“Challenging,” “passionate,” “approachable,” and “patient” describe a Davidson professor we honor today. This stimulating teacher encourages students to be more than they imagined they could be. As one student wrote, this professor “consistently stretched us to places that, without his help, we could not have envisioned.” Those in his classroom mention not only his high expectations but also their desire to perform well because superior work is this teacher’s norm.

This professor builds self-esteem and self-reliance in every student. He believes that everyone has something important to contribute. One student noted that he “never gave up on me and always expressed faith in my abilities.” He is “a professor who is interested in students almost more than in himself,” articulated another. Encouraging talented and struggling students alike, this teacher respects everyone’s opinion. As one alumnus wrote, “I truly believe [that this professor] knows me as person and not just as a student.” He creates a friendly, supportive classroom environment; his office door is always open. Even while on sabbatical, this professor reached out to all who needed his assistance. Many have left Davidson realizing they not only expanded their minds but made, as one student wrote, “a lifelong friend.” His Davidson home has provided a welcoming environment for study sessions and casual conversation. As a sportsman and hunter, he shares a love for the outdoors with his students.

His classroom is the setting for constant challenges. As another student tellingly revealed, we “abandoned timidity to delve full force into complex issues.” He is regarded as brilliant in mind and bold in action, and no one leaves his classroom without fully understanding new concepts. Students realize that what he asks of them reflects the same high standards he sets for himself.

This professor also occasionally pushes Davidson beyond its comfort level, reminding the entire college community through his incisive
letters and challenging retorts in the college newspaper that  
institutions deserve constant scrutiny. We are all the better for his  
probing and questioning of students, faculty, and administrators.  
His “fluid” teaching style, his “steady, friendly personality, his sense  
of humor, his interest in students’ ideas” have inspired many. This  
teacher encourages students to participate in academic conferences  
and spends hours helping those applying for graduate programs and  
major fellowships. More than one former student called him “a role  
model.” At least one student who spent a year abroad with him said  
the experience in Wurzburg was “one of the most amazing, life-  
enriching years of my life.” All comment on this individual’s ability  
to plant a seed for exploring and understanding other cultures.  
His scholarly interests range from writing across the curriculum to  
studies of German literature and culture. Writing and editing books  
and essays on Goethe, the Holocaust, and the teaching of German,  
this professor exemplifies the true scholar. His academic outpouring  
sets an inspiring standard for Davidson. Language, literature, history,  
and the humanities are among this individual’s broad-ranging  
interests.

One former student said it best: “He embodies all that Davidson  
means to me.”

For your welcoming and challenging classroom, for the deep respect  
you show every student, and for pushing us all to the highest  
standards, the Hunter Hamilton Love of Teaching Award for 2002 is  
awarded to Dr. Scott Denham.