The Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award

seeks out and honors teachers whose way of life uniquely inspires the full potential of each student.

This award is given to a Davidson College faculty member judged by his or her peers to display an exemplary love of teaching.

Cole Barton
Sunday, May 16, 1999

This recipient of the Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award is acclaimed for his ability to abstract concepts in such a way that students of every level are able to understand them. His students enjoy classes on even the most difficult subjects because he presents clear analogies that relate course topics to their personal experiences. He does not merely convey facts to his students, however. Instead, he treats them as knowledgeable collaborators in the learning process and, by so doing, he creates an atmosphere of scholarship and independent thought. He also brings the results of his own investigations into the classroom, thereby enabling students to experience first-hand excitement and challenge of research in his field. One alumna noted that he touches students on all levels. “He fills their heads with knowledge, their hearts with a passion to learn, and their souls with a confidence in their own abilities to accomplish anything.” Another observer wrote that in this professor’s classes, “uninterested students become inspired, and good students become great.”

This professor is also renowned for his genuine interest in his students and for his availability outside of class. It is not unusual for him to meet a student for an early cup of coffee and a bagel to discuss a problem set, to take a student out to lunch and a pep talk before an honors thesis defense, to work late at night and on weekends writing letters of recommendation, or to spend hour upon hour counseling alumni as well as current students about academic matters, career decisions, and life in general. One student wrote that he “took the time and energy to get to know me as a person...and that included an interest in my family, my goals, my strengths, my vulnerabilities, and most importantly, my growth as an individual.” Added another, “he was never too busy to listen to my problems or my hopes and dreams.”

Described as being “cheerful, witty, selfless, down-to-earth, sensitive, honest, determined, and an all-around good guy,” this professor exhibits a contagious enthusiasm for life, fly-fishing, Texas music, and the practical application of statistics to the understanding of human behavior. The recipient of the 1999 Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award is Professor Cole Barton.

(Written by Professor Bill Mahony)