



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

Award for Excellence in Teaching
2016

Distinguished Teaching Award

DR. BENEDICT NEWLING

Since joining the Department of Physics at the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton campus) in 2002, Dr. Benedict Newling has been widely known for his generous spirit, for his boundless energy and enthusiasm, and for his tremendous dedication to teaching.

When asked what was most helpful about his teaching, numerous students point to his passion, both for the material and for teaching it. One student wrote: “The enthusiasm that Dr. Newling has while teaching is unbelievable and keeps everyone interested 100% of the time.” His colleagues also benefit greatly from his enthusiasm and generosity, as he is always the first in the department to volunteer for any teaching- or outreach-related task. He also regularly participates in teaching and learning development sessions and is always willing to make time for colleagues who want to talk about teaching. As one colleague put it: “I presume that Ben is indeed human and that he does occasionally feel tired and beleaguered, but I have not seen it nor can I quite picture it.”

Not content with being a “popular prof,” Ben works continuously to improve his teaching. He keeps abreast of educational best practices, as well as the recent findings from physics education research. In recent years, he has undertaken his own investigation of pedagogical questions. He has adopted many creative teaching strategies which include: posting a lecture’s “take home message” at the start of class; developing a graphical timeline to provide students with a mental model of the course and the context of the current discussion; and asking students to respond to three questions regarding assigned readings—two “checkpoint” questions that test understanding and one that provides information for “just-in-time-teaching.” He also spends countless one-on-one hours working through problems with students in his office and has contributed to first-year support initiatives such as the UNBetween transition to university camp and Science 1001, a required first-year seminar course with the goal of fostering the academic skills necessary for success in university.

Everyone who knows Ben benefits from his presence at UNB. One colleague summarizes this brilliantly: “The tireless work Ben does to help his colleagues learn how to improve their practices constitutes, in and of itself, an impressive contribution to our educational community. The fact that he does all of this in addition to being an inspiring teacher to his many, many students, magnifies his contribution to a proportion that would seem daunting were he not so good-natured and helpful about it all.” His students, his colleagues and indeed anyone who has had the pleasure of interacting with him all agree that Dr. Benedict Newling richly deserves to be recognized with the 2016 Association of Atlantic Universities' Distinguished Teaching Award.