

1-1-1999

Young Teacher Award Citation for Rebecca Matveyev

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Recommended Citation

Lawrence University, "Young Teacher Award Citation for Rebecca Matveyev" (1999). *Faculty Award Citations*. Paper 107.
<http://lux.lawrence.edu/facultyawards/107>

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Young Teacher Award

Rebecca Matveyev, Assistant Professor of Russian

"Rebecca Matveyev, you came to Lawrence at a time when the challenges of teaching Russian were, here and elsewhere, formidable. Undaunted by those challenges, you have worked assiduously to introduce students to the language, literature, and culture of a country central to the past and future of the western and eastern worlds. Armed with new pedagogies and boundless energy, you have engaged your students in the often frustrating yet exciting journey toward understanding viewpoints and ideas that appear dauntingly unfamiliar. Not content merely to teach grammar, you would have your students understand Russian within its cultural context. Exposing your students to the many different manifestations of language--in literature, song, film, and everyday expressions--you make Russian come alive in your classroom.

Patience, rigor, and a sense of humor are just a few of the attributes that make you an excellent teacher. Although you yourself speak with a swiftness that leaves many of your colleagues in Main Hall dizzy, you never impose unrealistic expectations on your students. Colleagues attest to your skill at engaging students in thoughtful discussion and applaud your devotion to helping them read and think critically and write persuasively.

For their part, students speak of you in glowing terms as 'a resourceful teacher, able to make the most difficult grammatical topics palatable.' One considers your strongest point your 'incredible enthusiasm for teaching,' while another comments that your 'care and concern for the wellbeing of [your] students is unparalleled.' Although your first love is teaching Russian, you have also made your mark as an instructor in Freshman Studies, where your infectious enthusiasm for learning has found another venue for expression and where your literacy acumen has been used to good effect.

What students and some of your colleagues probably don't know--but what those in attendance at the recent Founders' Club Dinner can attest--is that you are as well a gifted and accomplished comedienne. Indeed, your shtick on the vicissitudes of teaching Freshman Studies had some of our most generous donors rolling in the aisles and suggests that, should you ever decide to give up teaching, you would have a bright future in cruise ships, vacation resorts, or--best of all--the Development Office.

Rebecca Matveyev, it is a pleasure to present to you the Young Teacher Award for 1999."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1999