

Joseph Templeton – Jefferson Citation 2014

By Marcey Waters

The criteria for the Thomas Jefferson Award, “that member of the academic community who through *personal influence* and performance of duty in teaching, writing, and scholarship has best exemplified the ideals and objectives of Thomas Jefferson,” describe one person more than any other I know on campus: my friend and colleague, Joe Templeton.

Many of you here know Joe. Indeed, it is difficult to be at UNC for long without getting to know Joe Templeton, with his quick wit, warmth, immense intellect, and his involvement in everything. Nonetheless, I will take a moment to provide a bit of background and summarize his accomplishments.

Joe Templeton, Venable Professor of chemistry at UNC and Special Assistant to the Chancellor, started his formal education in a one room country schoolhouse in Red Rock, Iowa, where he spent his elementary years, before school consolidation and a bus took him to Knoxville for junior high and high school. He attended the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena as an undergraduate before pursuing his graduate studies at Iowa State University in Ames. After a one year postdoctoral position at Imperial College in London with Nobel Laureate Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson, Joe joined the faculty at Carolina in 1976. Joe rose rapidly through the ranks, establishing himself as an world-renowned inorganic chemist: he has over 190 peer-reviewed publications, over 40 PhD's emanating from his lab, and a long list of professional activities outside of the university, including organizing conferences, serving on advisory boards and panels, and the like. He has also earned a reputation as one of the best, most challenging, quirkiest, and most engaging educators in the Chemistry department, especially among the first year graduate students. I know this because I've seen it first hand, having team-taught a graduate course with Joe multiple times. Joe likes to ask obtuse questions to the class and then call on students, which intimidates them for the first week or so. Slowly they catch on that Joe is joking half the time, and can't hear their responses regardless of whether they are right or wrong. By the third week, everyone is actively engaged, laughing, and learning the material with a depth of understanding that is difficult to achieve.

While Joe's teaching and research prowess put him among the best of the best of the professors at UNC, he has also taken on many leadership roles all across campus over the past 25 years. After serving as chair of the chemistry department from 1990 to 1995 he worked in the dean's office of the College of Arts and Sciences for three years before taking thirty-two undergraduates to London for a semester in 1999. Since returning from London Joe has chaired the summer reading selection committee and also served for three years as a program officer for the National Science Foundation. [stop and think about that for a second – chaired the summer reading selection committee and served as a program officer for the NSF; sound Jeffersonian?] More recently he was Chair of the Faculty (2006-2009) before representing the faculty on the General Alumni

Association's Board of Directors. He is now entering his sixth year leading the Carolina Counts program to implement recommendations from the Bain consultant report addressing operational efficiencies at UNC. He has been Special Assistant to the Chancellor since the summer of 2009. Most recently, he became the program director of the Chancellor's Science Scholars program, which aims to increase diversity among future leaders in science, and is based on the Meyerhoff program at UMBC. Additionally, he is the PI on a multi-million dollar grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to help fund the program.

His roles both on campus as an administrator and off campus as an ambassador for UNC are ones he tackles with enthusiasm, wisdom, and wit. Whether attending a board meeting for the Research Triangle Park Foundation, guiding a group of alumni around Peru, leading a group of incoming first year students in the summer reading program, or gently encouraging a young faculty member to move in the best direction for her future career, Joe is unusual in the breadth of talent he brings to every interaction. He has a way of leading people that makes one feel honored to be included. And although he is an exceptionally busy man who wears many hats, he always takes the time to stop and say hello, share pictures of his grandchildren, or have a laugh about something.

Joe Templeton exemplifies the ideals and objectives of Thomas Jefferson in everything he does. Jefferson's emphasis on education of the citizenry, civic duty, and participation is embodied in Joe's consistent, selfless, and high-impact service and leadership in every arena of this campus. This award to recognize faculty contributions aligned with Jeffersonian ideals is the greatest compliment one can receive in terms of peer recognition here at Carolina, and we honor Joe Templeton with this well deserved award today.