

George Mackiw Named Distinguished Teacher for 1996 MD/DC/VA Section

The annual MAA Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics, in the Maryland-DC-Virginia Section has been named the John Smith Award, commemorating the many contributions to the section of our deceased colleague. The 1996 recipient of this award has been engaged for over 25 years in college teaching of mathematics at an Institution which emphasizes the importance of teaching, while nonetheless requiring significant research and professional activity to enrich and enliven teaching.

Praised by the department chair as "a natural teacher who is effective at all levels of the curriculum, partly because of thoroughly planned classes, well-delivered lectures and carefully prepared assignments, bus also because of . . . breadth of . . . mathematical knowledge and . . . adeptness at relating it to a broad range of other fields," the recipient is also described by a mathematical colleague as "organized, efficient, considerate of the feelings of everyone, . . . and a master of dealing with people in a gracious way, so that students recognize that they are respected as individuals."

Assessment is also very high among all students, not only the very good ones: in surveys comparing the recipient with all teachers they have or have had college-wide, 65% of the students ranked the recipient as "excellent," 28% "good," and only 7% "fair." (None cited "poor.")

In particular, quotes from two students amplify the details. The first student claims that the recipient both "lured this 'undecided' major to the Math Department (and finally to a major in mathematics), and was certainly among those who inspired my ultimate choice of college teaching as a vocation." She described the recipient's lectures as "lucid and engaging, so well-organized and delivered in such a polished and economical (not to mention lively and entertaining!) style, that one never felt overwhelmed, and the diligent student was always left wanting to know more. This is the kind of instructor we all strive to be: a master of the discipline, as excellent communicator, and a caring individual."

A second student found the recipient "a brilliant lecturer who mingles mathematics with humor to charm students to attention, and who would often approach an idea or theorem from a multitude of angles, comparing a new idea with old familiar ones, elaborating on the complex relations between different concepts so that the student was forced to struggle to understand and assimilate, rather than to memorize and regurgitate formulae without any real understanding."

Selected on the basis of the foregoing as well as considerably more such accolades, from both students and peers, the 1996 recipient of our Section's Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics is Professor George Mackiw from Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland.