



ROLLIN HOTCHKISS, a UNL civil engineering professor, lectures to his Wednesday class. Hotchkiss received the James M. Robbins Excellence in Teaching Award this spring.

SANDY SUMMERS/DN

Professor's zest for teaching nets award

BY LINDSAY YOUNG
Staff Reporter

Rollin Hotchkiss gets excited about what he teaches, and his students have noticed.

Hotchkiss, associate professor of civil engineering, won the James M. Robbins Excellence in Teaching Award in May, given to one teacher nationwide by Chi Epsilon, a civil engineering student honorary society. Hotchkiss was nominated by members of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln chapter of Chi Epsilon.

Hotchkiss said he was honored with the student nomination and thought he was nominated because of his love and enthusiasm for his job.

"Students notice my enthusiasm for what I teach - that I actually care about what I teach," he said.

The honorary society award is given annually to a civil engineering teacher, and the contest follows a progression upward.

Hotchkiss' student nomination along with a statement about his teaching philosophy were turned into a district competition. This district consists of seven states in the Midwest.

After winning the district competition, Hotchkiss' nomination forms and philosophy statement were passed on to the national competition. They were

evaluated, and he was chosen by a panel of university administrators to win the national prize.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Brigham Young University and his master's degree at Utah State University, Hotchkiss went to work full time for the Tennessee Valley Authority as a flood hydrologist.

He taught part time at the University of Tennessee, and it was during this time, he said, that he decided what he really wanted to do - teach.

He received his doctorate at the University of Minnesota and eight years ago came to teach full time at UNL.

Aside from teaching, Hotchkiss does research projects and service, serves on professional committees and has, in the past, been the adviser of UNL's Chi Epsilon.

Apart from this award, Hotchkiss also enjoys the intangible rewards he receives as a teacher.

He said he likes to see his students understand the information he presents to them.

"The ultimate reward is to see the light of understanding in a student's eyes," he said.

This, he said, is the reason he teaches.

Hotchkiss said he owes his positive teaching experiences to his students.

"I would like to compliment the Nebraska students. They are hard-working, ready and willing to learn. I've been pleased," he said.

Hotchkiss said it was important for him to mix his out-of-school experiences into the classroom and said these experiences are important to a professor.

"A professor needs to live a full life," he said.

Hotchkiss is married and has four children. He collects root beer and is an avid photographer and bicyclist.

He uses these hobbies in his teaching. He has used his root beer collection and his biking as examples in his fluid mechanics course.

Hotchkiss said that it was good to bring outside activities to the classroom because students see a broader perspective.

Hotchkiss, originally from southern California, said he enjoyed working at the university level because the students who he taught wanted to be there and were there because they chose to be.

His focus on the university and his students will be awarded when he attends the national meeting for Chi Epsilon in April.

There, they will recognize his efforts in the university setting and present him with the student-nominated award.

Kiewit gives \$15 million donation to new NU technology building

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said. Regent Nancy O'Brien, who fought for the institute's Omaha location, said the Kiewit gift shows the business community and Omaha business leaders' commitment to the project.

"Everyone had to come together for this project," she said, including private business, the Nebraska Legislature, Gov. Ben Nelson and the university.

Nelson, Sen. Joyce Hillman of Gering and NU Foundation President Terry Fairfield participated in the groundbreaking ceremony

with Scott, Kiewit and Smith and symbolized the statewide effort to create the institute.

Business leaders promised \$40 million to help fund the institute, O'Brien said. They have given about \$30 million so far, and the Kiewits' gift covers the business community's funding commitment to constructing the institute's home, she said.

O'Brien also said she found the Kiewit name's association with the institute significant.

"Peter Kiewit was a strong business leader and stood for innovation in education," she said.

O'Brien said the institute's

Omaha location may have helped bring funding from the Kiewits, who are Omaha natives.

Peter Kiewit Sr., called the "Colossus of Roads" by Forbes magazine, was born in Omaha in 1900 and became one of the nation's largest road builders after World War II, constructing more miles of the U.S. Interstate Highway system than any other contractor.

He also graduated from Central High in Omaha and helped his brothers' construction company build Nebraska landmarks including Benson High School, the Joslyn Art Museum and the tower of the Nebraska State Capitol.

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