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# Excellence in Teaching Award Citation for Richard Sanerib

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## **University Award for Excellence in Teaching**

### **Richard Sanerib, Associate Professor of Mathematics**

"Richard Sanerib, you are the teacher parents hope their children will encounter in college. Engaging and engaged, you fill the classroom with an infectious passion for mathematics, and then fill your office hours with the sage and thoughtful guidance of a caring mentor.

Knowledgeable, tough, but warm, you train your students to read, write, and reverse precise mathematical arguments, while you lead them into abstract realms where they can see mathematics as you do--as serious, deep, beautiful, and fun. Tuned to the student wavelength, you sense when to press ahead with a proof and when to retreat to a day of review. Other teachers might continue blindly chalking and talking to the blackboard, but you have a gift to see in a single student's vacant expression the sign of a lost thread. Demanding and caring at the same time, you push the strong and encourage the weak, to get more information from both, in this way lifting all your students to surprising levels of mathematical understanding.

Outside the classroom, you are at various and perfectly scripted times coach, cheerleader, wise counselor, psychologist, quiet listener, and good friend. When students need to look into themselves, you hold up the mirror. When struggling students panic, you calm them with warmth and reassurance, before cajoling them into working harder and more productively. And when a student just needs to talk, you listen. In the classroom, you work on mathematics, dispensing equations with passion and joy, but in the office, you treat the whole person, offering the advice students need to hear, even if it is not always the advice they want to hear.

Mathematics have the reputation for being slightly strange, though it is gratifying to note that your attributes along those lines consist mainly in the fact that twenty-five years in Wisconsin have not eradicated your Maine accent, and that your skills as an interior decorator are, at best, dubious, given your proclivity for raspberry red and lime green wall treatments in Stephenson Hall--reason in itself to demolish the building. While we acknowledge these traits, and even tolerate them to a degree, we celebrate today those attributes that make you truly distinctive: your extraordinary gifts as a teacher of mathematics and a teacher of young minds.

Richard, it is a pleasure to recognize you with the year 2003 Excellence in Teaching Award."

*Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 2003*