

THE RALPH WILLIAMS AWARD

Each year, the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan provides hundreds of students with courses in their major field of study and thousands of others with instruction in writing, literature, culture, rhetoric, and communication. While the universal nature of these subjects provides an impetus for many who enroll, a significant reason for the Department's enduring popularity is its legacy of award-winning teachers, many of whom have become the subject of long-standing legends and countless campus conversations.

Without question, among the most well-known, longest serving instructors to have engendered such discussions is Professor Ralph Williams.

For four decades, Williams drew to his lecture hall – his stage, really – not only registered students but also passers-by, visiting parents, other professors, and alumni. He has, through his unique talents, enriched and entertained, enlivened and educated so many thousands of young lives during his tenure at the University. Who else but Williams could have drawn a full house for a voluntarily Sunday evening discussion of the Book of Job? Or convincingly told his students, “You’ll soon get used to Middle English?” Or helped bring to Ann Arbor the Royal Shakespeare Company?

While his retirement in 2009 left holes in many hearts, his legacy of superior instruction and lecturing lives on in his colleagues who have helped to make English a crucial academic hub for undergraduates at Michigan.



Making the Difference

THE RALPH WILLIAMS EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

To extend Professor Williams' impact for many years to come, the Department of English Language and Literature has established an annual award to encourage and cultivate the unique talents that great lecturers bring to their classes. The Ralph Williams Excellence in Teaching Award will recognize the achievements of those English faculty members who follow Professor Williams' example, reaching a broad undergraduate audience with the best that literary study has to offer. Gifts of all sizes can contribute to the success of this fund and to the ongoing excellence in undergraduate teaching at UM. Both expendable and endowed gifts are welcome as we strive for a goal of a \$100,000 endowment to provide \$5,000 in annual support. This fund will be launched in April 2010 at a conference in honor of Professor Williams.

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