

9-23-1992

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "09/23/1992 - Guernsey" (1992). 1992. 786.
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92-301

September 23, 1992

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BGU PROFESSOR

CHARLESTON, IL--Board of Governors Universities Distinguished Professor Bruce Guernsey will be among those present for the announcement of Eastern Illinois University's new president at today's (Thursday, Sept. 24) Board of Governors meeting on the Eastern campus.

The EIU English professor's teaching abilities recently earned him the BGU Distinguished Professorship, the most prestigious faculty honor in the five-university system. Guernsey has also received four Faculty Excellence Awards from Eastern.

To earn the top honor, he competed against professors from Chicago State University (Chicago), Governors State University (University Park), Northeastern Illinois University (Chicago) and Western Illinois University (Macomb).

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Guernsey, who is respected by students and peers for his teaching ability and the knowledge he imparts, says teaching to him "is a way of learning."

"I'm in the classroom to learn as much as the students...I try not knowing too much or being overprepared. I rely on my ability to respond to students' questions, my sense of humor and my skill at making things up as I go along."

His approach to teaching receives high marks from Eastern students, such as senior English major James Sterling Taber of Oakland, who said, "Dr. Guernsey has tremendous energy and challenges his students to think for themselves. He truly loves what he is doing."

Guernsey said he evokes interest in his classes by speaking the same language as his students and by remembering that he too was once a student. "I also make every attempt to 'humanize' the material I present--to relate it to everyday symbols."

Though his experiences as a Fulbright scholar in Greece and Portugal have taught him about other cultures, they have also given him greater insight into the American culture and the American language, enabling him to become a better teacher.

Guernsey, who has taught at such prestigious institutions as the College of William and Mary and The Johns Hopkins University, said what attracted him to Eastern 14 years ago was the university's emphasis on teaching. "I like being at an institution where the highest priority is excellence in teaching and where faculty genuinely care about their students. I also enjoy the lack of pretension in our students."

"I feel privileged to be doing what I love," added Guernsey, who measures his own success by the accomplishments of his students.

Guernsey does not limit his interest to teaching, however. He has had two books of poetry published and has finished a third. He has also had more than 200 poems published in magazines, such as The Atlantic and Poetry.

He has also given talks on Abraham Lincoln's poetry before local historical groups and has spent time with teachers in the community sharing ways to teach poetry to their students. He has also brought visiting writers to the Eastern campus.

Guernsey received a bachelor's degree in English from Colgate University, master's degrees in English and creative writing from the University of Virginia and The Johns Hopkins University, respectively, and doctoral degree from the University of New Hampshire.

He lives in rural Charleston with his daughter, Megan, a senior at Charleston High School. His son, Brendan, is attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison.