Preface

The University of Rochester is one of the world’s great research universities. Our primary commitment is to the elimination of ignorance and the advancement of knowledge. The values of research guide undergraduate education in the College and shape a distinctive environment for teaching.

Two ideals sustain pure research: the radical freedom to ask and answer any question and the professional expertise to make the questions purposive and the answers probative. Real learning requires both the freedom to ask and the knowledge to answer.

Researchers know that there is a relationship between affect and cognition. We learn best what engages us most. Learning is an act of freedom; it therefore is an act of will. Ultimately, no one is forced into learning. It comes from the heart. Our faculty achieve excellence in research and scholarship because they are free to follow their intellectual passions, to study what matters to them. It stands to reason that our students should be able learn the same way.

The Rochester Curriculum, with its unique framework of majors and clusters, has no required subjects. Rather, it builds a college education by merging and matching the faculty’s curiosity and achievement with our students’ interests and aspirations. The Rochester Curriculum invites students to study what they love, to let their interests drive their learning. It encourages faculty to teach the same way.

In the College, therefore, we do not craft courses in order to fulfill curricular requirements external to our subjects. In principle, rather, our teaching is internally motivated, an expression of intellectual authenticity, an exercise of freedom of mind. This formula allows progress in faculty research continually to affect teaching, to keep course content fresh. It thus preserves educational excite-
ment at all levels of instruction, from introductory through advanced courses.

The Goergen Award for Individual Achievement and Artistry in Undergraduate Teaching displays this special character of a Rochester education. In this third volume—as in the prior two—the essays by the award’s recipients illustrate the remarkable education that results when teaching and learning reciprocate one another as expressions of unfettered interest and unbounded inquiry. The Goergen Awards help us concretely to see, celebrate, and maintain the centrality of freedom in the work of learning. They have helped us talk to one another across fields about teaching and learning and thus palpably to experience our common vocation as teaching scholars. The Goergen Awards have changed our college and made us better.

The Web page of the College begins with the words, “Excellence requires freedom.” This phrase captures the essence of a Rochester education. Because of the generosity and vision of Robert and Pamela Goergen, through our teaching, we are making these words a reality.

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