

## **Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography**

### **Dr Robert James Rogerson**

Dr. Bob Rogerson has been dedicated to teaching geography since he joined the Geography department at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1969. Among other academic leadership posts at Memorial, he was Head of Geography (1986-8) and Executive Director of Oceans 2000 (1988). He became Dean of Arts and Science at the University of Lethbridge in 1988 and went on to become Executive Director of the industry-funded "Canadian Centre for GIS in Education." He returned to the Department of Geography, The University of Lethbridge in 1992 and served as Chair from 1993 to 1996.

Following many years of research achievement in glaciology and geomorphology and supervision of a dozen successful graduate students, Bob Rogerson has devoted himself to the often under-rated calling of teaching undergraduate students. Each year Bob teaches one or two sections of introductory physical geography with enrolments as high as 180 students, the lecture and lab sections of introductory geology, intermediate level courses in geomorphology and an advanced course in glaciology and glacial geomorphology. He is an innovator and leader in pedagogy, although his emphasis has always been on student learning rather than teaching per se. His excellence lies in the creation of circumstances, often in laboratory or field situations, where students can make the most of their potential as self-taught learners.

Bob has developed three learning techniques that are especially worthy of note because each fosters participation in a joint educational experience, teaching students how to learn from each other. First, he has developed a system of individual and group graded "mini-tests" following his philosophy of student centred learning. Second, he has developed and refined poster-based research assignments and poster sessions as a way of developing a broad array of presentation, collaboration and research skills among his students. Student poster displays have become a favourite public event in the university and have done much to broaden the interest in geography on campus and to raise the profile of the department. Third, he has encouraged and supervised a number of students in the design and preparation of "virtual field trips" using world wide web technology as a dissemination medium.

Bob has participated in the university's Teaching Development initiative and has been an active member of an ad hoc teaching development group at The University of Lethbridge known as "Teaching in Focus." In 2000 this work culminated in *Forever Better: Continuous Quality Improvement in Higher Education*, which was coauthored with Peter Knight and Nola Aitken. Published by New Forums Press, Stillwater, Oklahoma. It is a marvellously creative yet pragmatic monograph. "This is not a book for bad teachers, although they will find it useful." *Forever Better* makes a really useful contribution because it recognizes the challenges imposed by growing class sizes and the many calls upon our time in contemporary academe. It argues for a liberal education foundation yet recognizes the labour market's demand for practical employable skills. Finally in the book, as in Rogerson's teaching, there is no escaping a thoughtful appreciation and deep affection for our subject matter as geographers.