

Letter in Support of Dale Easley

This term I have had the pleasure of teaching *New Orleans: Geology and Jazz* with Dale Easley. Before this I casually knew Dale through faculty activities. I was aware of how much work he put in to helping build a science program, fostering a group of dedicated science majors, planning for the opening the Goldthorp Science Hall and creating a stimulating environment in that space. All this in addition to the demanding job of chairing the department shows Dale's tremendous work ethic and commitment to his career. There is something unique about the leadership in the UD EVS program, stemming from the competence of the faculty and their ability to work together. The students sense this cohesiveness and respond.

Serving on the COAC (Curriculum Committee), which Dale also chairs, I became impressed with his leadership and the smooth and efficient manner with which he cuts to the issue saving us from wasted time and random discussion on trivial topics. He does this in gentle way, simply by pointing at the scheduled agenda and asking for comments in e-mail to be shared at a future meeting. This sounds so basic but Dale leads the committee without ruffling any feathers. On top of this he is also involved with the difficult task of implementing the J-term, which has raised issues from various faculty members in programs that would be drastically affected. The faculty seem to be quite comfortable with Dale's leadership and he seems to have earned trust and respect from his colleagues. Dale works tirelessly on these administrative tasks, which alone is enough for me to admire him.

However, the thing I see most impressive about Dale is his commitment and passion for his students and the ideals of learning on a college campus, especially one like UD. While on the New Orleans trip I met several of Dale's former students from the University of New Orleans. The four students I met are presently working in non-profit or government agencies, dealing with environmental issues. From our discussions it is obvious that Dale's impact was huge and that there are many others who were classmates

together that still have strong ties, resulting from those experiences with Dale. One assessment study has shown that one-on-one contact is one of the strongest contributors to student learning. Many schools cannot or do not afford this luxury, but Dale has taken on the responsibility of mentoring his students and preparing them for both a career and a life beyond college. Study trips have been helpful, but even the frequent cookouts or social activities hosted by Dale help strengthen the bond, leading to academic success.

Over the course of the semester in the *Geology and Jazz* course I was impressed each class period with Dale's thorough and thoughtful preparation. In an interdisciplinary seminar like this there is a great deal of content and little class time. Much of the teaching is "seed planting" so that the students have questions to ask and answer in their individual experiences. Dale plants these seeds and nurtures them throughout the process. We had twelve students with many diverse viewpoints on the New Orleans trip. The group had a wonderful spirit and sense community, despite ideological differences and diverse upbringings. What was amazing was watching how Dale dealt with this, and being involved in the process, often having discussions with Dale late into the evening as to how to approach this issue or that and how to lay things out for the next class period. This was a joy for me – I have always enjoyed team teaching but something really clicked here. An emotional bond was formed in the group and I became aware of how Dale's former students from UNO must feel about him and about each other. Dale is ever present on campus and involved with numerous activities outside his job description, whether it is singing a tune from *Shrek* on a fund-raising concert or preaching on "Vocation" in Tuesday morning Chapel. Dale truly understands the concept of vocation and pours his core values into his teaching. On a personal and professional I have great respect for Dale and am happy to contribute this letter.

James Sherry