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Honorary Degree Award Citation for Herbert Tjossem

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Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

Herbert K. Tjossem, Professor of English

"Herbert Tjossem, the parish for which you care is wide indeed, and the houses 'fer asonder.' For over thirty-seven years, you have lent aid in English and wise, practical counsel to Lawrence students. To the young men and women of the American Midwest and beyond, you have extended what can only be called global comprehension--through Chaucer and Achebe, through Soyinka and Shakespeare. To international students you have proffered the lasting friendship of a household; and we might say of you, as Chaucer said of his Knight, 'He coude in litel thing have suffisaunce.' In your many travels at home and abroad, you have covered physical and psychic distances and have, for your students and in yourself, broken cultural boundaries in ways that should be a model for us all. Your course entitled 'Decolonizing the Mind' embodies your convictions.

And what you practiced you also preached. With a colleague you once wrote that 'if you are going to practice exposition in its true sense of teaching, you will have to construct imaginatively an occasion for writing quite different from the one you seem to be in.' You have constructed many an imaginative occasion. And you have exemplified as well the dictum of Sydney Smith, who wrote, 'In composing, as a general rule, run your pen through every other word you have written; you have no idea what vigor it will give your style.' You put the matter more subtly: 'when a writer wastes words he wastes his reader's time and spoils his attention.' You have neither wasted our time nor spoiled our attention and we honor you today for your capacious giving, for your contributions to the fine-tuning of our thought and speech, and for the rich legacy of your broad and deep literary mastery and vision.

By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, its privileges, and its obligations."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1993