

# What makes a great university?

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2:04 p.m. EST December 1, 2016

Recently, an article appeared in the News Journal featuring a headline, “research could mean lower quality teaching,” indicating that a renewed emphasis on research at learning institutions such as the University of Delaware will come at the expense of teaching. As a longtime educator who has engaged significantly in both areas of scholarship and teaching, I have found their integration to be essential in preparing our students to solve society’s grand challenges.



What attracted me to a career in education in the first place was the infinite possibility that lay before me. The scope and hope for such possibility was not limited to a classroom or a lab. It was (and continues to be) the opportunity to contribute to a dynamic ecosystem of learning...where activities defined by research and discovery co-exist with those to teach and inspire. For me, and dare I assume most of my colleagues, the combination and synergy of teaching and scholarship are not mutually exclusive; they are stronger together.

The article noted that a critical question needs to be asked: “What kind of university is UD?”

That question is easy to answer, and it’s the same as it has always been. Our institution is a great one. Part of what makes it so great is a long recognized commitment to both research and teaching. The very first goal highlighted in our UD Mission is the cultivation of learning, and we know this is only made possible by the many professors across multiple disciplines who are endeared and respected by peers, students and alumni around the world. This is a value we revere and celebrate throughout the institution on a regular basis via programs such as our Francis Alison Award for noted contributions to fields of study and our Excellence in Teaching Awards for commitment to students. The names of these talented faculty members are showcased at Mentors’ Circle, which highlights Delaware’s proud legacy of teaching excellence and mentorship at the heart of our campus.

When you work at a place where people are changing the world – finding new ways to harness energy, empower humanity to overcome physical disabilities, transcend the boundaries of geography to advance communities that never knew hope before – and bring this back to the classroom, well, that’s more than powerful. It’s a unique privilege that most can only dream of experiencing in life ... to be enriched by an educational experience that relies upon teaching to advance research, and research to advance teaching.

So as we reflect on what makes a great university, I would urge anyone concerned about this topic to think about the big picture: our future. I believe that those of us who sign on to a career in education have a responsibility to intrigue minds, inspire courage, open hearts and build confidence in the next generation. The endurance of our university and the relevance we bring to the technology, creativity, health, economy, science, governance, environment and social responsibility of our world rests upon the progress of our future leaders. As students take on challenges ahead, they will do so inspired by the collaborative exposure of research and teaching that are born and nurtured at great institutions, such as our University of Delaware.

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