Hunter-Hamilton Tribute to Malcolm Campbell

A teacher in the truest form, whose love for knowledge is contagious, whose commitment to truth is affecting, and whose deep love and dedication to Davidson College has become this professor’s signature, along with a profound “passion for edification.” The great teacher we recognize today not only obtains extraordinary results from students without asking, but also, as one nominator comments mentors students to “expect greatness from themselves.”

In the voice of a student, “I have not encountered another Professor with such a profound sense of balance, expectation, generosity, justice, respect, patience, and genuine curiosity.”

Beyond his open door, students perceive his strong and genuine desire to learn far more than a student’s name: “He [is one of those unique Professors] who “discovers our stories, passions, strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, and concerns.”

Students appreciate his wisdom and compassion during difficult times. He motivates their self reliance, asking them to contemplate steps they could take to solve problems. He is respected as a unique presence in their intellectual and personal lives who always listens, gives advice, challenges, inspires, and shares with them what it means to love teaching, learning, and to serve whole heartedly.

Posing scientific and ethical questions throughout the year, with an impeccable ability to guide, he pushes students to present their research at undergraduate research conferences state-wide and nationally. One of his students expresses: “For me, that motivation to be thorough, [and] to continuously put forth an incredible effort, is a definitive sign of a talented professor.”
A former student remarks: “One of his teaching objectives is to empower individuals, melting down feelings of intimidation, developing a greater esteem for the students’ intellectual capabilities...” followed by the observations that: “He has the ability to turn frustrations into moments of learning, and helps to put failures into perspective, [a continuous practice] which is important in the lab when many experiments do not give their expected outcome.”

Another student observes, “His patience has enabled me to work through many of my difficulties and has enabled me to be a productive member of the lab.... We spend hours designing, performing, and analyzing innovative ... experiments.”

For him, the Laboratory is an unconventional classroom where he develops cutting-edge pedagogical approaches, raising the level of college science instruction at Davidson College to the national level.

His inspirational nature touches Davidson Students during their college experience and beyond: “His use of primary literature in instruction taught me to read scientific journal articles and understand the broader nature of research. These tangible, practical skills have been incredibly important in my development and fluidity as a young scientist.” “Without his encouragement in my scientific abilities, I don’t think I would have reached my full potential to be where I am today--- at the end of my PHD.”

He is highly respected for his unique pedagogical skills, for the compassion and diligence with which he responds to students’ hesitancy, shyness, indecision, and ambivalence, for his sincere appreciation for a diversity of abilities, and for his conviction that differences strengthen a group or a community.
As some students have noted: “In a quiet but profound way, he has fought to expand educational equality to those individuals underrepresented in the sciences through his Genome Consortium for Active Teaching (GCAT) organization…. “By exposing minority students to the latest in microarray technology more students have the opportunity to be empowered educationally and personally regardless of their background.”

The American Society of Cell Biology selected him for the Bruce Alberts Award for Excellence in Science Education, and his enthusiasm for teaching Synthetic Biology allowed Davidson in 2005 to be the first small liberal arts school to be involved in the annual iGEM friendly competition held at M.I.T.

A Davidson graduate, a first–rate teacher and scholar, an exemplary Professor among Davidson’s outstanding faculty, and a great pedagogical influence on the national stage of liberal arts science education, today we recognize you, Dr. Malcolm Campbell, with the 2008 Hunter Hamilton Love for Teaching Award.