Students name van Gijsse ‘Teacher of the Year,’ again

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Valley City State University Associate Professor Hilde van Gijsel has once again been named the “Teacher of the Year” by the VCSU Student Senate.

The annual award is given to professors who demonstrate dedication to students with innovative teaching methods and continued professional development.

While teaching in the science department, Van Gijsel is also taking classes in the university’s Masters of Education program with an emphasis on technology education. She said spending time as a student helps make her a better teacher.

“It definitely makes it easier to relate to the students. When I’m frustrated as a student, I become more aware of my own teaching practices, because if I’m frustrated as a student, I’m like ‘okay, so if I don’t do that with my students, they might be frustrated too,’” Van Gijsel said.

So how does a native of the Netherlands become a professor in Valley City?

“They offered me a job; that’s the short story,” she said.

Van Gijsel joined the university in August of 2002, and quickly became very popular with students, receiving her first “Teacher of the Year” award in 2003.

Prior to joining the staff at VCSU she worked for 11 years in toxicology research at the Leiden University, the Netherlands’ oldest university, established in 1575, and from 1999 to 2002 she worked at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md.

When she applied for the job at VCSU, she said she liked what she saw: A small university that was predominantly a school for teachers.
Now she is responsible for the Health Science major and the new Medical Laboratory Science Major, runs the toxicology lab and helped establish VCSU’s involvement in the Dakota Nursing Program.

She is also advisor to the VCSU Pre-Professional Club which helps students interested in careers in the medical field, graduate school, law or other professional jobs.

“What all of these things have in common is that they require a pretty extensive application process and a lot of them require admissions tests. In a lot of these cases it’s not so much even what you know but how to take the test. So the club is really there to help students go through that process and create the best application that they can,” Van Gijssel said.