ASSOCATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES
AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING
2008
DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD
MARTIN VAN BOMMEL

Dedicated to his discipline, passionate about teaching, welcoming to all – these are the commendations of students and colleagues who have worked with Dr. Martin van Bommel. Admired and respected at St. Francis Xavier University, Dr. van Bommel is a worthy recipient of the AAU Distinguished Teaching Award.

Since 1995 Martin has served as a member of faculty specializing in Computer Science. Over this thirteen-year period he has taught more than twenty different courses in Computer Science, Information Systems, Engineering and Mathematics. In his letter supporting Martin's nomination, Dr. Ping Wang indicates this course load is "unprecedented" and that even with this load Martin's "devotion to our students' academic progress is unparalleled". While he teaches at all levels, Martin is particularly associated with the first year programming class, a course he has taught for ten years. Of his work with freshmen, former student Greg Lee reflects:

> Martin had a way of making computer code exciting, which should be taken as an impressive statement by anyone who has ever looked upon the actual hard code. It was also immediately evident that not only was Martin a great teacher, he lived and breathed to teach. His preparation for class was impeccable, and his complete lack of inhibition in his attempts to get his point across was inspiring…He simply wanted us to learn.

Martin's quantitative course evaluation results show he consistently performs well above university and department norms, while his qualitative evaluations routinely note that he facilitates an atmosphere where learning is the ultimate goal.

This objective has led Martin to integrate new ideas into his teaching, such as creating a lab for his intro course, trying new approaches to assignments, maintaining an open-door policy for his students, and creating a software program that integrates student ID photos with his seating plan to better learn students' names. His focus on students also includes supervising three students per year in Advanced Majors and Honours Programs. He also maintains a strong research program and a high level of service to the University. For example, Martin chairs the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee which oversees the newly developed Masters in Computer Science program. Since 2004 he has served as Chair of the Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science Department, during which time he has taught a full course load each year.

St. Francis Xavier University is very pleased that Dr. van Bommel decided to return to his Alma Mater and share his love of learning and teaching with his students. This commitment, combined with skill and outstanding effort, makes him an exceptional recipient of the 2008 Association of Atlantic Universities Distinguished Teaching Award.