Joel Toppen wins H.O.P.E. Award

A Hope graduate has received this year’s H.O.P.E. Award.

Dr. Joel Toppen ’91, an assistant professor of political science, was presented the 40th annual “Hope Outstanding Professor Educator” (H.O.P.E.) Award by the graduating Class of 2004. He was named the recipient during the college’s Commencement ceremony, held at Zeeland East High School on Sunday, May 2, at 3 p.m.

The award, first given in 1965, is presented by the graduating class to the professor who they feel epitomizes the best qualities of the Hope College educator.

Dr. Toppen began teaching at the college in the fall of 1996 as a visiting instructor. He became a visiting assistant professor in 1999, and was appointed assistant professor of political science in 2002.

During the 2003-04 school year he taught courses on national government topics and the methodology of political science research, as well as the course through which Hope students organize and run the college’s Model United Nations, in which more than 900 high school students participate annually.

Dr. Toppen serves as faculty advisor for student organizations including the Hope Democrats, the Ultimate Frisbee Club, the Cosmopolitan Fraternity and the college’s chapter of Amnesty International.

He has established an internship program in Johannesburg, South Africa, with the Food Programming Management Group of World Vision International, an initiative that debuted with two Hope students this spring. He will be teaching a new course on global poverty in the spring.

In the summer of 2003, he presented the paper “Ideology, Science, and Bush’s Millennium Challenge Account” during the 19th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, held in Durban, South Africa. He involves Hope students in his research work.

His scholarship has appeared in the journal Peace and Change and in Christian Scholar’s Review.

He graduated from Hope with a major in political science. He completed his master’s degree in political science at Purdue University in 1993, and his doctorate at Purdue in 1998. His dissertation examined the influence of democratic liberalism on U.S. foreign policy.

Dr. Toppen lives in Grand Haven, where he serves on the city’s Planning Commission. He is a member of the board of the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance. His community service has also included giving multiple presentations to area groups concerning political science topics, particularly related to foreign policy.

He and his wife, Heather Backer ’91 Toppen, have two young children at home.