To Be Adopted:

The Academic Senate Committee on Distinguished Teaching recommends Professor Joseph Childers (English) and Professor Bradley Hyman (Biology) as the recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award for 1999-2000. Both recipients inspire their students, undergraduates and graduates, with their passion, enthusiasm and dedication for scholarship and teaching.

Professor Joseph Childers

Professor Joseph Childers, who came to UCR in 1989, is recognized by his colleagues and by undergraduate and graduate students alike as an outstanding instructor and dedicated mentor. Professor Childers teaches a range of courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, from critical theory to Victorian literature to literature and technology.

While trained as a Victorian and Dickens scholar, Professor Childers’s research is marked by his commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry, as is his teaching. Professor Childers has developed many innovative courses, both within the English department and across the campus. He has collaborated with faculty from political science, economics and physical education in various interdisciplinary teaching efforts. One undergraduate course, “Theory and Practice of Everyday Life,” was written up in the Press Enterprise. With colleagues from political science and physical education, he has developed a new interdisciplinary year-long course, “Conflict,” as part of the Hewlett funded program in interdisciplinary education for undergraduates. He co-taught a graduate seminar with a colleague from the economics department called “(Re)valuing Marx” that attracted 25 Ph.D. students from dance, economics, English, philosophy and political science. This course culminated in students organizing a small conference where they formally presented their research papers. As one of his colleagues wrote “This is what is most exciting about Joe Childers’s teaching: he breaks the boundaries that have compartmentalized the disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and he does so with the inspiring manner of someone thoroughly committed to what he does.”

Professor Childers is known as a challenging professor who pushes students to do their very best while remaining supportive. As one of his colleagues wrote “Students are willing to be pushed because they know that the professor is hoping to lead them to a new level of understanding.” A graduate student commented that “Professor Childers navigated vigorous class discussions through some very theoretically dense material, which was otherwise intimidating for students. His avid enthusiasm for the topics of the seminar also helped class participation and involvement.” A student in his difficult undergraduate course, “Introduction to Critical Methodology,” wrote that “He’s an awesome professor. I learned so much about writing and learned that my own skills needed revamping. He’s really helped me to break down a paper and readings, and I’ve really been able to understand everything for the first time in my English major.”

In recent years, Professor Childers has served as Associate Dean of the Graduate Division, yet he has continued his strong commitment to teaching at the both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He regularly teaches an overload and he is currently directing 7 dissertations and is serving as a member of 12 additional dissertation committees. This is a remarkably energetic teaching record, especially when one considers the new courses he teaches and the effort he puts into developing new course syllabuses and lectures.

Professor Childers’s commitment to excellence in all that he does is reflected in his outstanding teaching. He is a dedicated teacher who works tirelessly to see his students succeed by challenging them to get the most from their university education. Professor Joseph Childers has clearly made a difference in the lives of many students; he is deeply deserving of the 2000-2001 Distinguished Teaching Award.

Professor Bradley Hyman
Since Professor Hyman arrived at UCR in the mid 1980s, his impact on the Department of Biology and the university as a whole has been tremendous. Professor Hyman has taught introductory and advanced undergraduate biology and molecular biology courses as well as small graduate seminars in molecular biology. Professor Hyman is someone who can clearly bring the beauty and mystery of science to students at all levels.

As one of his colleagues put it:

“Professor Hyman’s accomplishments in the classroom do not emanate from the fact that he has an uncanny ability to present material in a manner that makes it understandable regardless of its difficulty, nor from the fact that his courses are always up-to-date and present molecular biology as a field that is active, exciting, and growing. It is all of these, of course, but there are many intangible qualities to his teaching…He has extremely high expectations and standards, and the majority of his students respond by striving to achieve what he sets before them. At every level he challenges the students to use their body of knowledge to solve problems. Molecular biology comes alive in his classroom…”

Most notable is Professor Hyman’s willingness to teach the large introductory Biology 5a class, and his success at teaching it. Biology 5a is the first quarter core course taken by all biological science and biomedical science majors, and a large majority of students receive grades of C or below. Yet despite their often own disappointing results students laud Professor Hyman’s teaching and he has received outstanding student evaluations of this course over the 16 or so years that he has taught it. The course is not something he simply “pulls out the can” each time he teaches it, as he brings current molecular biology to the classroom rather than relying on lectures from past years. He writes thought provoking exam questions that are difficult to construct and doesn’t recycle or use questions from test banks. Several years ago, Professor Hyman taught Biology 5a twice during the same quarter in order to accommodate student demand and he is currently teaching Biology 5a as an overload.

Perhaps Professor Hyman’s teaching excellence is best exemplified in his upper division molecular Biology course (Biology 107). This course has been audited by at least six of his colleagues from different departments over the years who found the course to inspiring as it taught one how to think like a scientist and not just learn to regurgitate facts. Many of his former students have similarly remarked on how stimulating this course was. As one student put it “Brad taught his Molecular Biology course as a road to discovery. His teaching integrated the methods, developments and concepts of molecular biology in such a way to have me eager to return to the next class to see how a problem was solved. At the best moments I could feel the entire class behaving as if we were all participating in the actual process of scientific discovery.”

As a research biologist, much of Professor Hyman’s impact can be felt in his hands on involvement in his lab. Professor Hyman is known to spend hours with his students in his lab, helping them with everything from pipeting to DNA cloning and sequencing to learning the fine points of grant writing. Professor Hyman’s lab is a busy, stimulating place, bringing together undergraduates, graduates and post-docs to work on a diversity of research topics.

Professor Hyman is the consummate teacher. He combines his passion for science, commitment to research, and dedication to inquiry and learning, with a generosity of spirit to his colleagues and students that infuses every aspect of his professorship at UCR. He is richly deserving of the Distinguished Teaching Award.

E. Nothnagel
S. Rose
S. Salinger
A. Walker
M. Nguyen, ASUCR Representative
S. Cullenberg, Chair