

1996 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching Recipients

Professor Van Bluemel

Van Bluemel is totally dedicated to his students. In class he is always ready to help anyone struggling with the concepts of physics. In project advising he will undertake topics completely new to him only because a student is eager to work on the topic and can find no local expert. Outside of class, he is a role model. His enthusiasm, openness, and charm have had a lasting impression on generations of students. Finally, Professor Bluemel maintains the highest standards of integrity, doing what he believes is right, not what is expedient, popular, or easy.

In Professor Bluemel's classes, students find him easy to approach. While firmly insisting on precision in speech and in writing, he balances his high standards with warmth and understanding. He always respects his students' ability to learn while focusing on the development of their independent thinking skills. His mission is to get students engaged, thinking, and puzzling even within the confines of a large lecture.

Professor Bluemel's greatest impact has been through his outstanding advising of projects. Former students have described working with him on a project as their best experience at WPI, the defining experience of their undergraduate career. He is described as patient and wise, always advising in a non-threatening way. His guidance is often cited for helping students remain focused and productive while encouraging personal interests and inputs. After advising more than one hundred projects, Professor Bluemel remains enthusiastic about project work and its place in the educational process at WPI.

Outside of class, former students cite Professor Bluemel's willingness to discuss any issue, social, scientific or philosophical. He displays a strength of character and moral courage that have left a lasting impression on many. Years after graduation, students still consider him a friend because he cares about them long after they leave his classes. He communicates frequently with many former students, keeping up with their personal achievements and still serving as a source of inspiration and guidance.

For his dedication to the education of his students, for his integrity, for his commitment to the highest educational aspirations, and for his enjoyment of the interaction between student and teacher, we proudly present the 1996 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching to Professor Van Bluemel.

Nicholas Kildahl

Professor Kildahl is an educational innovator whose innovations have greatly enriched the classroom experiences of his students.

He has replaced traditional one way lectures with "dialogues" in the Socratic tradition. These dialogues place more responsibility on the students for their own learning, and, as Professor Kildahl uses them, foster a true partnership between students and faculty in the learning process.

For Professor Kildahl, "discovery" is the word that most aptly represents his approach to the teaching/learning process. From his complete restructuring of introductory labs and lectures in the introductory chemistry sequence, to his advanced undergraduate and graduate courses, Professor Kildahl has created course experiences that students cite as having pushed them to get the most out of concepts, and having extended their abilities. Professor Kildahl strives to have students truly understand concepts by applying them to problem solving situations. His classes are interactive, interesting, and thought-provoking. One outstanding quality is an ability to stimulate student interest in the subject by relating chemistry to real life. Notably, his students feel that he makes chemistry feel "human."

Although repeatedly cited as highly competent in his field, through the dialogue and discovery approach Professor Kildahl is able to gear his teaching to the level of each student. He is responsive to class abilities and suggestions. He cares about all aspects of the welfare of his students, and is gratefully remembered by many for his individual mentorship.

For his unique integration of innovation and excellence in teaching, we proudly present the 1996 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching to Professor Nicholas Kildahl.