

Chemistry Professor Thomas D. Varberg Receives Thomas Jefferson Award

St. Paul, Minn. - Thomas D. Varberg, DeWitt Wallace Professor of Chemistry, has been awarded the 2016 Thomas Jefferson Award. The award was established in 1961 by the Robert Earll McConnell Foundation to honor faculty members who exemplify the principles and ideals of Thomas Jefferson. Varberg was selected by a committee of past Jefferson Award winners.

Macalester president Brian Rosenberg announced the award at the April faculty meeting and read from this citation:

During the 1991-92 academic year, the Macalester College chemistry department embarked on a search to find a successor to Emil Slowinski, who had announced his intention to retire. Slow's shoes were a challenge to fill, but Macalester found a Cinderella candidate in you, Tom Varberg. You had what appear to be the essential qualifications of most Macalester chemists—an undergraduate degree from Hamline and/or a doctorate from MIT. Indeed, you had both. But Macalester had to wait an additional year to obtain your services because an NSF-NATO Postdoctoral Fellowship at Oxford University was too compelling to pass up. Thus, you started your Macalester career with a leave of absence.

Since your arrival in 1993, your manifold contributions to the College have repeatedly demonstrated the wisdom of your appointment. Your achievements as a scholar and a teacher set a formidable standard. You are the author or co-author of 34 refereed papers published in the most prestigious journals in your field of molecular spectroscopy, many of them written with your research students. There have been 37 of these undergraduate collaborators, almost all of whom have gone on to earn postgraduate degrees—thanks to your model and your mentorship.

Your 73 conference papers and 19 invited lectures also acknowledge the contributions of your student collaborators. But you have collaborators all over the world, consequences of sabbaticals and other temporary appointments at ETH in Zurich; the Universities of Oxford, Florence, Sydney, and British Columbia; and the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Boulder, Colorado. Your research has been supported by grants totaling almost \$1,250,000—most of it supplied by people in this room and our fellow-citizens via the National Science Foundation. On balance, this has been a better investment than most governmental expenditures.

Your scholarly productivity has not been at the expense of your teaching; indeed it has enhanced your effectiveness in the classroom. You have taught ten different courses, all of them central to the chemistry curriculum, and are an exemplar of the ideal teacher/scholar in the context of a liberal arts college. This has been recognized with a DeWitt Wallace Endowed Professorship, and those who heard your inaugural address



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no doubt remember it as a model of explaining sophisticated research in clear, compelling, and captivating terms. In short, you demonstrate the love of learning and power of communication that characterized Thomas Jefferson. But Jefferson's greatest contributions were in public service, and that may also be true of the Thomas we celebrate today.

You chaired the chemistry department for six years; served terms on most if not all of the standing committees of the faculty, often as chair; attempted to maintain order and decorum as Presiding Officer of the Faculty (no mean feat); kept them in line at commencement as Faculty Marshall; and seemingly always said "yes" when asked to serve on ad hoc committees—often but not always important ones. It is obvious, Tom, that you are trusted, respected, admired, and liked by members of the administration, your faculty and staff colleagues, and the hundreds of students who have learned from you. It is an honor for the past recipients of the Thomas Jefferson Award to invite you to join our group and bring it greater distinction.

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,138 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at [macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu) (<http://www.macalester.edu/>).

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