

Rev. Robert A. Wild, S.J., President of the University, with Professor Thomas J. Hammer, at the Alumni Memorial Union on the occasion of the 2004 Pere Marquette Dinner



This past year, Marquette University selected Professor Thomas J. Hammer of the Law School as the recipient of the University's Robert and Mary Gettel Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence. Professor Hammer had been nominated (quite unbeknownst to him) by several of his colleagues at the Law School, and his nomination was supported by letters from colleagues, students, and alumni.

The award was presented on May 6, 2004, at the University's annual Pere Marquette Dinner, an end-of-year gathering of faculty and administrators from across the University. Dr. Madeline Wake, Provost of the University, asked Dean Joseph D. Kearney to present the award on behalf of the University.

Remarks of Dean Joseph D. Kearney

in Presenting the University's Gettel Award for Teaching Excellence

Thank you, Dr. Wake. Permit me to begin by explaining why it is such a privilege for me to present this award to Tom Hammer. Tom was the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs when I interviewed and was hired as a faculty member at the Law School. To this day, I teach an unusual seminar that he helped me to design in the months before I came on board. So it was some disappointment to me that, by the next fall when I arrived, Tom had yielded the baton of the associate deanship to another of our colleagues. (At the Law School, the associate deanship is a position that rotates among the faculty—apparently just frequently enough that whoever holds the position yields it to another colleague right before he or she has permanently ruined all relationships with faculty colleagues.)

In any event, although he was no longer associate dean, it was nonetheless to Professor Hammer I turned most frequently as a new faculty member to discuss teaching. It was Tom Hammer I sought out, for example, when I was determining the best way to design a comprehensive final exam for my civil procedure course. It was Tom Hammer with whom I would speak when I was seeking to find the right balance between being demanding of our students and being understanding or patient. In fact, to this day it is with Professor Hammer more than with anyone else that I continue to talk about the central mission of the Law School, which is the teaching of our students.

I do not think that my experiences as Tom's colleague on the faculty are unique. The faculty letters in support of Professor Hammer's nomination are striking. They include an individual letter from each living faculty member of the Law School who has been privileged to win one of the University's teaching awards: legendary Professor Emeritus Jim Ghiardi, Marquette Law School class of 1942, Professor Jack Kircher, Professor (and this evening's Master of Ceremonies) Dan Blinka, and, someone whom many of you will recall, former Professor Christine Wiseman. But many—in fact, most—of Tom's other law school colleagues are represented as well in the dossier. It is evident that Marquette Law School faculty regard Professor Hammer as a model worthy of our emulation as a teacher.

And now that I serve as an administrator as well as a faculty member, I have an additional perspective on Tom's undertakings. I will pass over his extraordinary work with respect to the criminal law in Wisconsin and his service to the bar and public policy of this state—matters that are well reflected in Tom's dossier. I wish to recount instead his seemingly more mundane or less glamorous undertakings in rebuilding our clinical and externship program, which have impressed even national authorities in recent years. Simply put, Tom's work has been extraordinary.

Permit me to give some brief context: It has always seemed to a number of us that, as a Jesuit law school, we have a duty to ensure that our students have the opportunity during

their law school educations to get a direct sense of how they can use their developing professional skills actually to help people in society. Without providing excessive detail about them, it is enough to say that our clinical and externship programs are the primary means whereby we can give our students this opportunity. Unfortunately, for several years in the mid-1990s, these programs had fallen into some disrepair and neglect.

Professor Hammer then volunteered to take over the programs and, with his extensive connections in the Wisconsin legal community and with his deep dedication to our students, in short order has built up those programs to a point where I can feel comfortable in saying that I would match our programs against those of virtually any other law school in the country. Putting together these curricular offerings is an extraordinarily time-intensive venture: it requires making individual arrangements with such diverse entities as the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the state and federal public defender's offices, and the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. Tom does this essentially by himself and, far more importantly, does it extraordinarily well. The benefits to the Law School are incalculable. To me as dean, this last example of his work with respect to our clinical and fieldwork offerings best captures the essence of Professor Hammer's contribution to this urban Jesuit law school and university.

But ultimately of course it is not in the views or experiences of his faculty or administrator colleagues, either at the Law School or across the University, that we will find Tom Hammer's true measure as a teacher. It is in the views and experiences of his students. Consider some of the student commentaries on Professor Hammer's teaching, as summarized by my colleague and current Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Matt Mitten: "Representative of student comments regarding [Professor Hammer's] teaching," Matt writes, "are: 'excellent preparation and organization of material'; 'an expert in th[e] area [of criminal law and procedure]'; 'inspiring to be his student'; and 'I can't imagine I'd have a better professor while I

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punctuality, respect, candor, the necessity of preparedness, and generally, how to speak up with confidence.

am at Marquette.” The letters from alumni are perhaps even more striking, for the lasting mark that Professor Hammer has made is of course especially evident in those.

So what is it that students, past and present, have appreciated? As with so much good teaching, it is a mix of things. It is well stated by one of Professor Hammer’s former students, who wrote as follows:

My first impression of Professor Hammer in the classroom [in Criminal Procedure] left me somewhat intimidated. He randomly called on students, expecting them to be fully prepared. He asked students to stand when called on and to speak up to the class. Students were well-advised to be punctual, and not to wear baseball caps. Certainly, it was not good practice to open a soda can during his lecture. But Professor Hammer was well-prepared, knowledgeable, interesting, enthusiastic, and a wonderful storyteller, often weaving “war stories” into the discussion. His style of teaching caught my attention immediately, and it had a lasting effect. In each of the classes I took with him, he taught beyond the substantive material. He taught and reinforced skills that have been vital to my success both in law school and at work:

my mind a story recounted to me by the greatest teacher I have known, my late mother, who for many years taught English at a local college in Chicago. Shortly after she graduated from Loyola University in 1952 and started teaching at an all-girls Catholic high school, she found herself particularly frustrated with her inability to explicate perfectly a difficult Shakespeare sonnet. When she recounted this to a wise nun at the school, the response of the seasoned teacher was, “My dear, haven’t you realized that it is *you* they are studying most?”

Professor Hammer plainly realizes that most important of points. He provides a model of excellence to emulate. All of us at Marquette University—Tom Hammer’s university, for he not only teaches here but also holds both his undergraduate and law degrees from here—all of us, administrators, teachers, and students, are the beneficiaries of his awareness and his commitment to teaching excellence.

Tom, would you please come to the stage? •

Remarks of Professor Thomas J. Hammer in Accepting the Gettel Award for Teaching Excellence

Thank you, very, very much, Dean Kearney. I do truly appreciate your kind words. Father Wild, Dr. Wake, Trustee Stollenwerk, Former Recipients of the Teaching Award, Dear Colleagues and Friends:

One of the perks of receiving a teaching excellence award is being able to invite your family to this special occasion. I am very pleased to be joined tonight by my dear wife, Patty, our son, Matt, who is just finishing up his freshman year as an undergraduate student here at Marquette, and our daughter, Lauren. I am also very grateful that my mother and stepfather, Edna and Vic Sprtel, could be here with me tonight. It is wonderful to be surrounded by family at moments like this.

I am deeply, deeply honored to receive this award. This is true for a couple of reasons that I would like to share with you this evening. The first, I suppose, is obvious. To be recognized for excellence as a teacher, in a room that is full of excellent

teachers, at a University that places a high premium on quality teaching, is, quite honestly, a humbling and gratifying experience. I am sure that every prior recipient of this award knows exactly what I mean.

The second reason I am so honored to receive this award is not so obvious and is deeply personal. I am what some refer to as a member of the “2M” club because I did both my undergraduate and law studies here at Marquette. Because of that I have had the great privilege of being the student of several prior winners of the teaching excellence award.

As an undergraduate political science major, I had my first exposure to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights under the guiding hand of the legendary Fr. Virgil Blum. Dr. Jim Rhodes so inspired me in his political philosophy courses that I seriously considered pursuing graduate studies in that discipline. I took courses from John Krugler, Tom Anderson, and Tony Kuchan when they were just junior members of the faculty—but already standouts in the classroom. At the Law School, my teachers included some of the legends of Sensenbrenner Hall, such as Jim Ghiardi, Jack Kircher, and the late Ray Aiken. I also had the great fortune, soon after joining the faculty, to participate in a graduate seminar on the Civil War, a subject of special interest to me, that was taught by an icon in our History Department, the late Frank Klement. These teachers were masters at their craft. I know that from personal experience. And that is why it is such a special honor for me to have my name permanently added to a list that bears theirs.

My gratitude tonight is extended to Dean Kearney and to my colleagues at the Law School. Not only did they generously support my nomination for this award, but on a daily basis join me in our mutual commitment of providing a



first-rate legal education to our students. Special thanks also go to my colleague Dan Blinka, our master of ceremonies this evening, who I am told coordinated the preparation of the dossier in support of my nomination. Not only is Dan a master teacher who himself has won the teaching excellence award, but as we have learned tonight, he is also quite a master “master of ceremonies.” Most importantly to me, though, Dan is a master friend whose friendship I have cherished since we first worked together more than 25 years ago as colleagues in the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s Office.

I would like to congratulate the other two winners of 2004 teaching awards who will be recognized momentarily, as well as all those whose names were placed in nomination this year. I thank the Gettel family for its support of this award, the committee that chose me to receive it, the Good Lord for whatever teaching talent He may have sent my way, my students who have made teaching such a labor of love for me, my family whom I cherish more than words can express, and last, though certainly not least, Marquette University for giving me the opportunity for almost a quarter-century to do what I love doing.

Thank you very, very much. •