

Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography

Dr Geoff McBoyle

Geoff McBoyle has been a member of the Department of Geography of the University of Waterloo since 1969. His teaching abilities were recognised very early in his career. In 1989, he was one of the first recipients of the University of Waterloo Distinguished Teacher Award, and in 1994, the USA-based National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) awarded him the University Distinguished Teaching Achievement Award for Geographic Education.

For the past six years, Geoff has been Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at Waterloo. Despite this heavy administrative duty, he has continued to teach the Introductory Physical Geography course in both the Fall and Winter terms. With approximately 200 students per class each time, Geoff has introduced physical geography to thousands of students.

Geoff loves teaching and it shows as the students love being taught by Geoff. This is known from the student evaluations. Geoff consistently scores in the excellent category with more than 60 % of the students give him the top mark. These scores are complemented by the many comments students write on the back of their evaluation forms. A small sample of these provides some insight into what makes Geoff a great teacher. For instance, Professor Boyle teaches early on Monday morning, a task that can often lead to disaster. But not for Geoff...

"Professor Boyle - one of the few things that get me out of my bed at 8:00 am."

"McBoyle's enthusiasm kept the class awake every morning."

"Only 8:30 class I have never fallen asleep in."

Along with his exceptional pedagogical skills, it is also evident that Professor McBoyle's enthusiasm and love for the subject are one of the key ingredient...

"Teacher is enthusiastic and understanding, straightforward and organised."

"The professor gets excited about geography."

"The prof loves geography and loves teaching it."

"The prof. was an excellent instructor. He made dull topics tolerable."

"I like Professor McBoyle's commitment to the subject of geography."

This enthusiasm could become entertaining as

"McBoyle waking you up in the morning by jumping up and down."

Even his Scottish accent added some spice to the lectures.

This took place without ever losing the goal of learning about physical geography. Geoff has had a profound influence of students' view of the world as well as on their careers. Many have chosen geography as a field of study after having been exposed to the subject in Geoff's class.

To give a more complete picture of Geoff's style as a teacher, let us quote from a student's letter that supported the nomination to NCGE:

"He taught a second-year course in climatology in the early years. He would come into class in the winter with those black and red rubber boots, walk across the stage, kick off the boots and teach the class in stocking feet. As the lecture went on, Geoff would get more and more involved in the lecture. By the end of the class his socks would be hanging off the end of his toes."

Geoff is truly a great teacher that is committed to the discipline of geography and to the students that want to learn it.

In recognition of the outstanding contributions of Geoff McBoyle to the teaching of geography, we are pleased to honour him with the Canadian Association of Geographers Award for Excellence in Teaching.