

Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography Dr Rob Milne

Rob Milne has been a steadfast contributor to teaching in the undergraduate program in Geography and Environmental Studies at Wilfrid Laurier and elsewhere. Dr. Milne began his teaching career at Laurier on a part-time basis in 1992. Remarkably, between 2003 and 2010 when he was hired into a full-time tenure-track position, he prepared 17 individual courses and taught a total of 64 courses to well over 6,000 students. In the two years following, he taught almost 2,700 students in 12 courses. Dr. Milne's teaching evaluations are outstanding; he continuously receives either the highest or among the highest teaching evaluations in Geography and Environmental Studies. Importantly in his evolution as a teacher, he has become a pivotal faculty member in the development of online courses at Laurier. His service and teaching intermingle in many ways. For example, his work designing online learning courses led to his involvement with the Technology, Learning and Teaching Steering Committee, the Student Evaluation for Music and Online Courses Committee, and the Bilateral Committee on Teaching Evaluation. The courses he has developed for Online Learning serve as models for others in the department and across Laurier. Dr. Milne is well respected for his contributions to on-line learning at Laurier, and he acts as a resource university-wide in terms of best practice models for on-line learning. As a consequence of his work, in 2013 Dr. Milne received the Wilfrid Laurier University Award for Teaching Excellence.

Dr. Milne's knowledge of ecology and environmental studies is clear from his academic record and his long association with various environmental groups. Dr. Milne's service to the outside community in this regard is impressive, and much of it links with his teaching and research activities. He has been a founding member of the highly-regarded 'Watershed Report Card', the objective of which is to provide community and local agencies a set of protocols to evaluate the development impacts and to initiate remediation efforts to restore aquatic systems to a 'healthy' state. Closely tied to his research and exhibiting a strong level of community service is his work with environmental programs such as the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists. As the co-director of the environmental programs of this organization, he has made summer employment possible for many university students, who work on a diverse range of projects such as water quality testing, habitat restoration, wildlife monitoring and mapping land-use changes. Such linkages provide meaningful and real experiences for his students. Many of the letters of support for his nomination from current and former students highlighted this influence, and indicated the lasting impression his teaching has had on them. His connection with local environmental issues and community groups are respected by many of the students in his classes, who found his passion for ecological research also encouraged them to enter the environmental profession.

Dr. Milne has an active research record, made all the more notable by the significant teaching load he carried for several years. Since Dr. Milne has instructed thousands of students over the last few years, both on-line and in class, the range of his teaching ability is not difficult to testify to. He has shown his ability to teach both large and small classes, and used various methods of engaging students in problem based learning. His inclusion of students in local environmental networks and research opportunities illustrates his consultation with students outside of class. It is also clear from several undergraduate letters submitted as part of his nomination package that Dr. Milne takes the time to consult and listen to his student's problems and concerns. As a result several students seek out his classes and have selected Geography and Environmental Studies as a minor or major solely because of his teaching. Dr. Milne has also been active in both undergraduate and graduate thesis supervision throughout his time at Laurier.

In closing, we are delighted that Dr. Rob Milne has been selected as the recipient of the 2014 Canadian Association of Geographers Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography. We feel he is long overdue such recognition for the immense contributions he has made to Geography and Environmental Studies education.