

## Austin Peay State University

Austin Peay State University was proud to host the 126<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Tennessee Academy of Science on November 19, 2016. Conference attendees met in the Sundquist Science Center, which became one of the South's premier science teaching facilities when it opened in 2002. Undergraduate students as well as faculty presented research in oral and poster sessions at the well-attended meeting.

Austin Peay is a four-year public, masters level university offering more than 56 majors and 63 different concentrations. It is located in Clarksville, Tennessee and is named in honor of former Tennessee governor Austin Peay, who served the state

from 1923 until his death in 1927. From its humble beginnings as Austin Peay Normal School, the University has grown to well over 10,000 students. APSU has expanded to offer programming at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, as well as a Springfield, Tennessee campus (Highland Crest); it maintains a growing online presence. It is home to six colleges, including the College of Science & Mathematics. The University continues to grow and change; in 2017 alone it opened a new Art & Design building and will offer its first engineering degree. For more information regarding APSU, please visit the university website, [apsu.edu](http://apsu.edu).

## Tennessee Academy of Science Distinguished Science Teacher Award 2016

The 2016 recipient of the Distinguished Secondary Science Teaching Award, which is sponsored by the Tennessee Academy of Science, is **Mr. Barry Farris**. Mr. Farris earned a B.A. in Education from Lipscomb University, and then both M.S. and D.A. degrees in Chemistry from MTSU, where he completed research in synthetic organometallic chemistry and guided-learning activities in chemistry labs, respectively. He is currently in his 37<sup>th</sup> year of teaching Chemistry, Physics and Calculus at Columbia Academy in Maury County, Tennessee. He has been very active in service activities benefitting secondary science education, including serving as Treasurer for the Tennessee Science Teachers Association since 2001. Among his Honors, he received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 2001, and in 2012 he was named the National Christian School Association Teacher of the Year. Dr. Farris considers himself a constructivist, and crafts his lessons to help students use scientific information to construct their own understanding of the world around them. He says that he wants his students to know he cares about them as a person, not just

that they are responsible for knowing the material he presents. In particular he strives to give students the skill of disassembling complex material into connections of simpler problems that they have confidence in. This, he feels, is essential for college success, particularly in the sciences. Like many teachers, Dr. Farris wants his students to "reach their full potential". Barry put that sentiment into action when a bright student expressed interest in a computational research project that sought to use the laws of probability to game his favorite computer game. Even though this was far outside of his comfort zone, Barry encouraged the research and helped find external advice when needed. The student was only the second from Columbia Academy to present at the Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Junior Academy of Science, and he was an award winner. The student had a huge head-start towards the Computer Science degree that he is now pursuing at Rensselaer Polytechnic University. Please join me in recognizing Dr. Barry Farris as the 2016 Distinguished Secondary Science Teaching Award recipient!