**Professor Magdalena Maiz-Pena**

Described in one nominating letter as “the most patient human being I know,” the professor we honor today challenges Davidson students to think for themselves while also inviting them to share with her not just their tests and papers but their fears and desires as well. Because she knows their strengths and their struggles, she can stimulate students to set and achieve goals that seemed beyond their abilities even a few minutes before they leave her office. By her passionate and outspoken commitment to serving her students and her community, she instructs us all in the value of service to Davidson and the world beyond.

This professor teaches with legendary cheerfulness not only in her classroom but also at Vail Commons, from the audience of the campus lectures she attends, at her home, and occasionally even at Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream parlor. As a former student puts it, her classroom, no matter its location, is merely “the vehicle for communicating with us, nurturing our young minds, teaching us tolerance and leadership, opening us up for new experiences, and inspiring new ideas.”
Students who pass through her classes on the way to completing their foreign language requirement do not feel that they are merely being taught competence. Instead, they feel cherished, even enchanted. A ’96 graduate writes: “The potency of her magic was such that I believed I was her personal project, but over the years I realized that every student became her project.”

This professor’s gift for fostering self-esteem while also fueling a desire for self-improvement does not require the passage of time to be noticed. A current student writes: “I am grateful that she challenges me, but my profound respect for her comes from her knowing when not to push.” Because this professor combines such deep knowledge of her students with openly expressed passion for her subject, her students seem to learn Spanish out of a sense of personal rather than academic obligation: “Everyone wanted to do well and not let her down” remembers a student who had not exactly looked forward to learning Spanish.

Her classes often include a service component that prepares our students for an informed and often passionately committed consideration of the legal, political, social and economic factors facing the Latino community in the world today. Those who
graduate and move far beyond this country often receive supportive e-mails from this professor and in turn feel what one student calls the sensation that “I am not making this journey alone.” Another student sent in a picture of herself at the moment of receiving a graduation hug from this professor. The accompanying letter concludes with a moving tribute: “I will never forget my advisor. She was an essential part of my Davidson experience, and I would not have made it to graduation without her encouragement…. I will always love and admire her for everything she has done for me.

For exemplifying the many innovative ways a foreign language classroom can extend itself into communities needing service, for helping “establish and maintain a spirit of solidarity among students and faculty of Latino or Hispanic background, “ and for the voice that rings with clear compassion and enthusiastic encouragement in the ears of students long after they graduate, Davidson College honors Señora, Associate Professor Magdalena Maiz-Peña, with the 2006 Hunter Hamilton Love of Teaching Award.

[citation Z. Kuzmanovich]