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Administration Advisory Committee, and he also serves on multiple other national cybersecurity and tax advisory committees – all with the aim of preserving the integrity, security ...

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Outside of a global pandemic, one of the greatest threats to stability in the modern world is cyber crime. Few people in our region are more involved in fighting off

digital attacks and hackers than Jared Ballew.

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integrity, security and confidentiality of electronic tax returns.

Based on his work and accomplishments, Ballew has been named the fourth annual winner of Southwestern Community College's Distinguished Alumni Award.

"The work that Jared does to stay several steps ahead of cybercriminals is invaluable to us all. When you consider the consequences of someone's tax records falling into the wrong hands, you have to be thankful for people like Jared," said Dr. Don Tomas, Southwestern Community College President. "His career is a clear example of what a motivated, dedicated individual can accomplish with a degree from SCC. We are extremely proud of Jared, and he is certainly deserving of this award."

After graduating from SCC, Ballew earned bachelor's and master's degrees from East Carolina University. He started working for Drake Software in 2003 and continued his employment there throughout his higher education journey.

When SCC officials arrived at Drake's headquarters to present the award, several dozen of Ballew's colleagues threw a surprise party to celebrate the honor.

"We're very proud of Jared and his accomplishments as a member of the Drake family," said James Stork, Drake's Vice President of Education, Marketing and Government Relations. "I've had the opportunity to watch him from a brand new employee, to the accomplished, well-respected industry professional he has become. To see him get this award, thinking about where he's come from, what he's accomplished both for Drake and the tax industry, and what we expect him to accomplish going forward makes all of us very proud. Obviously, SCC is a very important part of his journey to career success."

Dr. Mark Ellison, SCC's Director of Enrollment Management, has chaired the award's selection committee since its inception and said this year's field of nominees was the most-crowded yet.

“Not only did we have the most nominations we’ve ever received, but it was also the

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Technologies Program Coordinator Kirk Stephens (now retired).

“Southwestern’s impact isn’t just in Western North Carolina,” Ballew said. “SCC’s impact is the entire world. I think community college is the best choice for all individuals who are looking to make their futures better. It’s a springboard for your path forward.”

Previous winners of the Distinguished Alumni award have been EMS graduate Kyle Dowling (2019), Outdoor Leadership graduate Dustin Wilson (2020) and National Park Service – Seasonal Law Enforcement Training graduate John Mattox (2021).

“This award is a wonderful way to shine a spotlight on the impressive accomplishments of our graduates,” said Brett Woods, Director of the SCC Foundation. “When you see the way they are serving our communities, it helps you realize just how impressive of an impact Southwestern is having in the world today.”

Advisory

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