JOHN GILL HOLLAND

Caring, personal, patient, eclectic, and unfailing: These are some of the words students use to describe the second recipient of this year's Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award. This professor's love of language inspires students whether they are composing a poem, drafting a short story or improving their writing skills. Admired and respected for the ability to bring literature to life, he is also cherished as a friend by students and alumni. They describe him as an attentive counselor, one who will drop everything to listen to a problem before offering advice. One student notes that this professor, "... had mentored me through my mother's death, struggled with me through the disentangling of the finer points of my convoluted writing style, guided me through the maze of graduate school, and commiserated with me over the trials and tribulations of learning ..." His classes, noted for their challenging yet joyous style, often begin with the emphatic, "How are you today, students?"

Known for his voracious appetite for reading, he is especially known for encouraging students to emulate his example. He invites all of his students to transcend the limiting boundaries of the familiar – the safe and comfortable thought – in order to learn something new. One student says, "He values the view of every student and does not undermine a student's opinion even if it is different from his own. In this way, he builds self-esteem and invites one to pursue knowledge further ..." Even when a student's performance is not up to par, he acknowledges strengths as he gently nudges him or her to push a little harder, do a little better.

This teacher's commitment to his students does not end in the classroom. His office, his table in the E. H. Little Library and his home are resources centers for any student who needs academic guidance, but they are also safe havens for those who need a nod of encouragement or a listening ear. When he is not at work as a teacher-scholar, he can usually be found as some student event. Following the fortunes of Davidson's wrestling team is one of his particular passions: Hovering at the edge of the wrestling mat, shouting encouragement and snapping pictures, reliving perhaps some moment of his own college-wrestling days. No wonder that so many students see in him a person who supports them, who affirms their vitality, and who believes in them and their causes.

A native of Mr. Jefferson's state, a proud son of Washington and Lee, and an admirer of it's namesake-president Robert E. Lee, this man is a demanding teacher, an empathetic counselor, and a warm human being.

We congratulate John Gill Holland and name him recipient of the Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award.