

REGENTS TEACHING AWARD

Dr. Charles Rochester Young acceptance speech

September 8, 2000

Thank you very much for your kind remarks, Regent Olivieri. I'm honored and humbled to be here today in front of such a distinguished gathering. I'm particularly honored to represent my colleagues from UW-Stevens Point, our College of Fine Arts and Communication and our Department of Music.

I have several groups of people to thank today because no one ever accomplishes anything alone. Before I begin, I should mention that I will probably get much of the attention today for this teaching award, but the real stars today are my wife, Jennifer and my 7 month old daughter, Kate. There are many nights at the dinner table where I'll bounce teaching ideas by Jennifer for the following day. She'll often say "Honey, that's a REALLY bad idea..." I've found Jennifer's advice over the years to be invaluable and it has undoubtedly saved my students and I a lot of frustration. Jennifer and Kate have also been very understanding when I have to stay up late grading papers and/or work late in my office.

I would like to accept this award on behalf of the family who couldn't be here today. Education is an important part of our family, with at least one person working in education continuously since 1895. We've also had many family members whose belief in lifelong learning led them to complete degrees later in life. However, the most significant educational accomplishment in our family is that my father is probably the only person in the history of American education to be expelled from high school and later receive a doctorate degree in Educational Administration!

I'd like to thank everyone from the Office of Professional and Instructional Development here in Madison. My participation in their Wisconsin Teaching Fellows program was a memorable experience where I learned a lot about teaching and learning.

I'd like to thank ALL of the administration at UW-Stevens Point. As Regent Olivieri mentioned earlier, my students and I are very involved in technology. I know that Chancellor Thomas George, Provost Bill Meyer and Marv Van Kekerix are all here today and each of them have been very instrumental in providing our campus with superb technology resources. Also I'd like to thank Gerard McKenna, Dean of Fine Arts at UW-Stevens Point and all of the Music Department chairs (Donald Greene, David Hastings and Robert Kase) who have been so supportive of my work over the past several years.

My colleagues in the Music Department at UW-Stevens Point have also been unbelievably supportive over the years. In fact, they could have easily run me out of town during my first year at UW-Stevens Point, when I recommended changes in 30 courses in our music theory and composition curriculum. Not only have they been incredibly enthusiastic, but they have helped in many initiatives for which I too often get the credit. Additionally, I would like to mention the incredible support staff in the Music

Department and in our campus Information Technology division who continually go above and beyond the call of duty for the students and faculty.

I'd also like to thank my many friends, university colleagues and former teachers who have supported and encouraged me over the years to continue improving. They have enriched my life immeasurably.

Finally, I'd like to thank my students, because they are the ones who continually teach me how to teach. I honestly believe that I've probably learned more from them than they have ever learned from me. So, I thought today would be an occasion to share with you some of the things I've learned from my students over the past several years. This list is by no means complete, but hopefully will give you an appreciation for some of the things I've learned through teaching.

DIRTY DOZEN THINGS I'VE LEARNED FROM MY STUDENTS

(In no particular order)

1. **Talent is highly overrated.**
I've seen so many "untalented" students surpass the "talented" ones that I've given up on the idea of talent. I've also learned from my students that desire, tenacity and flexibility of approach DO matter!
2. **Teaching is more about people that it is about the subject.**
People ask me all of the time "what is the hardest thing about teaching music?" I usually reply, "Nothing. Music already knows how to behave. It's teaching the human beings that is difficult."
3. **Students learn all of the time, not just in class.**
I've learned it's important for my students to see me "practice what I preach" outside of class. If I say one thing and do another, they learn what I practice INSTEAD of what I preach.
4. **Students are more willing to take risks when I take them.**
When students see me trying things and making mistakes, they become more willing to accept risks and mistakes as normal parts of the learning process. Avoiding mistakes usually means avoiding learning.
5. **Students want to know that you care more than what you know.**
Of course, they want professors who do both even more!
6. **Students live up to expectations.**
Students rarely excel in an environment of low expectations.
7. **Quality is more important than quantity.**

My students learn more when I teach a small amount of material with great depth.

8. **Students never walk into a classroom with an empty brain.**
When I started teaching I thought my job was to fill the students' brains with knowledge. I soon learned that students already had ideas about virtually everything. I became a better teacher when I started each lesson by "meeting them at THEIR level."
9. **Process and product work better together than apart.**
A good process is one which produces the desired product. A good product cannot be consistently achieved without a quality process.
10. **Being flexible is essential.**
I've learned I have to have at least as many explanations as there are students in the room. I've learned the best learning often happens after I've abandoned the lesson plan. After all, it's not "the right way" if it doesn't work.
11. **Students respect those who respect them.**
Students learn how to respect themselves, their work and others better when they work with faculty who respect themselves, their work and their students!
12. **We learn more by failing than succeeding.**
I've never taught a perfect class where every single student learned everything I tried to teach them on the first try. If I have learned anything about teaching at all, it is ONLY because I've continually tried a lot of things --many of which didn't work very well.

In conclusion, I'd like to say I am truly humbled and honored to receive this award. I extend an invitation for any of you to come and visit what we do in our Music Department at UW-Stevens Point. We would love to share what we do with you.