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# Honorary Degree Award Citation for Gervais Reed

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## Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

### Gervais E. Reed, Professor of French

"Gervais Reed, rigor and precision have been the hallmarks of your teaching, as any of your students can attest. Ten thousand times over you have heard, and corrected, the novice French speaker's '*j'ai alle*' (as euphonious as 'I have go-ed') or the not-so-novice declaration '*cette piece s'agit de deux clochards*' (poetically rendered: 'this play concerns two bums'). Through hours of personal contact and pages of meticulous grading, you have taught students to care about language and the power, used or misused, it embodies.

One of your former students has described your pedagogy as 'Quaker teaching: a book, a chalkboard, a teacher, some students'--no gimmicks or distractions, but only the pure and essential exercise of the mind before the text. In homing in on a word or an image, in unwinding the knotted syntax of a poetic phrase, you have nudged students to ever higher levels of intellectual engagement. 'If anyone embodies Lawrence's pedagogical ethos of focus on writing, close reading, and personal attention,' one has written, it is you. And you have also exemplified the Lawrence ethos of personal attention in other venues as well, most especially in your year-long service as Dean of Students.

At the heart of your exact, exacting, pure, and Cartesian mode of teaching has been the 17th century classical literature that has fostered your own research and writing, your use of language. In your articles and reviews, and in your editorship of the journal *French Review*, you have made contributions to your field that extend beyond the campus. And your legacy has gone forth in other ways as well. As part of your mark on American academics, you have created a dynasty of French teachers and scholars who, impressed by your unwillingness to accept less than their best and inspired by your passion for the well-wrought thought, will no doubt emulate what one has celebrated as your 'generous and stimulating mentorship.'

All that you have done, at Lawrence and for Lawrentians, as scholar and teacher, earn you our thanks and appreciation. In those sentiments, we are not alone. Indeed, your work has been of such influence--has, if you will, conveyed a Frenchness so precise--that the French themselves have named you 'Chevalier dans l'ordre des Palmes Academiques' in gratitude for you activities in behalf of French language and culture in the United States. And though the French Ministry of National Education has beaten Lawrence to the punch, we are nonetheless honored to have this opportunity to honor you and to anticipate our continuing association.

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, 1996*