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Young Teacher Award Citation for Karen Harpp

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Young Teacher Award

Karen Harpp, Assistant Professor of Chemistry

"Karen Harpp, creativity and enthusiasm have been the hallmarks of your classes since you came to Lawrence three years ago. With unparalleled energy, you have annihilated the myth that serious teaching requires a stodgy environment. You have set clear objectives and maintained high standards for courses so well organized that they seem to be spontaneous, and so spontaneous that they are fun. For you, and thus your students, science is exploration and discovery as well as memorization, and their opportunities to develop as scientists themselves have opened your students' worlds. To many of them, you have been a vital mentor and role model, the 'type of person,' one has written, 'who makes you want to become a leader and make that special difference.' You have never accepted less than their best, and, more impressively, you have inspired them constantly to do their best. You have excited them about what they have learned and made them want to learn more. Your receipt of the Mortar Board and Babcock awards this year evidence the students' approbation and appreciation.

A key to the excitement you convey to students is your astute association of chemistry with daily life, your distinctive ability to draw on students' current understanding of their world to broaden it. Your involvement with the 'Chemlinks' project to reform the teaching of chemistry and with the 'Faculty for the 21st Century' in the national Project Kaleidoscope initiative reflects the innovative and interdisciplinary approach to teaching you have brought to Lawrence.

With your inspiration and tutelage, your students have created a demonstration team to introduce the community beyond the campus to the importance of chemistry. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pre-college students have marched to Youngchild Hall to be entertained and educated by the group that, when it began, was known as the 'Bomb Squad,' a name that seemed absolutely appropriate to those of us who work next door to Youngchild, in a building prone occasionally to sway sympathetically in response to loud noises.

As a geochemist, you have participated in expeditions that have posited that the Galapagos Islands are perhaps twice as old as was earlier assumed, a point of immense importance to explaining the biogeography of that isolated chain. Your exploration of anthropogenic pollutants in local lakes and ground water will be influential in countless ways upon the understanding and development of northeast Wisconsin. To support that research, you have received a substantial grant from a National Science Foundation program that rarely makes such grants to assistant professors at liberal arts colleges.

For the energy and skill you bring to Lawrence, in classroom and laboratory and the oars of shells on the Fox as well, it is a pleasure to present to you the Young Teacher Award for 1997."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1997