectations as a teacher:

*“Every day presents an opportunity to make a lasting improvement in the lives of my students. Sometimes the smallest triumph leads to immeasurable gains. I strive to provide my students with practical life skills that will help them to function independently. The rewards I’ve received from teaching are many: seeing students mature socially, complete challenging course work, gain valuable job skills, or even completing a class on the college credit side that no one thought possible. They’ve gained jobs, earned certificates, become proficient with life skills to live independently, they’ve learned how to ride a bus, use a computer, and participate as a member of the community. The mobility and confidence they achieve is vast and allows students to be successful. In addition to the inspiring accomplishments of my students, the thing I enjoy most is learning from my students. I love when they teach me – and that happens almost daily!”*

Bennett’s students provided letters of support in her nomination packet. One student, Trent, summed up her nomination best:

*“Barbara Bennett is a wonderful teacher because she shows how to teach us by explaining everything in a step-by-step process. I had three of Barbara’s classes and each of them helped me exceed into life. I think that Barbara should receive teacher of the year because she is the most hardworking teacher and she has dedicated her work for 30 years and has influenced so many students like myself to thrive in life. She has a wonderful heart and is super kind teacher I have ever had in coming to NOCCCD! I would nominate her for teacher of the year because everyone needs a wonderful person like her [in their life]!”*

Eligibility for the Orange County Teachers of the Year Program is limited to candidates who are finalists in their district competitions and meet all of the following requirements:

1. Fully credentialed teacher for a minimum of **eight years**
2. Must have a minimum of eight years of credentialed teaching experience in the classroom
3. Currently assigned to teach students at least .5 FTE
4. Assigned to teach students for the 2017/18 school year
5. Not previously nominated as an Orange County Teacher of the Year

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See below for more information and to view photos:

- To read the [Orange County Register](http://www.oregister.com/2017/05/02/6-orange-county-teachers-get-big-surprise-theyre-named-the-best/) article on the OC Teacher of the Year Awards, click here:  
<http://www.oregister.com/2017/05/02/6-orange-county-teachers-get-big-surprise-theyre-named-the-best/>
- To view photos of Bennett receiving her award, click here:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nocccd-sce/albums/72157681535386030>
- To view the OCDE video of the surprise award visits, click here:  
[http://video.dailynews.com/?ndn.trackingGroup=92461&ndn.siteSection=inform\\_wordpress\\_plugin&ndn.videoId=32351228](http://video.dailynews.com/?ndn.trackingGroup=92461&ndn.siteSection=inform_wordpress_plugin&ndn.videoId=32351228)

**SCE Background**

A member of NOCCCD, which also includes Cypress College and Fullerton College, the School of Continuing Education (SCE) has been cultivating change for more than 40 years with educational programs and services from high school completion, English-language acquisition, career technical education training, and self-development courses. SCE serves 30,000 students annually, ranging from preschoolers to seniors, at three Center locations in Anaheim, Cypress, and Wilshire (Fullerton) as well as approximately 150 off-campus locations. Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and part of the California Community College System, all SCE courses are approved by the State of California. NOCCCD's School of Continuing Education – **Change. Cultivated.**

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