

June 10, 1988

Dr. Barbara Uehling
Chancellor
University of California
Santa Barbara

Dear Dr. Uehling,

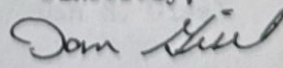
I would like to share with you my support of Dr. Walter Capps, Department of Religious Studies, for the honored title of Professor of the Year. It has been my pleasure to be associated with Dr. Capps for the past several years. I have managed to enroll in every class Dr. Capps has conducted during that time. I have not known nor heard of a student that did not enjoy his classes or teaching style.

Being a veteran of the Vietnam War and having had the opportunity of speaking in Religious Studies 155, along with several other vet's, I have come to know and understand Dr. Capps concern and interest for that particular period of U.S. history. Dr. Capps interest in Vietnam goes beyond the war itself, beyond our nations response, to the heart of the impact that war had upon the men and women who served in Vietnam, Dr. Capps is a man that truly cares about his fellow man, about his joys and about his sorrows, the major incidents and the minor that take place in everyday life. Through his interest and concern for the Vietnam Veterans, Dr. Capps has demonstrated that unique quality that sets man apart from all other animals, that quality of course is love and compassion.

It is my sincere hope that Dr. Capps receives that for which he has been nominated. Should you require more information please contact me and I would be most happy to provide what I can.

Dan M. Gisel
737 Del Valle Dr.
Fillmore, Calif. 93015

Sincerely,


Dan M. Gisel

1311 Harbor Blvd. #3
Oxnard Shores, CA 93035
12 June 1988

Chancellor Barbara S. Uehling
c/o Professor Robert S. Michaelsen
Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Cheadle Hall - 5th Floor
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

Dear Chancellor Uehling:

I am writing you in wholehearted support of UCSB's nomination of Professor Walter H. Capps for the national "Professor of the Year" Award. I have known and admired Professor Capps during my five years of graduate work in the Department of Religious Studies; I have been his student and, for the past two quarters, one of the Teaching Assistants for his Vietnam course as well as for his new "Voices of the Stranger" course.

As a graduate student, I have found Professor Capps a humane, thoughtful, humorous, empathetic guide. His work on graduate levels, however, while important, involves him with only a small number of students. His greatest impact occurs in the huge undergraduate courses: the Vietnam class which involves nearly 900 students, mostly limited to seniors; and "Voices of the Stranger", which is being offered for the very first time this spring and which has an enrollment of close to 600 students, again, mostly seniors.

In universities and colleges across the country some of our most gifted students are dropping out because the education being offered seems superficial in comparison with the urgent issues being faced by our society. At the same time, large numbers of more "normal" students remain within the educational system, wending their way through four years of competitive intellectual "exercises". Many of these students are surprisingly untouched by what an older generation would call "ethics" and "human values". Instead, they know how to make the system work --and they will use their skills at the expense of less educated, vulnerable people who do not understand corporate takeovers, insider trading, computer technologies, and land grabbing.

Many of our young people grow up in an ethical void. The stable system of values once provided by family and church has now largely been taken over by the media. It is not the purpose of our educational institutions to step into this breach; traditional scholars are appalled even by the suggestion. Yet in a climate of rising violence, racism, substance abuse, and illiteracy, something has to be done. A practical reality is that every child in this country passes through our educational system -- and if educators are unwilling to explore new techniques for reaching those children and competing with the media for their minds and hearts, our society may tear apart at its seams.

During the period in ancient Greece when democracy was struggling to survive societal pressures, sacred theatre functioned as a "safety-valve", unifying a restless, passionate, frustrated populace in an experience of catharsis. The pedagogical function of Greek theatre worked, not through a discourse of deductive rigor, but, rather, through the dramatist's skillful shaping and controlling of emotional effects; through experiencing these, the Greek citizen came to moral awareness.

We no longer have sacred theatre, but we do still have the dark emotions which it once purged. We are faced with serious choices today: we can ignore the existence of these emotions, which is what most educators prefer to do; we can fan the emotions into violence and despair, as the media tends to do; or we can experiment with ways of channeling these emotions into moral awareness.

This third option is what Walter Capps has chosen. Like the visionary Hasidic rabbi in Chaim Potok's The Chosen, Capps looks out and asks "How will I teach this mind what it is to have a soul? How will I teach this mind to understand pain?" In struggling to find ways, Capps is fashioning a uniquely powerful contemporary version of sacred theatre. He works with what I.F. Stone refers to as "the steady accumulation of common wisdom distilled from common experience". He brings together all of humanity's most ancient, gripping stories but his hundreds of students experience them as living realities, not as historical texts, not even as drama in any traditional sense.

We do not watch Antigone defy an unjust law by covering her brother's corpse with dirt: we watch a Native American describe his people's struggle to protect sacred mountains and streams from huge mining interests backed by an unjust federal government; we do not hear an ancient Greek chorus: we hear a one-legged Vietnam vet, a former governor of Nebraska, sing the hauntingly tragic "Waltzing Matilda" from World War I; we do not watch Medea slay her children: we watch as a veteran describes in a shaking voice what it was like to gun down a twelve year old Vietnamese boy in black pajamas.

Capps brings together all these stories, these voices. The upper middle-class predominately WASP students are exposed, many for the first time, to Vietnamese refugees, blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, Jews; the students hear the experiences of a homosexual with AIDS, of people who have lost their eyesight, the use of their limbs. They listen, many of them cry, frequently they break into spontaneous applause.

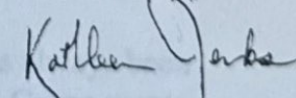
Capps guides the process with compassion, humor and an unerring sense of timing. He demands that his students go beyond the more obvious emotional reactions; he asks that they unite mind and heart and really reflect on what they have heard. He asks them to consider issues of war, violence, race, creed, gender, ecology and political power from a new, more mature, more morally "aware" perspective -- and it works. Like some modern Aeschylus, he brings together the surging drama, the deep values and passions, and out of these he creates that "sacred time/space" in which a thousand students begin to experience that moral awareness without which this society cannot survive.

I sit among those hundreds of students and I watch both "performance" and "audience". I watch Capps trying to activate catharsis, healing, and humane values in these students. Sometimes I worry that they are too young or self-centered to understand -- and, it must be admitted, some are and then one can only hope that the seeds ripen at a later date. But the majority of the students awe me with their willingness to struggle with the issues raised by Capps. Some of the students are confused, even angry, because, as one expressed it, "I've been here four years now and how come nobody ever brought this stuff up in other classes? -- instead we have to study shit that no one cares about, but this stuff we'll have the rest of our lives. We should've had it earlier, man".

This is clearly a different age with different needs. I watch Capps-the-scholar and Capps-the-visionary trying to shape new forms and techniques -- and then I listen to his students in my TA office and I read their papers and exams with a deep sense of relief: it is working -- what he does is working. He has had close to fifteen hundred students this year alone -- and many of them will transmit this listening/sharing process to their own children in the years ahead. The "60 Minutes" program on his Vietnam course has brought him hundreds of thousands of pieces of mail from veterans and parents of veterans who have found renewed hope through the issues which Capps is addressing. New courses using Capps' techniques are sprouting up all over the country; these are being taught by Capps' own graduate students as well as by many others who have been influenced by his many public speaking and media appearances; sometimes he spreads himself too thin -- he is as willing to speak before a smalltown PTA as before a huge national organization -- but at least the message is getting out and people are acting on it.

There is much more I could write about Capps but I think it all comes down to something quite simple: the man honestly believes that if students are given a "sacred time/space" which nurtures emotion as well as cognition, those students have the potential to transform not only their own lives, but their fragmented society as well. A man who can teach this as Walter Capps does, richly deserves to be honored with the national "Teacher of the Year" award, not merely as the obvious personal tribute which this would be but, more, as an inspiration and encouragement to other innovative teachers who might otherwise hesitate to experiment in the face of more conservative opposition from within the profession.

Sincerely,


Kathleen Jenks

June 13, 1988

Dr. Barbara S. Uehling
Office of the Chancellor
Santa Barbara California 93106

RE: Professor of the Year nomination

Dear Chancellor Uehling,

I am writing to you to express my support for the nomination of Dr. Walter Capps for the Professor of the Year Award. It is my understanding that this award is the highest national award that can be bestowed to a college level professor, and in my opinion, Dr. Capps has exemplified and met all the criteria worthy of this honor.

I strongly believe that Dr. Capps provides his students with a type of educational outlet that is rarely found in most classes at this university. His lectures are carefully articulated to provide his students with a powerful combination of interesting and stimulating material, and his main emphasis has always been on educating his students on the various issues about which he is speaking. As a student and participant in some of his classes, I was never made to feel that the educational value of his class, or the extent to which I had comprehended his material, was solely being measured by my performances on exams. My grade was measured by the degree to which his material had impacted on my life. Seldom is it true that one single class can motivate a student, through the emotions of the professor, to achieve an understanding of not just the concepts offered in the class, but also to a more general understanding of one's own life, and how it is interfaces with others. Dr. Capps reaches the emotional levels of his student's hearts, and provides them with the opportunity to gain insight into themselves. This, to me, is what education is all about.

On a personal note, I must also add that Dr. Capps has always been able to see eye to eye with his students. I have met with Dr. Capps many times outside of class, and the respect that he has shown for me, as well as my accomplishments is always heartwarming, genuine and sincere. Dr. Capps is truly concerned about the welfare, feelings and emotions of all of

his students, and I believe that all those who have had the opportunity to take one of his classes recognize this also. July 15, 1988

Dr. Capps has earned the respect of not only his students, but also university faculty and administrators, community members, and a host of others across the nation who have seen excerpts of Dr. Capps "Impact of the Vietnam War" class which was shown twice on CBS's 60 Minutes. Dr. Capps' accomplishments were recognized this year when he received the Professor of the Year Award at UCSB, and I feel that his talents and qualities are truly worthy of the National Professor of the Year Award also.

Dean Chancellor Gehring

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Mark S. Weinstock

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June 13, 1988

From: Steven R. Herron

Teaching Assistant, Interdisciplinary Studies 150
University of California, Santa Barbara.

To: Barbara S. Uehling
Chancellor

University of California, Santa Barbara.

Dear Chancellor Uehling:

I am writing this letter in support of Walter H. Capps for the Professor Of The Year Award. As a graduate student in the Department of Religious Studies, I have had the opportunity of working with Professor Capps on several occasions both as a student and teaching assistant. I hope this letter will in some way reflect the impact Professor Capps has had upon the students of this campus.

Professor Capps teaches a variety of undergraduate courses ranging from Monasticism to the role of religion in contemporary politics, as well as several graduate seminars. But there are two classes which are especially appreciated by the students of this campus. Both deal with the aspect of "otherness" within American society, one by looking to the past and the other to the present and future. Albeit academically grounded, these classes allow the students to "feel" and "experience" the underside of the great American Myth through the use of guest speakers and audience participation. The results have been RS 155 and INT 150.

Known as the "Vietnam" class, RS 155 has become the most popular class at U.C.S.B.. Restricted to Seniors, the focus is on the Vietnam era, its conflicts, justifications, myths, and realities. The "otherness" of war is examined by and reflected in the words of those who served and those who did not. The students are given the opportunity to experience the emotions of the war years from the protests in Berkeley to the killing fields of Southeast Asia. For many of the students who lost loved ones during the war, it is an opportunity for understanding and dealing with their confusion. For others, it is a show case for examining human vulnerability. Culminating with a visit to "The Wall" in Washington, D.C., the class provides a forum of learning about our country, government, and people.

June 13, 1988

In this same way, INT 150 has picked up where RS 155 stops. Concerned with the present and future, INT 150 deals with the myths of American Civil Religion. Here again the aspect of "otherness" is examined, but this time in the light of "equality". It examines the diversity of that phrase "We the people" and brings the students into contact with those groups making up the periphery of American society. Although this class has only been taught once, the majority of students went out of their way to say that it was "the most important class" they took at U.C.S.B.. Much of the credit for this type of student response is due to the presence of Walter Capps.

Professor Capps has a wonderful way of getting to students. His soft spoken and unthreatening manner works as an effective foil to the emotionally packed subject material. Always available to his students, he has become an inspiration for many and is respected by all. That he sets an example for his students is evident in the final exams of INT 150. To quote one student: "When I see the relationships Dr. Capps shares with so many beautiful people I am at first envious. How much he must grow when exposed to such light. A desire to emulate him is followed by attempts to 'find out how he does it'. This class is Dr. Capps showing how he does it. When I learn to lower my defenses and trade a little security for a window to let the light in, then I can start to inspire others to shine." The love, respect, and concern which Dr. Capps feels towards all people is clearly reflected in his work and the students he teaches. Because of this, many graduating students not only leave with a first class education but also with a little bit of Walter Capps. They could do much worse.

I hope this brief letter is of some value.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Herron

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June 13, 1988

Barbara S. Uehling
Chancellor, UC Santa Barbara

About two years ago, a friend asked me to attend a lecture in one of his classes. The class was what we refer to on campus as "Vietnam," but appears in the Schedule of Classes as "Religious Studies 155: Religion and the Impact of the Vietnam War." The lecture hall, the largest on campus, was crowded; it took 15 minutes to find a seat. A smallish woman took the podium, and told a story about a gold watch.

The woman's name was Rose Sandeck, and she worked as a combat nurse in Vietnam. The watch, she said, was one of the things she will never forget about being there. She was treating a soldier who had lost both his legs in the fighting, and was to receive the watch for being the 20,000th person to go through her hospital. A general came to the hospital to present the award, but the soldier refused it. "I can't accept this, sir. It's not going to help me walk." Sandeck was stunned. Crying, she walked over to the soldier and told him how proud she was of him.

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The auditorium was absolutely silent. A woman next to me began to feel choked as well, both out of compassion for the nurse's experience in Vietnam and out of a realization that I knew absolutely nothing about the war or its impacts. The next quarter it was offered, I enrolled in "Vietnam," and learned more in the class than in any I have ever had. Being there is a truly powerful experience; people trying, in their own words, to tell of their involvement in a war that no one wanted to talk about.

Professor Walter Capps is modest about his involvement in the class, saying that the powerful emotion comes from the veterans' experiences. But in "Vietnam," as with the other classes he teaches, Walter Capps is both coordinator and catalyst, and without his presence the courses would be much less successful. His emphasis is deeply humanistic, and unlike many professors who are concerned solely with abstracts, Capps' classes reach the heart as well as the mind. Capps was among the first to recognize the appalling silence the nation has maintained about the Vietnam war, and has worked continually on issues resulting from its impacts.

I have been in three of Capps' courses; "Vietnam," "Religion and Politics," and his newest project, "Voices of the Stranger." "Voices" is, in my opinion, more innovative than "Vietnam," an examination of society from the perspective of people banished to its margins. The

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classes have a common thread in Capps, who is able, by having people speak in the first person about their lives, to link issues in students' minds. He is, in short, a consummate teacher; a person who is able to listen as well as lecture.

After taking Capps' courses, many students remark that their outlook on life has changed. I know this is true for myself as well. With "Vietnam" in particular, I have been able to better understand my parents and people their age. Sometimes I'm able to help as well. I was recently at home, when a friend of my father's seemed out of sorts, pouring hot water in the kitchen sink and heating several cans of beer. He explained that it was his way of marking the anniversary of the day his platoon was hit by mortar fire. Two of his friends died that day, and a good amount of shrapnel is still in his skull. I thought back to one of the most basic things Capps does when introducing veterans. He says, "welcome home." I told my father's friend this and he was quiet, as tears streaked his face.

"Nobody's ever told me that," he said.

Almost all of Capps' students can relate similar experiences. He refers to it as a process of healing. It is a process he has been able to originate and be a part of. It is what makes Walter Capps a

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great teacher. As one of his students, I value highly the knowledge he has shared with me. Walter Capps deserves the honor of National Professor of the Year.

Douglas Jay Arellanes

Junior, UC Santa Barbara



PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR
ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete this nomination form and attach to it 1) a one-page Curriculum Vitae, and 2) no more than six one- or two-page letters from current students, former students, colleagues, the president of the institution, academic deans, or any others who support the nomination.
- Mail your entry to arrive by 5:00 p.m., June 15, 1988, to: CASE Professor of the Year Program, 11 Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.
- Please enclose a \$30 entry fee (made payable to CASE Professor of the Year) with each nomination.
\$20.00 ENTRY FEE FOR RE-ENTRY

Name, Academic Rank, and Discipline of Nominee:

WALTER CAPPS, PROFESSOR, RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Institution:

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA BARBARA

Address:

SANTA BARBARA, CA 93106

Contact Person:

BARBARA S. UEHLING, CHANCELLOR

Telephone: **805-961-2231**

Professor's Current Teaching Log (list course titles and levels):

SEE ATTACHED

Attach this form to your nomination materials.

DEADLINE: JUNE 15, 1988

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DAVID PIERPONT GARDNER
President of the University

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106

BARBARA S. UEHLING
Chancellor at Santa Barbara

June 13, 1988

Gary H. Quehl, President
CASE Professor of the Year Program
11 Dupont Circle Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Quehl:

Re: CASE Professor of the Year 1988 Nomination

I am enclosing some updated material to renominate Professor Walter Capps of the Religious Studies Department for the CASE Professor of the Year Award.

Since last year, his class on "The Impact of the Vietnam War" has been featured twice on CBS Television's "60 Minutes" program. Enclosed is a taping of that show. The class is also a model for more than one hundred college courses on this subject throughout the nation. His newest course, "Voices of the Stranger," appears to be a successful attempt to approach the subject of cultural and ethnic diversity in a manner thoroughly in accord with the fundamental objectives of a liberal arts education. The course was developed in response to two key recommendations of the Smelser Committee Report, (a University of California task force report on Lower Division Education), namely, that there be opportunities for upper-division students to integrate the knowledge they have acquired through courses of an interdisciplinary character with thematic foci, and that steps be taken within the University to foster understanding of "the internationalization and diversification" of the society.

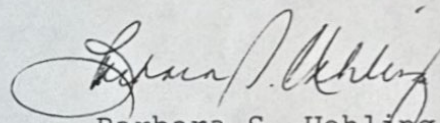
It is significant that the Chronicle of Higher Education's recent article on current college courses on the 1960's cites both of these courses with approval.

Page Two
Capps Nomination

Professor Capps has also received the Professor of the Year Award from the UCSB Mortar Board for the third time over the past four years. His publications are also progressing very well. Some examples are: (a) a full-length manuscript on Religious Studies: The Making of an Intellectual Discipline is currently being evaluated by a major university press; he will have two books out soon on contemporary American Religion; and he also has another book in process, Finishing the War: Vietnam and the Next Generation, that focuses on the class.

I wish to add my strong support on behalf of the Santa Barbara Campus in nominating Professor Walter Capps for this prestigious award.

Cordially,



Barbara S. Uehling

Enclosures

cc: Robert S. Michaelsen, Acting Vice Chancellor for Academic
Affairs
David Sprecher, Provost, College of Letters and Science
Phillip Hammond, Chair, Religious Studies