Jacques Barzun, the sage Dean of Columbia University, once said, “Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition.” Happily, that statement does not hold true in the slightest for the many alumni and current students who hold this Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award recipient in such high regard. An alumna perhaps summed it best, writing that “[This professor] possesses an array of talents: he is a gifted professor, an amateur comedian, and an enthusiastic activist. He is also an attentive friend.” Another graduate confided, “As a teacher myself, I can appreciate, now more than ever, the time and energy that [this professor] devotes to his students. I never questioned that we, his students, were his number one priority. He has patience [as] I only wish I could have...[He] was happy to explain concepts over and over again until they finally crystallized in my mind.”

Harvard’s John Kenneth Galbraith noted of his subject of expertise: “On few topics is an American audience so practiced in turning off its ears and minds. And...none can say that the response is ill-advised.” Although some American minds may be switched off, the minds of countless students who have passed through this professor’s classes, and even more who have progressed through the seemingly endless lines outside his office door, have on the contrary been awakened and tuned into his field. A non-major alum who took his intro course realized, “[He] breathes life into what can often appear dry and unappetizing.”

No student ever found those patient repetitions boring. Not when this professor used such disarmingly practical approaches to clarifying complex matters for his students as: “economic scarcity [means] eating bologna with olives in graduate school,” or “diminishing marginal benefit [means] the eleventh chocolate-chip cookie didn’t taste as good as the second one!”

Despite the cookie analogy, his courses are no cup cakes. Another former student wrote, “[He] believed in you and expected the best from you. He was not an easy professor; in fact, he was quite demanding. But, his attention inspired all of us, male or female, ... major or literature expert. His passion for the subject matter contaminated each one of us.” And he asked no more of his students than he asked of himself. One student writes, “We called him ‘Complete Pete,’ for his thoroughness and his commitment to helping his students understand.” And another: “[He] knew our foibles and our strengths, our interests and our weaknesses. Never did I feel as if I were just another student. He made the effort for each and every one of us.” Students also know that he is “Complete” in the sense that the problem set had better be done, or a somewhat long-winded colleague knows that the blackboard better be cleared for action at least 5 minutes before this professor’s next class.
love of teaching Award Professor Peter Neal Hess. nuirured the potential of so many, and names as recipient of the 2001 Hunter-Hamilton

Davidson College is proud to honor this teacher who has believed in and hae

realized my full potential. in me as a shy and unconfident freshman, and it was only through his belief in me that I

that you, EVEN YOU, can learn economics. An alumnus recalls, "He recognized talent

Most of all, this professor is a true idealist. For as his students attest, he believes