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Excellence in Teaching Award Citation for William Bremer

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University Award for Excellence in Teaching

William W. Bremer, Professor of History

"William Bremer, for twenty-five years you have introduced Lawrence students to American History in particular, and to the study of history in general. And you have done so in London and at Lawrence, in tutorials and independent studies, in seminars and lectures. In your case, however, there is a special meaning in the description of what you have taught here as 'courses,' for you have also occasionally served as coach for those students who pursue the noble game of golf and who share your devotion to this ancient form of humiliation. We cannot know whether your course on the American city as a historical phenomenon, for example, would have a rating of 72.5 or 73, or if the difficulty of antebellum slavery or the origins of the American welfare state would be rated higher or lower than that. But you have guided your students through all of these topics and more with the careful eye of an assiduous professional.

Over the years, they have reported how attentively you have shown them how to address each subject, how thoroughly you have pointed out each hazard, how carefully you have explained how to read the evidence and the arguments they had to master to accomplish what each course demanded of them. Above all, you have exhorted them to follow through. They have appreciated your guidance, and they have been grateful that while you were always available with wisdom and rich 'local knowledge,' you also insisted that they had to be able to negotiate the doglegs and sandtraps of historical study themselves. In teaching them American history, you have taught them the intellectual rhythm that will permit them to go on learning. Like P.G. Wodehouse's Scottish sage, you have helped them as far as they might be helped, and then whispered encouragingly, 'Dinna press.'

Most of all, your students have always known that you would never leave them stranded in the woods of any course. While you are scrupulously accurate in counting every stroke of their intellectual effort, you are also meticulously fair. What you have helped them to acquire as they have moved to new courses and new lives is the invaluable sense that in their own bags they carry the capacity to understand the origins and context of the world they now face.

For you, the bogeys on the Lawrence course have been few and far between, and so it is a pleasure to recognize the birdies and eagles of your teaching with the 1994 Excellent Teaching Award."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1994