

AeroAstro's Greitzer to receive Baker Teaching Award

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Ask students who've studied under Edward Greitzer, the H. Nelson Slater Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics, to characterize him; the recurrent phrases that will emerge are "rigorous expectations," "passionate and compassionate teacher," and, most often, "my role model."

So it's fitting that on May 9, MIT will present the veteran AeroAstro professor with the Everett Moore Baker Teaching Award, the only Institute-wide teaching citation selected and awarded solely by undergraduate students.

The award is presented by the Everett Moore Baker Memorial Foundation. Baker was MIT's dean of students from 1947 to 1950.

Reading through the avalanche of student testimonials submitted on Greitzer's behalf, one sees that virtually all writers underscore the value of his teaching style: tough with high expectations; dogged insistence on continual revision until a product meets his uncompromising standards; and a genuine and overt display of pleasure when, at the end of the process, he ensures the student knows it was a job well done.

A few quotes from Greitzer's student admirers:

- "I appreciate that much of the responsibility, accountability, organizational skills, and work ethic that I took from the class resulted from his high expectations for our performance and his confidence in our success."
- "Ed never passed up the opportunity to grill me on the technical content of our experiment (much to my chagrin at the time), but I owe a great deal of my ultimate success to him."
- "He always showed a genuine interest in hearing about my life, the work I was doing, and my plans for the future. I valued greatly the advice and perspective he provided."
- "I have the utmost respect for his work ethic, integrity, and attention to detail. I view Ed as a quintessential example of teaching and research excellence, and hope to someday emulate his methods as a professor myself."
- "A lack of understanding could not be sidestepped or brushed off, but required an acknowledgement of the issue and a commitment to find the answer. These values embodied by Professor Greitzer have made a direct impact on my ... life as an engineer."
- "In addition to having a very interactive teaching style, Prof. Greitzer constantly asks for feedback and criticism on how he might do a better job at teaching the class."

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The characteristically self-effacing Greitzer responded to the accolades by saying, "I'm overwhelmed at receiving the Baker Award. Undergraduate education is something special for MIT faculty. I'm particularly pleased because the award is described as being about appreciation and recognition from students — they're what this is all about."

While the Baker Award is based on student nominations, faculty members also offer effusive praise for their colleague.

AeroAstro department head Jaime Peraire says, "The Baker Award is well deserved for Ed and excellent news for the department. Year after year he's shown us that he is an exceptional teacher and mentor. He is an example for us all. I can't think of a more deserving candidate."

Institute Professor Sheila Widnall adds, "Ed is the rock upon which we build our excellence in undergraduate education and the glue that holds us together."

A typical Greitzer story is told by former AeroAstro department head Earll Murman, Ford Professor Emeritus of Engineering:

"Early one morning when I was department chair, I was informed that student hackers had dismantled a very large skeleton of a jet engine and reassembled it in the small lecture space at the front of 35-225. Ed was scheduled to lecture there at 9 a.m. I telephoned him. In 30 minutes, he was at the front of the lecture hall, beginning his lecture on propulsion, a lecture that was not scheduled for several more weeks! Ed had grasped the teachable moment, gained the respect of the hackers, and captured the interest of all of the students."

Greitzer, who received his BA, MS, and PhD from Harvard University, has been on the AeroAstro faculty since 1977. He is a former director of AeroAstro's Gas Turbine Laboratory and former deputy and associate department head. Between 1996 and 1998, he took leave from MIT to direct Aeromechanical, Chemical and Fluid Systems at the United Technologies Research Center. Greitzer teaches courses on propulsion, fluid dynamics and thermodynamics; his research interests include gas turbine engines, turbomachinery and propulsion. He has also been involved in numerous MIT collaborative endeavors with industry and other universities.

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