

2009 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching Recipient

Stephen J. Bitar

In the words of a fellow colleague, this year's outstanding teacher "cares so much it hurts."

Professor Stephen Bitar is a teacher who takes a genuine interest in each and every one of his students--in their classroom success, their academic achievements overall, and their lives. In the classroom, Professor Bitar has an unmatched approach to lectures. His depth of knowledge has been described as limitless, with students and faculty alike commenting on his superb mastery of the material. However, it is his ability to convey this knowledge to students that is so impressive. Students consistently say that he can explain very complex material in a clear manner and that he focuses on instilling fundamental concepts that can be applied to a multitude of problems. Students find the knowledge acquired in his classes to be useful in future classes, in graduate school, and in their professional careers. In the classroom, Professor Bitar's lectures have been described as insightful and his colleagues have described him as a "talented pedagogue." As one student stated, he creates an "environment that makes me want to raise my hand frequently and participate."



Professor Bitar also brings real world experience into his classes. His combination of design and practice is, according to a student of his, "perfectly done." Professor Bitar makes "the nitty-gritty details of Electrical Design tie into the larger picture." And students see that what they are learning now at WPI will be applied well beyond their undergraduate studies. Professor Bitar is actively involved in the laboratory sections of his classes, devoting great energy to hands-on learning and making sure that every group understands their experiment. In one case, he rewrote a laboratory exercise on the fly because a certain piece of equipment wasn't available.

While Professor Bitar demands high standards from his students, he also gives them the tools to achieve success. Not one to confine his teaching to the classroom, he routinely stays hours beyond his scheduled time to explain difficult concepts to students. According to his students, he seems to have office hours all the time, and no one leaves his office without a good answer. He is "one of the few professors who will stay up until 2 in the morning to help you solve a problem." He is accessible to all students all of the time, and takes extra effort with students who are struggling. His patience is limitless and he provides his time to any student, for any reason.

His concern for students is, in their words, inspiring. His enthusiasm for teaching makes his students want to succeed and excel. Students seek him out, not only as a classroom teacher, but also to aid them in their professional and personal development. Professor Bitar has a sincere love for the students of WPI, and the smile that is always on his face shows that he gets as much fulfillment out of his students as they do from him.

For his extraordinary ability to convey knowledge, his commitment to student success in all areas of study and life, and his great generosity with his time, it is with great honor that we present the 2009 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching to Professor Stephen J. Bitar.