



Thomas Love Photo credit: Better Health Partnership

An 'incredible' educator: Medicine's Thomas Love wins Diekhoff Award for Graduate Teaching

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What makes a great teacher depends on whom you ask. But most would probably agree on a combination of superb people skills, a passion for the profession and a remarkable toolkit of teaching techniques.

For all this and more, Thomas Love, an expert in statistics and professor of medicine, population and quantitative health sciences at the School of Medicine, has been recognized with a 2018 John S. Diekhoff Award for Graduate Teaching.

Love will be recognized along with other award winners during commencement ceremonies May 20.

Keep up-to-date on commencement via social media using #CWRU18.

The students who nominated Love are effusive in their praise for his enthusiasm, the extra steps he takes to ensure successful learning and his deep-rooted commitment to addressing their goals and interests while still providing thorough coverage of requisite material in his classes.

"The amount students learn in his classes is incredible," wrote one student nominator. "His efforts to engage students with a blend of theory and actual problems they will encounter in the professional realm really prepares them for the next step in their careers."

Love sends short electronic surveys to his classes at the end of each week to address lingering questions students may have (and to ask the most important things they learned that week). He then creates FAQs to attend to any topics that remain unclear. Many students who are reluctant to ask questions during the week report how valuable this process is to them.

Based on these surveys, Love revises his courses regularly, with as many as half of the adjustments flowing from formal and informal student feedback. And he works with students to identify interesting and pertinent internships through his network.

Among his offerings, Love teaches the year-long core offering in applied biostatistics and data science in the Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences. In addition to this foundation course, he teaches advanced courses, including the Design of Observational Studies.

One striking example of Love's commitment is a half-hour final exam/portfolio review in his office for those in the core course. Students are given the choice of an individual or a two-person session. In his class of almost 50 students this semester, there were over 30 meetings with individuals and seven, two-person team exams. Together, they constituted three, eight-hour days of questions and discussions.

"This final method is unlike any other educational experience I've had," wrote a student nominator. "It is the closest thing to simulating the pressures, expectations and competencies required in the real world."

Asked to name two influential teachers of his own, Love immediately replied: "My parents. My mother still teaches high school history and English, and my father was a physicist at Brookhaven National Laboratory (in New York). I always wanted to combine the teaching and research that they did, and I've been fortunate to have the chance to do so. I am my parents' son in that regard."

Two mentors were also influential: At the University of Pennsylvania, where Love earned his doctorate in statistics from the Wharton School, the late David Hildebrand "worked with me on enhancing my teaching skills. And here at CWRU, Randall Cebul was a superb mentor who provided enormously helpful guidance and direction when I transitioned from the (Weatherhead School of Management) to the (School of Medicine) 17 years ago."

About the award

The Diekhoff Award honors John S. Diekhoff, a distinguished scholar, teacher, mentor and administrator who served Case Western Reserve in several capacities during his tenure, from 1956 to 1970. He was professor of English, chair of the Department of English, dean of Cleveland College, acting dean of the School of Graduate Studies and vice provost of the university.