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President's Award for Outstanding Service

Summary:

(May 28, 2003)-In the world of academia according to Tom McRoberts, when University of Minnesota, Morris students succeed, the state and the world gain.

Indeed, many UMM students owe their success to McRoberts, who serves the Morris campus both as associate director of Continuing Education and as director of the Center for International Programs. Due to his longstanding and tireless efforts on behalf of University students, it does not surprise either students or colleagues that McRoberts is among those chosen this year to receive the (University of Minnesota) President's Award for Outstanding Service.

This University-wide award recognizes exceptional service and commitment to the University of Minnesota community by any active or retired member of the faculty or staff.

In his announcement, University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks stated "Your excellence is a model for your colleagues and co-workers to emulate. True to the mission of this land-grant institution, you have done more than your share to make this outstanding university one of the preeminent institutions in the nation."

Said McRoberts: "I am deeply honored to receive this award. I am also deeply appreciative to those who wrote on my behalf, especially to Paula O'Loughlin (associate professor of political science) and Karen Ellis (program associate in the Office of Continuing Education) for organizing the effort. I will be forever in their debt."

"In Tom's world view, the University's public purposes and his role as a part of the University originate in and are inextricably intertwined with this sacred trust of supporting students," according to materials submitted in support of his nomination for the award.

McRoberts' commitment to the University of Minnesota began immediately following his graduation from UMM in 1968. Since then, "he has been integral in UMM's growth and development into one of the country's top
public liberal arts colleges. He played a critical role in the transformation of Continuing Education and Extension first into University College, then into what is now the College of Continuing Education. In addition, his advising and mentoring activities reflect his willingness to do whatever is necessary to maximize student success and thus the University's public goals," said O'Loughlin.

Tim Droske '02, who now works in the Office of Admissions at UMM, said: "Tom helped me to realize how much I was capable of accomplishing and to set my sights as high as I wanted. His commitment to the students at (UMM) is without comparison. When a prospective student asks me what makes an education at UMM unique, all I have to do is explain what Tom McRoberts does for students at Morris every day."

McRoberts was among those who led the effort to help launch international and study abroad programs at UMM. He has always been the primary support for international students who come to the Morris campus. Students from such areas as Africa, Asia and the Middle East speak of McRoberts' important role in helping them acclimate to Morris, Minnesota finance their education participate in rewarding, educational opportunities and pursue their dreams. Over the past 10 years, more than 1,000 University of Minnesota students have benefitted from programs, forged primarily through the efforts of McRoberts.

"The development of the Gateway program, UMM's college-entry program targeting underserved student populations, provides an example of Tom's leadership in action," said Sandy Olson-Loy, vice chancellor for student affairs. "As the college looked for ways to enhance students' success at UMM, Tom articulated a deeply worthwhile goal: building a rich summer transition program to support students as they entered the college, easing what many described as an extremely difficult educational and cultural leap."

While McRoberts' many significant contributions across numerous programs and with countless constituencies have been recognized multiple times, he would be last in line to acknowledge his own achievements. He received the Morris Campus Student Association Outstanding Faculty Award in 1970, and was UMM's commencement speaker in 1981. His contributions to the University's Masters in Elementary Education program led to Recognition of Service Awards in both 1986 and 1988. In 1991, the University honored his advising efforts with its highest award for advising, the John Tate Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising. In addition, he received the all-University Academic Staff Award in 1993. And the list goes on.

"The list of his service is exhaustive, but, with Tom McRoberts, it is not simply the quantity of ways he has shown his devotion to the University that is remarkable but the particular quality of his dedication," said O'Loughlin.

History Professor Roland Guyotte agreed: "Tom combines insight, compassion, stamina and a sense of humor. He sees opportunities and he takes them. He accepts assignments others prefer not to take. He devises strategies others can carry on and moves to new challenges."
Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.