It’s all about the questions. How can we know that your hypothesis might be correct, asks this professor. Better ask some questions. And questions come and come and come: questions about other classes, about students’ plans for the upcoming break, about life in the dorms; then about students’ troubles with the assignment, with the research project, with the challenging work the class demands. One student remembers how this professor helped her figure out a strategy for some difficult homework for another course: This professor “sat with me and explained the topic just enough so that I would be able to complete the problem on my own. [Then] I had to explain the answers back . . . to make sure I understood everything.” There are questions about research design: What if you had set up the experiment in another way?
How did you control for natural variance? Was it double-blind? Questions about the problem set at hand, the research goals, the experimental design. And her devastatingly perceptive questions, prefaced always with a modest rhetorical gesture: “This might be a silly question, but. . . .” followed by something probing right to the heart of the matter.

It’s all about the talk. This teacher is devoted to all her students, always supportive, always happy to listen. Office hours are for caring about students in every way. “There were many times at Davidson when I found myself in her office for solace during difficult times. She did not always wait for me to come to her, [but would] check up on me even when things were wonderful,” remembers one graduate, now five years out. “She came to every one of my dance concerts, knew what kind of books I liked and recommended more, [and] spent countless hours talking with me about things that were important to me.”
Students repeatedly comment on her patience, her commitment, her guidance, “her unmatched expertise.” They talk about long-term support they get from her, even years later. Students come to her for advice about jobs, school, even relationships. One colleague mentions that this professor is “one of the most intuitive people I know, capable of picking up the slightest hint of unease, stress, or sadness in someone’s face. And she’s always right on target. She offers support, but does not horn in. … She maintains a healthy balance between supporting and mentoring her students, while encouraging them to be self-reliant.”

“When I felt homesick in graduate school,” remembers one student, this professor offered instant words of support: “Take care of yourself, Kiddo. I’m so proud of you for doing something outside your comfort zone. Email or call when you need to!”

It’s all about the research. This teacher is a driven and successful researcher as well, a nationally recognized fellow in
her field, frequently cited by her peers in professional journals. Her drive to know more, to create knowledge about the mechanisms and function of the human brain, is infectious. In lecture, students report, she will “come across a psychological paradigm and experimental result and marvel at it, emphasizing out loud, ‘How cool is this!!’ ” And on a promising piece of student work she writes in her quick shorthand: “Good work! I’d be more than happy to talk w/ you re research – let’s set up a time.” Those meetings bear fruit. In published experimental work on the psychology of aging, memory, social relations, and cognition, this scholar regularly collaborates with students, who more often than not end up with first-author credit for articles. This scholar is a teacher who possesses immense generosity of spirit, seemingly endless time, and the magical ability to inspire and cultivate great achievements from all her students.
It’s all about the teaching: in the lecture hall, in office hours, around the dinner table, over email, at conferences and poster sessions, from the very first day of class to years beyond graduation.

For your shining example that defines what it means to be a mentor, for your selfless dedication to your students, for your support of undergraduate research, for your commitment of heart, soul, and mind to the liberal arts at Davidson College, we present the 2007 Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award to you, Professor Kristi Multhaup.