Otis Beard was named 2002 recipient of the David L. Underwood Memorial Lecture Award—an award that honors outstanding staff members for their dedication to teaching and students.

Excerpted from remarks by Herb Niemeyer, 4/17/2002:

It is national library week. On this April day the signs of a rebirth of a new Spring revitalize us and prompt us to survey the life blossoming all around us. In college we have the opportunities for new beginnings several times throughout the year and each new semester gives us that jump-start of hope to try again.

We come to the library to announce the Underwood award winner because in our secular world this is a special place that holds the memories and gives us access to ideas for a better world.

David Underwood was Dean of Instruction from July of 1967 until his death in 1975. The library collection was named for him and the lecture established by Florissant Valley to honor his life and to perpetuate the ideals he has come to symbolize. Those ideals are a commitment to excellence, a genuine concern for students, faculty, staff and all of education.

The 2002 David L. Underwood Lecturer is Otis Beard. Otis was born a few short months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and was raised in the St. Louis area. The second of five children, Professor Beard was educated in the St. Louis public schools. Otis enjoyed participating in sports and loved to read. "The library was one of my favorite haunts." Upon graduation from high school he served in active duty in the Navy.

When Otis was discharged from the military he enrolled in college as a part-time student at SLCC. He received both graduate and undergraduate degrees from SIU-E. Like many of our students he attended classes part-time. Before being employed at FV, Otis taught several years at SIU-E and then at UMSL. A specialist in developmental education, reading in particular, Otis believes deeply that learning and laughter are not
mutually exclusive entities. He believes they should not meet at random but should converge frequently in and outside the classroom.

Otis was active with kids as a track coach. He loves to cook. You’ll often see him riding his bike in Forest Park. Otis has two children, Bostic and Bonji, and recently received word that he is a grandfather. Otis and his wife Cynthia have recently celebrated their first anniversary.