

Teaching Portfolio

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The comments of my colleagues, Margaret Ewalt (Spanish Department), Karlyn Crowley (English Department), Dennis Proffitt, (Department of Psychology), and Elliott Weiss (Darden School), are gratefully acknowledged, though any remaining defects are mine. Copyright © 2000 by Robert F. Bruner and the Trustees of the University of Virginia Darden School Foundation. Version 3.6, May 25, 2000.

I. Introduction: This is a Teaching Case

I prepared this portfolio for myself, to crystallize some insights about my path of development as a teacher. However, the reader can participate as well, using this narrative as the basis for a conversation about teaching skills, and how one describes them. This document is structured as a teaching case study¹ that invites the reader to reflect and converse. I beg the indulgence of readers outside the field of business administration since for the sake of brevity I have skipped discussing some terms, context, and assumptions. Also, the reader must remember that there are no “correct” teaching portfolios (though there may be many wrong ones); I merely hope that this stimulates reflections about the presentation of teaching work. The usual caveats apply: this is a work in progress; this is an abstraction of highlights rather than every detail; the aim is not to present effective or ineffective professional work, but rather to stimulate the reader’s reflection.

A case study assigned in business school is usually accompanied by a few study questions to guide the student. I reflect this assignment first toward the case, then toward the reader: strong as the temptation may be to critique *this* document, my hope is that the reader will use it primarily to reflect on his or her own work as a teacher. Here are some assignment questions for this case:

1. What and how does Bob Bruner teach? Why?
2. One attribute of successful professionals is integration or connectivity among various work activities. Where is the “connectivity” within Bob Bruner’s teaching activities and among his teaching, research, and administrative service to the school?
3. What kinds of evidence does he offer of teaching effectiveness?
4. How has he grown as a teacher?
5. What insights does this offer for your own development as a teacher?
6. How might you describe your own work as a teacher?

II. Teaching Responsibilities

My teaching responsibilities fall into five categories. Each is briefly described below:

- **MBA Classroom teaching.** Typically, I teach two sections of a course each semester. First Year Finance in the fall and the second-year MBA elective, Mergers and Acquisitions in the spring. Each section has about 60 students. I teach both courses by the case method (see the next section for a discussion of this.)
- **Executive education classroom teaching.** Currently I participate in the delivery of four short executive education programs at Darden, and direct one of these.
- **Preparation of teaching materials.** I write 15-20 new items of teaching material per year. These include case studies, teaching notes, chapters, technical notes, exercises, etc. I regard this activity to be part of “teaching” because this writing is aimed, quite simply, at enhancing students’ learning, as well as the classroom performance of my colleagues and myself. My research and teaching tend to connect through my preparation of teaching materials.
- **Supervise MBA-level business studies and Ph.D. candidates.** Typically, I supervise about five second-year MBA students in their preparation of a report, case study, or project. I have chaired the dissertation committees of two Ph.D. candidates at Darden, and regularly work informally with candidates at other schools.
- **Teaching about teaching.** I take opportunities to help colleagues acquire teaching skills.

¹ A business case study is a 10 to 20-page document that describes an administrative situation and is the basis for class discussion culminating in an action recommendation.

Typically, this entails observing colleagues teach², giving presentations at conferences and seminars on teaching, presenting resource materials on my website³, and co-editing an electronic journal on teaching⁴.

III. Teaching Approach

I teach by the case method of instruction. The best cases present practical, realistic, and compelling business problems in which the task of the student is to recommend a solution. I arrive at the classroom 15 minutes before the class begins, spread out my notes, and then step back to absorb the mood of the students, their energy level, the state of the room (hot/cold, dark/light, clean/dirty). This is precious time: I'm revving up, and imagining how the next 90 minutes will go. A few students will come forward with questions, which I gladly field, knowing that it saves larger chunks of time back at the office later on.

I start class punctually with a "cold-call," inviting a student to describe the problem in the case, any analysis he or she did, and recommendations. By starting the class this way, I seek to focus the discussion on decision rather than on analysis. Cold-calls are a common practice at Darden, and students prepare for them. Nevertheless, I usually give the student a few minutes to collect his or her thoughts while I invite the rest of the class to discuss their key takeaways from my preceding class meeting with them—this is a great way to warm up the discussion and helps create conceptual linkage from one class meeting to the next.

Then the student whom I have cold-called gives a 10-minute impromptu presentation, at the end of which many hands are in the air and the real discussion begins. At this point, teaching gets messy. I prepare to teach each case for 1-3 hours the night before (plus 1-2 more hours in a teaching team if it is a team-taught course)—the product of this is a few yellow pages of notes, which lay out my own analysis of the case. One of these pages summarizes three⁵ teaching objectives for the class, and an outline of questions. In no sense is the list of questions a "script"⁶; instead, it is a simple mental map of how I *might* get from an opening expression of the case problem through to some kind of closure. But the reality of most cases and discussions is that there are numerous possible paths through the maze. My summary page is mainly a compass to orient me in the midst of a possibly turbulent case discussion.

After the cold-call, I like to call on many students. This is inclusive in the section community; it builds synergy among students. I encourage students to debate with each other, and challenge them with paradoxes, possible objections, and anecdotes. I like a *lively* discussion and might intervene with the windy, droning student. All the while, I make notes furiously on the chalkboard. My handwriting, never the best, degenerates as the energy level rises in the room. I love to use colored chalk to highlight points of contention, bright ideas, and dim ones. I draw arrows from one section of the board to another to

² Typically, I observe 5 classes per year, offering oral and written comments. In connection with the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program, I mentored Cheryl Jones, an Assistant Professor at UVA's School of Nursing.

³ See <http://faculty.darden.edu/brunerb/>.

⁴ See *Educator* published on the Financial Economics Network, www.ssrn.com.

⁵ You will be more effective if you can say succinctly what you are trying to accomplish in each class. Of course, there is no magic to *three* objectives.

⁶ Early in my teaching, the list of questions *was* a script, from which I later learned to relax as I accumulated experience. Occasionally when I teach a case for the first time, I might follow a more scripted plan. The trap that scripts pose is that the instructor stops listening to the students.

highlight linkage of ideas. (By the end of the class period my chalkboards look like abstract art, drawing hoots of laughter from colleagues who happen by.)

I adore the electricity of a good case discussion. It feels like we collectively make magic. The students give me energy that I reflect back in the form of banter, humor, rapid movement around the room, chalkboard work, and more questions. After an especially active discussion, I'll have chalk all over me. Teaching back-to-back classes is arduous, something I avoid.

Teaching is a performing art; I use any artifice I can to engage and energize the students. Humor is an important instrument. I fail miserably with canned jokes, monologues, and set-piece humor. Instead, I rely successfully on banter—to be good at this, the instructor must *listen* very well. I avoid like the plague sarcasm and humor based on stereotypes.

Most discussions have one or more moments where the insights suddenly crystallize. Engineering these is not something I map precisely. They occur involuntarily in a section, almost like a sneeze. I recognize techniques for accelerating or delaying the tipping points, but ultimately, I believe in the efficacy of the process: if the instructor leads the discussion effectively, the discussions will crystallize when the section is ready. One must trust the process. As Montaigne said, “It is the journey, not the arrival, that matters.”

How to close the class discussion is one of the toughest decisions. Sometimes, the best course is to do nothing: simply let the issues hang out there for the students to mull over before the next class. But usually, I like to take a vote if there are competing alternative recommendations, or invite a student to sum up the discussion, or ask the opener to say what he or she has learned or concluded from the class period. Closing with reflections on the recommendations for the case problem helps return the attention of students to decision-making and action-taking.

After class, I return to my office promptly, make notes on students who participated in the discussion, and try to recharge for the next task of the day. In noting student participation, I especially acknowledge the quality of contribution. But at the least, I like to see a steady pattern of effort. Midway through the course, I will counsel the relatively silent students. I grade exams and term papers myself using an outline, and will read the outlier papers three times to convince myself of the fairness of the grade.

IV. Why I Teach This Way

The case method of instruction is quite costly, in terms of prep time, materials development, energy consumed in class, and course administration. Each successful case instructor believes in some overarching ends that justify the cost. Here are mine:

- It is **effective**. People learn best the lessons they teach themselves. Thus, learning is best when there is a process of self-discovery, as opposed to passive absorption of what others say. I believe that student ownership and active engagement with the case problem are the keys to the effectiveness of this method.
- It **builds the capacity for critical thinking**. Instructors model skills of questioning. Discussions exercise skills of debate and challenge. I want to produce business leaders who are capable of thinking critically.

- **It exercises the administrative point of view.** If the goal of business education is to enhance the effectiveness of practicing managers, then helping students weigh the practical implications of their analyses is important. The best way to do this is to draw students to decisions, and the practical implications of their recommendations.
- The case classroom **models a learning environment.** Through this, the student can learn how to achieve trust, respect, risk-taking, high quality of debate, and tough-mindedness in other professional settings. While much has been said about the "learning organization" in recent years, companies continue to grope slowly toward that goal. Whatever it is, a culture of high-quality discussion is probably at its core. John McArthur, Emeritus Dean of Harvard Business School, has said, "How we teach is what we teach."
- The case method **models the process of inductive learning-by-doing** that managers will employ during their careers. Thus, the method prepares the student for life-long learning, and for being a useful participant in a learning organization. As Walter Wriston said, "Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment."
- **The teacher learns too.** Because of the interactivity of this method, the teacher can encounter fresh perspectives on old problems, or test classic solutions to new problems. As Charles I. Gragg wrote years ago, "Not all the teaching should be done by the teacher. Not all the learning should be done by the student."
- **The case method is fun.** The case method certainly energizes me and seems to motivate students.

V. Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The best teaching is truly transformational: it affords a surprising "Aha!" to the student that makes a lasting difference. Such teaching transforms the teacher as well. Here are some tenets of my teaching philosophy, forged by my own experience.

Learning is the objective. This may seem obvious, but in practice it is not. Academicians are trained to expound ideas. Good teaching requires an altogether different mind-set, a focus on the student's growth in struggling to acquire those ideas.

Action-taking is precious. Structure the learning experience to develop them. Absorbing facts and theories is a necessary foundation for professional life--but simply doing so should not distinguish one as a professional. The crucial dividing line between the merely trained and the truly *educated* lies in an increased ability to judge and to act. The objective content of teaching (i.e., the facts and theories) is a necessary, but not sufficient, goal.

Wisdom grows through personal experience. Accordingly, professional learning must be *experiential* in nature. The student must replicate the process of discovery experienced by other professionals. Thus, the key task for the teacher is to present the stream of experiences by which the student will grow in judgment. In this context, failure is important as a foundation for learning. Accordingly, the teacher must find a "voice" with which to explore, and even celebrate, failure.

Learning extends across time and space. Students carry their learning beyond the lecture-hall or seminar room. Indeed, probably the dominant basis of learning is student-to-student rather than between student and professor. Professional teaching should aim to harness this reality. In professional life, team effort is increasingly the norm. Collaboration and competition vastly influence the work of individual practitioners. Ultimately, as the poet, T.S. Eliot, said, "There is no life not lived in community... ."

The most important task for the student is to assume personal responsibility for the quality of his or her experience. The professor cannot live the experience for the student any more than the professor can learn for the student. The role of the student is to be an explorer, an active participant, and contributor to successful learning. This is diametrically opposed to the currently fashionable view that the student is a "customer" and that the school is merely a vendor of knowledge and degrees. Learning cannot be bought at any price; it must be *earned*. To understand that the student (not the professor) "owns" the learning experience requires professorial humility: without student ownership, the professor's efforts will fall short.

The most important tasks for the teacher are to pose problems, and to inspire students onward in the discovery process. If wisdom is the highest good, and if wisdom follows experience, then the teacher should be a structurer of learning experiences. This stands in contrast to the consumerist view in which the role of the teacher is to *ease* students through the struggle of personal discovery. *Explaining* is risky: it may clarify, but it also pre-empts the discovery process.

It should be fun and/or fulfilling...or it's not worth doing. Burdensome tedious work is not sustainable indefinitely at an excellent level of performance. You have a choice (probably more choice than you think). Look for joy in the teaching task, or find a way to make it joyful.

In short, excellent professional teaching is counterintuitive. What matters should be learning, growth in judgment, the integrity of the struggle to discover, the total learning experience, and joy in the task. The student receives by giving. The teacher gives by asking, encouraging, provoking, and exhorting.

VI. Vignettes

Appendix 1 gives my *curriculum vitae*. From this work experience, I have chosen four experiences that have been important to my own development as a teacher. Accompanying each are a few learnings for me.

A. Redesign of Darden's First Year Finance Course, 1988-1991

As a newly-tenured Associate Professor in 1988, I was assigned to the position of Course Head of First Year Finance, which meant being a leader of a team of 6 to 8 tenure-track (or tenured) instructors, and functioning as the curriculum designer of the course. As this was my first leadership assignment at Darden, I was eager to prove myself before my peers.

First Year Finance is important to Darden. It is a foundation on which many other courses build. Darden sends about 40 percent of its students into careers in Finance. Therefore the course has a great deal to do with the students' sense of adequacy of preparation for their life's work *and* their level of satisfaction

with the entire MBA program. School rankings depend in part on surveys of student satisfaction.

For several years leading up to my assignment, the First Year Finance course had ranked in the lower half of all required courses. I believed that the course lacked immediacy to the students. It used relatively old teaching materials and lacked relevance to the work students would be hired to do upon graduation. The course badly needed updating in the theoretical advances of recent years, and in the nature of the astonishing revolution in capital markets that occurred in the 1980s. Students were not unaware of this revolution, and were eager to learn more.

Looking forward to a three-year term as course head, I chose a path of radical, rather than incremental, redesign. My reasons were that the course was in such need of repair that patchwork would not suffice and that the virtue of radical change in the first year was that it left me two years to recover if the experiment blew up at the outset. Here are the key elements of my change program:

- **Updated teaching materials.** In the space of 12 months, an assistant and I produced 35 new case studies. These formed the bulk of the course that offered 53 class meetings.
- **New organizing theme.** I planned the course around a new theme: the creation of value for investors. This sought to train students rigorously in valuation analysis and focused students on the *economics* of business phenomena. Finally, it turned students' gaze outward, toward the capital markets, where investors were to be found.
- **Linkage of practice to theory.** The orientation to economics permitted the course to harness rich theories (e.g., option pricing, capital asset pricing, and market efficiency).
- **Team-based leadership.** I organized the faculty effort as a high-performance work team, rather than as a command-and-control assignment. Mark Eaker, Ken Eades, Bob Conroy, Bob Harris, and Mike Berry joined me in this assignment.

The rollout of this new design was a stressful experience. In some instances, the materials weren't polished to the usual standard. In others, we overburdened the students with work. Given the wealth of new material, the instructors were learning how to teach it just a few steps ahead of the students. And in the background was a murmuring of alarm among the Darden faculty about the radical changes being made—eventually, a special meeting was called to quiz me on these changes and ultimately to warn me about the dire consequences of the path I was on.

Fortunately, the risk-taking paid off handsomely. Students and instructors discovered unanticipated insights in the new teaching materials. Students shouldered the demands of the new course. At the end of the rollout year, students gave First Year Finance the highest rating of any required course at the school. Perhaps the most serious test of the new design is its sustainability: though leadership of the course has been handed to other colleagues over the last decade, the basic design introduced in 1988-1989 remains the model for this course. This experience impressed on me the importance of risk-taking, of owning the course you teach, and of developing a fresh vision appropriate for that course. **Appendix 2** offers a summary of the First Year Finance course and changes that were implemented.

B. Programs on Mergers & Acquisitions, 1995-2000

My research has concentrated in the field of mergers and acquisitions, so I had a natural appetite for offering a course in this area. I developed or co-developed three courses:

- **Corporate Financial Transactions** (1995-1999). This was an experimental course taught by

myself, Professor Michael Dooley of the UVA School of Law, and Professor Robert Harris of Darden. **Appendix 3** offers a syllabus and description of the course. While my co-instructors are on other assignments, this course has been mothballed.

- **Mergers and Acquisitions** (1998-present). Given the unfilled student demand, and student interest in the basic “blocking and tackling” in this area, I decided to offer a regular case discussion-based course. **Appendix 4** offers the course syllabus in its 30-session form.
- **Mergers and Acquisitions: Strategy and Implementation** (1999 to present). As the new leader of this executive program, I led a redesign effort that was implemented in October 1999. **Appendix 5** offers a description of this program.

These efforts have reminded me that it *is* possible, and enjoyable, to marry teaching and research. Class discussions have suggested new research questions. Research suggests new insights to carry into the classroom. In addition, I am reminded of the value of “thinking out of the box” i.e., outside of your scholarly specialty. M&A is multi-disciplinary. Much of my research had been rooted in financial economics. Teaching these courses, especially in collaboration with Law faculty, taught me of the need to look outward into the related disciplines.

C. Darden Partnership Program 1994-2000

In 1994, I was asked to co-develop a new executive program along with four colleagues Mark Eaker, Ed Freeman, Andrea Larson, and Robert Spekman. The program was to help middle managers at large, underperforming corporations consider how to renew and transform their organizations. None of the team members were experts in the area of corporate transformation, so we formed a study group to learn from the main writings there. Furthermore, since team-based management seemed to be an element of successful transformation efforts, we sought to model it in the way we administered the course (we were all “the course head” i.e., true partners), and virtually all the classes were team-taught by two or three of us at a time. **Appendix 6** gives a description of this program.

This program taught me or reminded me of the virtues of teamwork, team study, and team results. Differences in style become an asset, rather than a liability. We inform one another. We produced joint work, such as *The Portable MBA*, that was almost certainly better than we could have achieved individually.

D. Evolution of Teaching Style

I have wrestled with how to produce the best possible graduates. Darden attracts very talented, high-potential people into its MBA program. Out of a regard for them I have looked for ways to extend their capacities. Early in my career, my response was to challenge and stretch the students: set high expectations, demand high performance, evaluate fearlessly, correct straightforwardly. I was tough-minded, and wanted the students to learn tough-mindedness. A graduate professional program is pre-eminently a socialization process; MBA students need to learn to think like successful business leaders. I took this approach out of respect for the capacities of the students, my own self-expectations, and my love of the subject. The student evaluations of me from the start of my career seemed to confirm the wisdom of this style.

Across many small events and bits of data, I became aware that this style affected students differently. Novices, shy students, and the quantitatively weak struggled with me; because of them I struggled too. I experimented in small ways with my style in an effort to reach *all* students in a more positive way.

I was reminded of a quotation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “We must combine the toughness of the serpent and the tenderness of the dove, a tough mind and a tender heart.” Over the past decade my style has changed in a number of ways:

- **Listen harder, especially to novices.** Smart and sophisticated students easily grab the instructor’s attention; letting this happen too much or too often is a trap. It is equally important to listen to the other end of the distribution. Look for opportunities in and out of class to gauge the progress of weaker students.
- **Lighten up; be friendly.** Humor has served me well in this regard. I try hard to remember students’ names, and some facts about each. I genuinely care about my students and look for opportunities to express that.
- **Less is more.** One can try too hard. Better focus, or simply better coverage of less material often results in broader, more lasting learning. Easing back from a detailed script for a discussion gives students a feeling of ownership of the discussion, and weak students more chance to speak up.
- **Fight stress: yours, theirs, the school’s.** Stress echoes back and forth between students and teachers. Graduate students have a steady undercurrent of stress; I look for ways to remind them to manage it. As for myself, rest and regular exercise make an enormous difference in producing a resilient attitude toward students. Finally, staff and colleagues sometimes benefit from gentle reminders to ease off.

The evidence from my weaker students suggests a marked improvement in the way they engage me, and in their learning. But the evaluations of my teaching still suggest that I pack a lot into my teaching, and that my courses are demanding experiences. I conclude that my style remains a work in progress. My aim is to continue to search for the right balance. I once produced a study of Lawrence Bossidy, CEO of AlliedSignal Corporation, and a legendary tough manager. The case focused on his leadership style, and how it changed. In an interview he told me:

I used to be a fairly command-and-control guy, but now I don’t think that works very well any more. I’ve changed. So should we all. If I’m not different a year from now than I am today, then shame on me.

Teachers, too, need to adapt.

VII. Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

Objective measures of my teaching effectiveness include adoptions of my teaching materials, student evaluations of my teaching, and honors recognizing my teaching.

My case studies and other teaching materials are used well beyond Darden. For several years, I have been the Darden faculty member with the largest number of external sales of material. Darden recognizes a number of my cases as “best sellers.” My casebook, *Case Studies in Finance* has been carried into the third edition, and has been adopted for use at 200 business schools. The electronic journal that I co-edit, *FEN Educator*, reaches a base of over 5,000 instructors.

My teaching ratings for the past five years are given in the following table. The absolute values are average responses on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to two statements: (a) this course was effective; and (b) this instructor was effective. On the “instructor effective” dimension, the

mean score for the past seven years for all instructors in Darden's required courses was 4.27 and for instructors in elective courses was 4.37. In the fall of 1999, the Dean's office began reporting the evaluations differently, as the percentage of all students who rated the course or instructor a '4' or '5'.

Acad Year	Fall Semester	Course Rating	Instructor Rating	Spring Semester	Course Rating	Instructor Rating
94-95				FIN-FY (Sec C)	4.74	4.74
94-95				FIN-FY (Sec D)	4.79	4.84
94-95				Corp Financial Transactions (w Harris, et al)	NA	NA
95-96	FIN-FY (Sec A), ch	4.87	4.92			
95-96	FIN-FY (Sec B)	4.73	4.73			
95-96	Corp Finl Transactions (with Harris, et al)	4.81	4.61			
96-97	FIN-FY (Sec A)	NA	NA	FIN-FY (Sec A), ch	4.96	4.88
96-97	Corp Fin Transactions (with Harris, et al)	4.88	5.00	FIN-FY (Sec B)	4.72	4.79
97-98	FIN-FY (Sec A)	4.82	4.91	Mergers, Acquisitions, Restructuring	4.88	5.00
97-98	FIN-FY (Sec B)	4.53	4.63			
97-98	Corp Fin Transactions (with Harris, et al)	4.95	4.80			
98-99				Mergers, Acquisitions & Restruct (1 wk)	4.79	4.90
98-99				Mergers, Acquisitions & Restructuring	4.71	4.88
98-99				Corporate Financial Transactions (with Dooley)	4.00	4.60
99-00	FIN-FY (Sec C)	100%	100%			
99-00	FIN-FY (Sec D)	100%	100%			

Other recognitions of my teaching and teaching materials are the following:

1987 Wachovia Award for Excellence, for case study, "Walt Disney Productions, June 1984"

1991 First Wachovia Award for Excellence, for negotiation exercise, "TAKEOVER!"

1993 Wachovia Award for Excellence, for case study, "Rhône-Poulenc S.A."

1998 Faculty Marshall, a recognition from Darden students for teaching excellence.
1994, 1991, The most recent citation states: *A In appreciation for your outstanding teaching and service to students, and your commitment to the entire Darden community.*[@]
1987, 1986, and 1984

1992 and Outstanding Teacher in the Elective Courses, European Institute of Business
1994 Administration (INSEAD) in Fontainebleau, France. A recognition from INSEAD students.

1992, 1994, Cited for teaching excellence in the biannual *Business Week Guide to the Best*
1996, 1998 *Business Schools* (New York: McGraw-Hill).

1994 University of Virginia Distinguished Professor Award, designated by the faculty and administration of the University. The citation reads:
...conferred annually upon that member of the faculty who has, over a period of not less than ten years excelled as a classroom teacher, shown unusual concern for students, and made significant contributions to the life of the University....this award is primarily for the master teacher who has directed his or her efforts toward superior instruction and

enrichment of life in the University

- 1994 Cited as one of 12 "Masters of the Classroom: MBAs Single Out These Professors as the Best Teachers in the World of Business" in "The B-School Profs at the Head of Their Class: Enthusiasm, Preparation and an Abiding Effort to Transfer Knowledge Set Them Apart," *Business Week*, October 24, 1994, pages 73-74.
- 1995 Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education, State of Virginia. This is an award granted annually to the "exceptional faculty members from Virginia's 33 state-supported and independent colleges and universities," in recognition for "their contributions to teaching, research and public service."
- 1995 Second place, 1995 European Case Writing Competition, sponsored by European Foundation for Management Development, in the category of joint ventures and strategic alliances for "Renault-Volvo Strategic Alliance A, B, C and D" written with Robert Spekman.
- 1996 Elected to membership in the Raven Society of University of Virginia, for contributions in teaching and service to the university.
- 1996 Recognized for "Best-selling" case, "Glaxo Italia S.p.A.: the Zinnat Marketing Decision" by the European Case Clearinghouse.
- 1997 Wachovia Award for Excellence, for case study, "Renault-Volvo Strategic Alliance A, B, C and D" with Robert Spekman.
- 1998 Received "Outstanding Faculty Award" from the MBA graduating class of 1998.
- 1999 Received the "Harrison Award for Overall Teaching Excellence," given by the University of Virginia. Selected from a field of over 2000 faculty. In extending the award, the University Provost said, "it is rare to find a professor so capable of impressing and pleasing so high a percentage of his students. Bob's stamina and standards inspire his colleagues and students alike."