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# Excellence in Adventist College Teaching Recognized

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For the first time in 100 years of Adventist education in North America, teachers are receiving significant cash awards for excellence in teaching. Thomas and Violet Zapara, through a grant totaling nearly \$1 million, have enabled the North American Division each year for five years to award \$1,000 each to 36 college professors, an additional \$3,000 to three college professors who win national Zapara awards, and beginning in 1989 to grant \$1,000 awards for teaching excellence to 137 teachers in North American academies and elementary schools.

The awards for college and university professors, first granted in 1988, are divided into three categories: applied arts or professional disciplines, humanities, and sciences. The process for selecting the 36 college teachers varied somewhat from campus to campus; for example, some campuses selected more than one teacher in a single area, such as the humanities. Whatever the differences among the colleges, the Zapara awards required all campuses to rely on the following criteria: spiritual credibility, concern for students, commitment to quality, choice of peers, student evaluations, professional development, relationship with colleagues, service to academic discipline/profession.

The national award winners in each of the three categories of applied arts or professional disciplines, humanities, and sciences were selected by a committee of three educators outside the Adventist educational system: Kay J. Andersen, executive director since 1969 of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities; Eugene H. Cota-Robles, assistant vice-president for academic affairs of the University of California; and Marjorie Downing Wagner, former president of Sonoma State College and former vice-chancellor of the California State University and Colleges. This committee reviewed professional and academic résumés, letters of support, and essays by the candidates articulating the hallmarks of excellence in teaching, and describing how they attempted to meet those standards.

As a way to honor all those teachers who work hard and creatively to uphold excellence in teaching within the Seventh-day Adventist educational system, we are pleased to publish in their entirety the essays written by the three 1988 winners of the national Zapara Awards for Excellence in Teaching.

—The Editors

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## Eric Anderson

Eric Anderson, professor and chair of the history department of Pacific Union College, received his B.A. from Andrews University and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. In 1982 he received a Ford Foundation Research Grant. Louisiana State University Press, in 1981, published his book, *Race and Politics in North Carolina, 1872-1879*. He has written essays for journals such as the *Social Service Review*, and chapters in several books, including *Southern Black Leaders of the Reconstruction Era*, the *Dictionary of North Carolinian Biography*, and *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*.

In addition to chairing several faculty committees at Pacific Union College, Anderson has been elected president of

both the Association of Western Adventist Historians and the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians. For many years he served as a consulting editor of *Spectrum*, and has often written for the journal, including: "Ellen G. White and Reformation Historians" (Vol. 9, No. 3, July 1978), and "The Bishops and Peace, or Is it Necessarily a Sin to Build Nuclear Weapons?" (Vol. 14, No. 2, October 1983).

## Excellence in Teaching

by Eric Anderson

It is easier to describe a poor teacher than an excellent one. Excellence comes in bewildering variety, while its opposite is predictable

and stale. The bad teacher never criticizes himself, and is content to say the same thing each term. He may shadow box with important ideas, but he seldom changes his mind or hears the implications of questions. A poor teacher simply lacks intellectual curiosity. He (or she) is not tempted to browse in the library nor linger in the archives or laboratory.

The bad teacher is invariably lazy, unwilling to write detailed reactions to student papers, prepare essay examinations, or spend time in the office. Teaching is a chore to be hurried through, as more important or pleasant diversions beckon.

Excellence is a more elusive matter. Really good teachers might be either shy and self-effacing or brash and confident. Whatever the experts say, there are outstanding teachers who are disorganized, oddly attired, and socially awkward—as well as equally good teachers who are eloquent and stylish. I would find it difficult to

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**Eric is the most brilliant scholar-teacher with whom I have ever worked. He combines research and teaching more effectively than anyone I have seen. His professional activity is imperative at a time when students are asking whether Adventist teachers measure up to their counterparts at other church colleges or secular educational centers or whether Adventist teachers are widely enough known to have their recommendations lead to acceptances in graduate and professional schools.**

—A colleague

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write an unerring rule for identifying excellent teachers. I remember masterful teachers who seemed to break all the “rules,” pacing about the classroom, putting students on the spot, and scorning modern visual aids.

In the end, I can only define classroom excellence by my best teachers—and I have pursued excellence by imitating them. I try to replicate, for example, the enthusiasm and imagination of my seventh-grade teacher, Lyndon Furst, who somehow had the entire class excited about *The Guns of August* and caught up in his blackboard maps of the battle of Tannenberg. I make up tests hoping they will be as stimulating as those Don McAdams concocted at Andrews University, that my students will learn from my tests, and reflect on them long after they have stopped writing. Whenever I assign term papers and essays, I have in the back of my mind Harry Leonard’s tough fortnightly essays at Newbold College, and his unsparing yet encouraging criticism of my undisciplined

writing. Arthur Mann’s vivid lectures at the University of Chicago are the ideal for my lectures. Though his quirks (and his pipe) would never do for me, I would like to describe historical events as clearly as he, and ask such probing questions. And when I consider the full range of things a Seventh-day Adventist Christian scholar should be, I think of the learned conversation of John Waller and Walter Utt’s witty letters, praying that I can nourish my students and colleagues as they did.

Thoughtful people have employed a variety of metaphors to describe what teachers do. Allan Bloom compared teaching to midwifery: “The birth of a robust child, independent of the midwife, is the teacher’s truest joy.” C. S. Lewis thought the teacher’s task was like “old birds teaching young birds to fly.” Teachers, he wrote, “handed on what they had received: they initiated the young neophyte into the mystery of humanity,” which over-arched student and teacher alike. For everyday use, I prefer a less elevated image. A teacher is like an actor, I believe. An excellent teacher is constantly aware of his audience, gauging their reactions, reading in their eyes the truest praise and the most penetrating criticism. The poor teacher has stopped noticing, and seldom feels dejected or elated at the end of a class period.

## Roy A. Benton

Roy A. Benton, associate professor and former chairman of the mathematical sciences department at Columbia Union College, received his B.A. from Andrews University and his Ph.D. in mathematical logic from the philosophy department of the University of Michigan. He has made presentations at several scholarly societies and published more than a dozen research articles on modal logic in journals such as the *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, *Studia Logica*, and the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*.

While he was chairman the number of majors in mathematical sciences rose from 10 in 1980 to 77 in 1987. Benton was elected by the faculty four different years to serve as their representative on the college board, and for four years served on the president’s and academic dean’s advisory committees. He was the principal grant writer and negotiator for more than \$1 million in grants from AT&T for his own and three other Adventist colleges. He has been active in the Association of Adventist Forums as chairman for four years of the Washington, D.C., chapter. Benton for several years has been a member of the board of editors and written for *Spectrum*, including, “Odyssey of an Adventist Creationist” (Vol. 15, No. 2, August 1984), and “An Ingathering of Angels” (Vol. 18, No. 2, December 1987).

## Ten Commandments for Teaching

by Roy A. Benton

Here are ten commandments for excellence in teaching that I have distilled from my experience:

**1. Know your students.** Thankfully, I have found that spending time with students is intrinsically rewarding, but there are definite pedagogical side benefits as well. If I've spent an hour working with a student on a project, helped her get a job, or he's been to a party at my house, I will have tremendous immunity against bad days in the classroom. My worst jokes are funny and intricate explanations become captivating. I came to CUC because its Christian goals and ambience make this sort of individualization a priority, and the small size of the college makes it possible.

**2. Stay curious.** To be a growing teacher, you need to be fascinated by your subject. Even if you are not

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**Colleagues and administrators look to Roy for guidance and assistance in establishing broad principles which would guide in problem-solving and decision-making. As a member of major committees and as a faculty representative on the Board of Trustees, he is considered a leader and commands much respect from his colleagues.**

—A college administrator

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naturally charismatic, passion for a discipline even as dreaded as mathematics is clearly infectious, and boredom or cynicism is ultimately fatal. I find I am best able to keep up my own excitement by devoting summers to doing original work in my specialty, and by trying to keep reasonably current in the varied areas of mathematics, logic, and philosophy that I teach. This desire comes naturally for me, since there's nothing I like better than walling myself away to work on a challenging technical problem.

**3. Appreciate diversity.** It is important to be curious not only about the subject matter of your discipline, but also about the amazingly complex and varied ways that students can approach a subject. Some students circulate carelessly but creatively toward solutions, while others are linear but relentlessly precise. Fortunately, there are careers out there in which each style is valued. It can be

especially fascinating and rewarding to pay close attention to students whose modes of thinking are sharply different from your own. While I tend to be most excited by abstract beauty, engineering students in my differential equations class, for example, have taught me some provocative applications and have motivated practical psychological shortcuts and rules of thumb that I have used in later teaching.

**4. "I may be ignorant, but I ain't stupid."** Yogi Berra may or may not have said it, but I think of it as being uttered by each student. John Gardner claims in *Excellence* that a teacher shouldn't even try to make everybody into an Einstein. (It is gratifying to hear that Hollywood has glorified our profession in *Stand and Deliver*, but you can bet that even the heroic real-life calculus teacher who is the role model for the film can't turn every kid into a genius). On the other hand, Gardner says that you shouldn't accept mediocrity, either. Rather, a teacher's task is the more demanding one of nourishing the undeveloped talent in each student to its unique potential.

**5. Stay ignorant: don't judge too soon.** Some of my most pleasurable and inspiring successes in recent years have resulted from reserving judgment on student ability, especially in the cases of those intimidated minority, international, and female students whose latent talents had to be found and coaxed out. While Adventists send many of their finest offspring to SDA colleges, so that our department has had more than a fair share of bright students (including a half-dozen now completing graduate programs), their unique abilities have not always been obvious at first. For example, a young fellow came to campus not too many years ago as an unwashed, dyslexic high school dropout with a G.E.D. certificate. He hung around the computer lab soaking up information and helping other students. Some of us resisted the initial urge to demand "Where's your pass?" We took a chance and instead encouraged him until he began to take classes. He became a brilliant computer student and now is the creative and reliable academic computing system manager at CUC.

**6. "Be cruel but fair."** So says a Monty Python comic, no fool about human nature, and he's not far wrong. Even if (in fact, especially if) you came of age in the academically laissez-faire sixties, you soon realize that students need the subtle and not-so-subtle discipline encouraged by grades and deadlines. It is destructively shortsighted for students' careers for you to think that Christian compassion implies lenience regarding academic standards and demands. For instance, in good science teaching, I find that there is no shortcut to requiring a lot of good old-fashioned homework. I try to respect and facilitate student effort by helping them work suggestive examples in class and by taking enough time to construct entertaining exercises and fair exams whose

goal is to stimulate learning. I personally mark all my exams and projects and leave only about half of my assigned exercise papers to my readers. Being fair to all students in a diverse environment may also require flexibility as well as toughness—for example, I sometimes teach in a brisk but intuitive way so as to meet the needs of the majority in a class, and then arrange tutoring for the slow ones and more rigorous bonus exercises or an extra hour for honor students.

**7. Like Socrates, be a “midwife.”** Nothing is more destructive than presenting scientific subjects as if they were cut and dried. Even in MATH 101, I try to give imaginative examples and exercises which give students the pride of doing something new, the feeling of being drawn out rather than filled up. Stimulate students to find their own way as much as possible. After all, from the explorer’s viewpoint, scientific investigation is more like searching through a maze than walking down a path. I find that it is well worth using class time to let students work through intelligent wrong guesses of the sort they are likely to take when working by themselves. Ironically, I also find that the better teacher I become, the less I talk. But this doesn’t mean it’s easy. Teaching socratically actually takes more preparation and anticipation than does the use of traditional notes, all the more so since the props aren’t supposed to show (and you risk wasting the students’ time at the rate of \$15 apiece per class hour, at CUC’s current rates). Being a “midwife” also entails appealing to students’ prior intuitions, which often leads to reliance on methods that may seem oddly unscientific, such as the use of metaphor, offbeat examples, and graphic aids.

**8. Teach for the students, not for yourself.** My first year teaching calculus, eager to point the way toward the shining disembodied ideal I (still) believe mathematics to be, I remember how spellbound I could become when I faced the board and explained the optional sections of the text, laying out the beautiful logical underpinnings of differentiation—and how shocked I was to turn toward the class and see the pre-engineers confused or disengaged, and how two premeds got their advisor to let them drop the course. When I sought his advice, this respected chemist told me: “You’ve not only got to help them learn it: you’ve got to make them want to learn it and to believe they’re learning it.” It took painful experience for me to fully sense the obvious point that classroom communication—even in the hard sciences where truth is larger than any person—is a two-way process fired by human passions. I learned quickly that being entertaining and approachable can build a sense of excitement and mastery in students that enriches rather than cheapens the learning process. My calculus students absorb much more material nowadays, and their eyes tell me that they love what they are doing.

**9. Laugh at your bad days, and urge your students to**

do likewise. Once after a sleepless night I opened an elementary math class: “Today we are going to learn about an important new function, though it’s related to a function you already know about,” and inadvertently wrote “sex” on the board instead of “secx” (short for “secant of x”). It was downhill from there—derivations

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**Roy thinks of teaching as a calling, a vocation, a type of ministry. . . Excellence in any discipline demands setting priorities—sometimes to the apparent exclusion of other areas of life. Roy has mastered his field of mathematics and logic and yet has maintained a healthy interest in family, church, society, and culture as well.**

—A former colleague

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got turned around, and all my calculations came out wrong. But I’ve never made those same errors again. If you can stand the renewed embarrassment of reflecting on those sorts of experiences—and smiling helps—you might avoid repeating them. In any case, a sense of humor about your mistakes keeps you willing to take the risks necessary for growth, by giving you the confidence that failure can be merely temporary.

**10. Don’t shirk the dirty work required by your calling.** Looking out for students’ overall needs is a complex task, and they may not always appreciate the wisdom of your chosen priorities. They can sometimes be myopic about the long-term benefits of institution-building chores such as curriculum planning, committees, professional meetings, recruiting, correspondence, publishing, and securing equipment grants. However, even students will appreciate your efforts on the often mind-numbing tasks of tutoring, grading, and advising. Trying to do it all is, of course, impossible, so you have to realistically face your limitations and competing goals. In trying to juggle all the conflicting demands of academic life, I don’t have any firm answers. But sometimes I survive committees by imagining faces of future students, and by recalling that I covet current popularity less than alumni respect 20 years down the road.

## *A. Gregory Schneider*

**A.** Gregory Schneider, professor of behavioral sciences at Pacific Union College, received his B.A. from Columbia Union College and his Ph.D. in psychology of religion from the University of Chicago Divinity School. For the 1985-1986 school year he received a National

Endowment for the Humanities fellowship for college teachers. He has read papers to scholarly societies, such as the national meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Southern Historical Society and contributed reviews to both *Church History* and the *Journal of Religion*.

Schneider, in addition to campus responsibilities, has served on a Social Sciences Review Panel of the National Endowment for the Humanities, on the steering committee of the Person, Culture, and Religion group of the American Academy of Religion, and on the coordinating committee of the Adventist Peace Network. He has written for *Spectrum*, including an article with Charles Scriven, "The Gospel Congress" (Vol. 12, No. 1, September 1981).

—The Editors

## Reflections on Some Hallmarks of Excellence in Teaching

by A. Gregory Schneider

The first hallmark of excellence in teaching is *listening*. Even when lecturing, I must listen for the signs that tell me intuitively when I am connecting with my students and when not. I listen actively to students' comments and questions. Such listening is far more than being quiet while students speak; I need to tell

them what I think I hear and what I sense the implications to be. In one-to-one appointments I listen to voice and gesture and posture in order to sense my student's full agenda.

In addition to listening, one must demonstrate a *passion for one's discipline*. I practice my discipline because it keeps me alive and active in the quest to make sense of my world. It is this quest for conceptual perspective and understanding that I take to be the heart of my discipline. I convey this passion for understanding by modeling it. I draw upon my research and writing in the social scientific study of religion for some of my more vivid and powerful examples of problems and analysis in the social sciences. I sometimes scruple to talk about "my article" or "my book" for fear of inflating their significance and my ego, but citing it does get students' attention as few other things do. Often informal contexts offer opportunities to convey a passion for the discipline in a lighter manner. I am, for instance, privileged to sponsor the Behavioral Science Club. In working with our majors in that context, I find that the offhand remark, the spontaneous discussion, or the tongue-in-cheek social scientific commentary can teach as much as formal class presentations.

*Relevance, concreteness, and vividness* constitute a cluster of hallmarks excellence that keep the passion for explanatory power from floating off into abstraction. The relevance of what one teaches is not to be judged solely

## The Zapara Award Nominees for 1988

### ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Luanne J. Bauer, Ph.D., Chair/Professor, Communications (Humanities)

Dwain L. Ford, Ph.D., Professor, Chemistry (Sciences)

Oystein Sakala LaBianca, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Behavioral Science (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

### ATLANTIC UNION COLLEGE

Stacy Dean Nelson, Ed.D., Chairman/Associate Professor, Physical Education (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

Clifford O. Pope, M.A., Professor, Math/Applied Science (Sciences)

Myron F. Wehtje, Ph.D., Professor, History (Humanities)

### CANADIAN UNION COLLEGE

Robert D. Egbert, Ed.D., Dean/Associate Professor, Education (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

Lawrence L. Ford, M.B.A., Assistant Professor, Business (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

### COLUMBIA UNION COLLEGE

Roy A. Benton, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mathematical Sciences (Sciences)

Deborah Joy Brown, M.A., Chair/Assistant Professor, English/Modern Languages (Humanities)

James W. Burns, M.A., Department Head/Associate Professor, Physical Education (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

### KETTERING COLLEGE OF MEDICAL ARTS

Margaret L. Rodenburg, Ph.D., Professor, General Education (Sciences)

### LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

Loma Linda Campus:

Mildred T. Akamine, M.S., Associate Professor, Nursing (Sciences)

Ronald A. Hershey, M.A., Associate Professor, Physical Therapy (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

Karen D. Wells, B.S., Instructor, Dental Hygiene (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

by one's students; but they are sovereign in deciding what initially gets their attention. College students, Erik Erikson tells us, are in that stage of life concerned with intimacy. In Introduction to Sociology, Chaim Potok's novel, *The Chosen*, captivates students with a story of one sort of intimacy, an adolescent friendship, and also with a drama of young men coming to terms with the religion of their parents. The latter issue is of great relevance to the majority of my students, who are Seventh-day Adventists from birth. While student imaginations are engaged vicariously with these highly personal issues, I am able to school them in what C. Wright Mills called the "sociological imagination" by pointing out how this friendship and the relationships between fathers and sons are contingent upon the great movements of history and society. Another way to be vivid and concrete is to share stories of my own experience. Students do perk up when they hear "the professor" lay himself out personally. This spring, for instance, I found some students unusually attentive when, to help illustrate the economic metaphor for marriage and kinship, I described how it had once felt for me to call a girl for a date and learn by ordeal what I was worth on the "marriage market." After I had told the story, I was somewhat nonplussed when a young lady student asked, "Did she say yes?"

A fourth mark of excellence is a *focus on moral and ethical issues*. In upper division courses I choose texts and initiate discussions designed to show our future

psychologists and educators how the metaphors we choose for explaining human nature imply basic moral attitudes and visions of the good person. In Introduction to Sociology, students consider information about apartheid, global hunger, domestic poverty, sexism, nuclear armament, etcetera in the light of their Christian heritage. I require three Bible studies, which bring to light things

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**I was involved in the educational work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from my graduation from Union College in 1956 until 1984. I cannot think of more than two or three other people whose intellectual integrity and articulated view of the basic philosophical questions I respect more than I do that of Greg Schneider.**

—A former colleague

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like the social criticism of the prophets and the nonviolent, but still socially subversive, "politics of Jesus." I admit that much of this material is not very popular with many of my students. I believe, however, that duty to my students, to society, and to God requires its inclusion.

A fifth hallmark is a strong element of *intellectual challenge and stimulus*. I like to require books that are

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#### La Sierra Campus:

Vernon Howe, Ph.D., Professor, Math/Computing (Sciences)  
 Roger L. McFarland, M.Ed., Associate Professor, Health/Physical Education (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)  
 Charles Teel, Jr., Ph.D., Chair/Professor, ethics, School of Religion(Humanities)

#### OAKWOOD COLLEGE

Lucille Lacy, Ph.D., Chair/Associate Professor, Music (Humanities)  
 James H. Melancon, M.A., Associate Professor, Religion and Theology (Humanities)  
 Juliaette W. Phillips, M.S.W., Assistant Professor, Behavioral Sciences (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

#### PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE

Eric D. Anderson, Ph.D., Professor, History (Humanities)  
 A. Gregory Schneider, Ph.D., Professor, Behavioral Science (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)  
 Steven R. Waters, Doctor of Arts, Associate Professor, Mathematics (Sciences)

#### SOUTHERN COLLEGE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Jan Charles Haluska, Ph.D., Associate Professor, English (Humanities)  
 Ray Hefferlin, Ph.D., Professor, Physics (Sciences)  
 Edward L. Lamb, M.S., Chair/Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

#### SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST COLLEGE

Barbara T. Crutch, Ph.D., Professor, Math/Physical Sciences (Sciences)  
 Frances S. Mosley, Ph.D., Professor, Social Sciences, Education (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)  
 Erwin Sicher, Ph.D., Professor, Social Sciences (Humanities)

#### UNION COLLEGE

Minon Hamm, Ph.D., Chair/Professor, Art and Humanities (Humanities)  
 Marilyn Lang McArthur, M.S., Assistant Professor, Nursing (Sciences)  
 Virginia Simmons, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Human Development (Applied Arts/Professional Disciplines)

#### WALLA WALLA COLLEGE

Rosemarie Eileen Buck, M.S., Assistant Professor, Nursing (Sciences)  
 Jon Lee Dybdahl, Ph.D., Professor, School of Theology (Humanities)  
 Donnie Thompson Rigby, M.A., Professor, Communications (Humanities)

not written in standard textbook formats, essays or monographs that require the student to attend to the structure and main thrust of an argument, rather than to simply follow a textbook's scheme for classifying information. I also look for surprising, unsettling, even debunking approaches to familiar topics. I do this for the sake of shaking myself and my students out of our "world-taken-for-granted" and into an attitude of critical perspective. The perspectives of Marx, Durkheim, Freud, and Skinner on religion and human nature are essential to this effort, and virtually all my students must confront their ideas at one time or another. Such confrontation inevitably breeds some anxiety. I attempt to limit such stress by two strategies. First, I provide a clear, reliable course organization that minimizes uncertainties over course procedure and grading. Second, I require and model a response to critical perspectives that asks questions of comparison, contrast, and evaluation and gives students opportunity to take their own positions on threatening ideas rather than merely having to submit to them.

Then there are *fairness, compassion, and provision of hope*. It behooves teachers to be humble about their

testing instruments and procedures. I go over my "objective" tests yearly to eliminate or revise questions with success rates of below 50 percent. I give time and encouragement to students who wish to protest certain questions on quizzes or tests, never guaranteeing, of course, that I will fully satisfy them. For the less academically gifted, I include a category of evaluation that rewards faithfulness and punctuality more than analytical ability or test-taking acumen. With students who are faltering, I go over tests personally in my office to provide counsel and encouragement on study techniques and to observe their mode of approach to questions and attempt to detect and correct self-defeating patterns. I provide some extra-credit exercises, not so much because of the marginal difference they may make in grades, but because they give the student a course of action and thereby provide hope to mobilize energy for one more try. Finally, I make opportunities to enjoy the company of my students. A simple willingness to talk, tease, and banter before and after class, for example, can reassure them that I am for, not against, them. Students have little to hope for from a teacher unless they sense that, basically, he likes them.