

Question 3:
What do you like most about teaching?

“Personally, teaching is an incredible opportunity to directly be part of student development and education. Teaching gives me the chance to help students to think outside the self, and to help individuals locate themselves within a larger social system *and to figure out what that means for them*. So many formative experiences happen during the college years, and being in the classroom allows me to help students understand and evaluate those college experiences from a perspective of knowledge informed by scholarship, encouraging students to directly apply those ideas in ways that will impact their day-to-day lives. I realize this all sounds esoteric, but it’s really quite simple. Each day I can take concepts and theories and discuss them in class to help students understand— for example – how to better navigate a challenging romantic relationship, how to better demonstrate their skills at an internship, how to better interpret behavioral statistics that they hear on their favorite podcast, or how to better critique a social system that has not treated them justly. Together we become better family members, friends, co-workers, and citizens as we collectively construct an understanding of communicating and relating to one another. I love being a small part of that process.”

Jonathan M. Bowman

2014 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

2014 Western States Communication Association’s Distinguished Teaching Award

“I live for that AHA! moment when my students first understand a new concept or see how the lesson applies directly to their lives. I get excited when students see improvement or when they are able to struggle through to mastery. Because I teach communication skills, I see this on a regular basis. As these successes build on one another my students grow in confidence. Helping students discover their strengths and then develop those strengths into regular habits of mind is extremely rewarding for me. Knowing that I have helped students move forward with skills they will use for the rest of their lives is gratifying and truly fulfilling for me.”

John Heineman, Lincoln High School (Lincoln, NE)

1998 Marcella E. Oberle Award for Outstanding Teaching in Grades K-12

“Interacting with interested and intelligent students. It both expands their repertoire of knowledge, insights, and skills and also broadens my perspective as I learn from their ideas and experience. The interaction with younger people also makes students and me aware of generational differences and induces respect for one another’s experience.”

David Zarefsky, Northwestern University

2012 Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellence Award

“I love connecting ideas with people and people with ideas. Seeing their eyes light up as they understand the concepts and how they apply feeds my soul. Students have sometimes been startled when they come in complaining that they can’t watch television, talk with friends, or check out Facebook without thinking of how the concepts of the course apply—and I do a fist pump and cry,

YES!! I also love seeing my students grow and change—from first-year students to seniors and from students to alumni. They never cease to amaze me: the Spanish major who taught English in China; the students who become teachers, professors, ministers, lawyers, consultants, and community organizers; the parents. And to hear that a course they took from me made the difference? Priceless!”

Kathleen J. Turner (Emerita), Davidson College

2007 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

“I’m selfish. I like the learning that goes on as I prepare and teach a class. There is no profession other than academic teaching where you are paid to learn. I like the process of organizing complex and new materials into teachable units. It’s creative work. I love crafting stories about what I am teaching and watching how they get better over years. I like it when students say they changed their major (to communication and not away from it) because of a class I taught. I like, as well, the moments when students tell you how you mattered in their lives. I like it when people, after they leave college, have great respect for our discipline because of a class they took with me.”

John A. Daly, University of Texas

2002 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

“My favorite thing about teaching may at first seem odd. I especially like it when in a graduate seminar I realize that the position I have been advocating is wrong and the position the student is defending is in fact right. I love those days first because I’ve learned something new. Anyone who has taught and done research for more than a few years has undoubtedly pushed ideas that needed amendment. When a graduate student makes me see the flaws in one or more of my ideas, I am excited by the new knowledge that I’ve gained. Second, on those occasions when the dialectic in the classroom makes me amend my views, I know that the class discussion has worked.

We have had a genuine dialogue and the better argument has emerged. That is exciting.”

Robert C. Rowland, University of Kansas

2005 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

“What I like most about teaching is seeing the light bulb go off for a student! This can mean different things for different students. For students in the basic course, it might be overcoming their fear of public speaking and delivering a successful speech advocating for a nonprofit organization they are passionate about. For undeclared majors in the basic course, it might be realizing that they are enjoying their communication class and that communication is what they would like to declare as their major. For students who have been struggling academically, it might be making the Dean’s List (3.5 GPA for the semester) for the first time after they have worked hard to improve their grades over the course of several semesters so that they can regain good standing at the university. For Research Methods students, it might be finding their voices as scholars and deciding that they want to do undergraduate research so that they can explore a research question that is of interest to them. For students who are struggling to identify a career, it might be securing a summer internship that they enjoy and landing a full-time job offer from that company. For students who want to enter academia and become professors, it might be getting that acceptance letter and fellowship offer from their dream school that demonstrates that people beyond their inner circle and alma mater see their potential for further study. All of these light bulb moments are special and motivate me to keep teaching!”

Tiffany R. Wang, University of Montevallo
2017 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

“When I was an undergraduate Wheaton College senior looking ahead to graduate school in communication at the University of Kansas, I asked for advice from my undergraduate advisor, Em Griffin. Without question, he is one of the best teachers I have ever had, and his advice has stuck with me to this day. He told me that it is impossible to develop close relationships with every student that comes into your classroom. For one thing, there isn’t enough time and energy to do that. Also, not every student wants to get to know the instructor; some will sit in the back and learn and hopefully have a good experience, but you won’t really get to know them, and that’s OK. But those realities shouldn’t stop you from building those connections with the students you can, with those you have an opportunity to get to know somewhat better. That advice has freed me from the burden of feeling like I need to connect with everyone, and allowed me to focus on nurturing those student-teacher relationships that emerge naturally. Those relationships are what I most enjoy about teaching. I love getting to see students’ individual talents and strengths, watching them grow during their education, and then seeing how they use those skills in the world. It is a joy to have front-row seats to that growth and development and, as I have an opportunity, to walk with and help students as they seek their futures.”

Andrew M. Ledbetter, Texas Christian University
2011 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

“The thing I like most about teaching is my students. I love interacting with them, I love learning from them, I love helping them understand the content of any course and I love when they see the connection between what they are learning and their lives. I love it when a student tells me they hated to speak in public before having the course in public speaking but now they actually like it (or hate it far less). I love it when they let me know how they used supportive communication to decrease someone else’s defensiveness or how they now understand how their behavior influences the behavior of others when they are working in a small group. Having just completed my 43rd year of teaching, these things still excite me. My students are the reason I have always loved teaching and still do!”

Sara Chudnovsky Weintraub, Regis College
2014 ECA Donald H. Ecroyd & Caroline Drummond Ecroyd Teaching Excellence Award

“I love when students get excited about learning and take advantage of all the opportunities a college education or graduate education has to offer them. I have led many study abroad programs to several very different countries. Seeing students experience the world beyond where we live is also very exciting. The two best things I did in college were debate and study abroad, neither of which had much to do with actual classes. I can see that students also thrive when they take advantage of such extracurricular activities, and I spend a lot of time in my classes talking about the kinds of experiences they can have in college.”

Stacey K. Sowards, The University of Texas at El Paso
2013 WSCA Distinguished Teaching Award
