Today’s honoree “instills an incessant thirst for knowledge,” “teaches with an open mind,” and understands intuitively that “students’ voices and opinions matter.” If you want to teach equally well, simply follow these five basic steps:

*First, love what you do.* “I have never had a professor who was [so] excited about a class,” one nominator wrote. Another marveled: “[None] of the students in my class brought a love [of the subject] to the first meeting, but . . . we all took a love of [it] away from the last meeting. This was due entirely, 100%, to [this professor’s] enthusiasm.”

*Second, inspire excellence by maintaining high standards.* More than one nominator recalled the transformative effect of a “C” from this professor. For years after graduating, one alumna kept this professor’s hand-written comments from a “C” paper right at her desk: “The words . . . held great power,” she explained, “for somehow they were able to get through to a notorious procrastinator, and convince her that” she could do better. Another ex-student observed: “All good teachers can cultivate [their] . . . brightest students, but it takes someone who truly loves the craft of teaching to recognize promise in an average student, like I was, and to take the time to encourage that student to grow.”

*Third, teach the whole student.* Cultivate in each student not just intelligence and academic skills, but also leadership and personal growth. “Every class I took with [this professor],” one nominator testified, “develop[ed] me . . . as a [student], [and] as a person. . . . I genuinely believe that [this mentor’s] teaching helped me develop into the well-rounded young woman I am today.”

*Fourth, don’t confine teaching within classroom walls.* Former students fondly recall how boundless this professor’s dedication to them was: how she met them in the Union, sponsored their organizations, attended their athletic events, and invited them to dinner. “She
took time to get to know [us] in a way . . . very few professors do,” one recalled. Another’s most cherished memories occurred off campus: “sitting on her porch, sipping lemonade,” and discussing life. A student who struggled at Davidson credits this professor’s personal encouragement: “At one particularly bad time . . . she literally took me home . . . put me . . . in her guest room, gave me the latest Joyce Carol Oates novel to read, made me a peanut-butter and banana sandwich, and provided . . . nurturing that far exceeds anyone’s expectation of the teacher-student relationship.”

Fifth, and finally, after inspiring students at Davidson, keep inspiring them—for the rest of their lives. One nominator—now a teacher—still “look[s] to [her pedagogical] example.” Another—now a writer—credits her with “[inspiring me] to put writing at the center of my life. . . . She’s passed books to me [and] shared ideas about her own writing. . . . I’ve sent her copies of [all my manuscripts] . . . before publication. . . . [She] has guided me in so many ways, always lovingly. I am sure there were plenty of occasions when she had [no time] to sit with a brooding, half-crazy, wanna-be writer, but she did. She always did. And . . . [a]lthough I do not see her as often as I would like, she remains one of the most important people in my life.”

For inspiring students with your passion for literature and writing; for your devotion to teaching the whole student, with integrity; we bestow the 2010 Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award upon you, Professor Elizabeth Mills.