Socrates tells us he was a kind of midwife, helping others bring to life the beauty and truth of their souls. The teacher we honor today masterfully guides students to discover and cultivate their own expertise, a teacher who gives, as one alumnus writes, “even the most timid students the voice they deserved while maintaining a constant interchange of ideas and opinions.” An alumnus writes that his first class with this professor “was a first taste of everything Davidson would come to represent to me: a place where professors engaged with their students, knew their names, actually explored ideas rather than simply distributing them to classrooms full of empty vessels.”

Time and again, students call their experience with this professor “life changing.” An alumna writes that he “changed my
ideas about reading and writing criticism in a radical way.” He has, in the words of one student, “the uncanny ability to make literature accessible and thrilling without diluting the challenges of the text.” Students laud what one called his “incessant encouragement, positive demeanor, excellent scholarship, tough requirements, and considerable humor and creativity.”

His classes transform students through compassionate challenge and what one alumnus calls his “contagious enthusiasm.” Another student writes that this professor “respected our raw skills and yet acknowledged the possibilities for greater work from each of us. …he encouraged us—that is, he gave us courage. …one of [his] greatest gifts to me is this courage to trust my own ideas.” Yet another adds, “In him I found a professor whose love for simply being in the classroom was equaled only by the ease with which he elicited some of the finest work I ever saw come out of my peers or myself.” He is a person
who gives much, of his time, of the breadth and depth of his learning, of his profound humanity. The “one thing he wouldn’t do,” writes one alumna, “is give us the answers.” The result, as one student writes, is that “I am undoubtedly a more thorough thinker, a better writer, and a livelier student as a result of my time in [his]… classes.”

His quiet yet radiant energy animates those around him. “The sense of camaraderie he fostered among students,” writes another alumna, created an intellectual community from which members emerged “changed as students and as individuals.” Armed with the axiom, “No candy is too cheap for my students,” he has been known, as an alumnus writes, to contrive “a rough economy of Smarties packets as a way of managing the flow in a discussion.” Another adds that “his sometimes goofy techniques never failed, at the very least, to elicit the laughter often required to get students talking about difficult issues.”
The support our honoree offers students does not stop with the conferral of the diploma. An alumna writes, “I graduated from Davidson five years ago, and I know that I can email [him] at any time with any number of obscure questions, and he will write back offering his help and very often asking those great questions of his that help me find the right answers.” The judicious question, the hallmark of a creative and attentive mind, makes students, as one remarked, “push their ideas beyond the superficial.”

His ingenious teaching style inspires not only students, but his colleagues as well, for whom he is, as one writes, “my most valued source of ideas and advice.” Another adds, “I learned enormously from him, about classroom technique, and about the substance of the Humanities curriculum… the time I spent in the classroom with [him] was quite simply the most enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience I have ever had.” He is a
professor who invites such superlatives, inspiring a student to call their all-day reading of *Paradise Lost* as “one of the most important experiences with literature I have ever had.”

One student speaks for many when she writes that his “enthusiasm as a teacher, guidance as an adviser, and counsel as a friend have made him a quintessential part of my experience at Davidson.” For all this and more, we honor you, Professor Randall Ingram, with the 2007 Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award.