Effective Teaching

Assoc Prof Tan Soon Yim was surprised and overjoyed to win EEE Year 3 Teaching Award. He is also gratified as he started with average teaching scores which improved vastly recently. He is teaching difficult subjects like Engineering Electromagnetics and Engineering Physics to groups as large as 1000 students. However, his students from the 2 subjects that he taught are not surprised.

A student whom he taught Engineering Physics agrees with him that many students find the subject difficult. Thankfully, the student said that "his approach in explaining concepts or solving problems, in my opinion, is very effective. It is clear and concise. I'm sure that most of us can understand his teaching very well."

The student further commented that his classes are so popular, "that many of the students, from other classes, decided to join his lesson... The funny thing is, those who are late for his class, by instinct, will automatically bring a chair of their own."

How does he teach? Again like superteacher Lalit, he prefers to use overhead projectors and transparencies. Assoc Prof Tan explains how he teaches: "First figure out why you want the students to learn the subject and what you want them to know and then find a method that help students visualize abstract concepts or reducing deep ideas to simple understandable terms. I use overhead projectors because I can write and sketch on the transparencies."

A student, whom he taught Engineering Electromagnetics, appreciated his patience, enthusiasm and for teaching him "not just to study hard, but study smart too."

Assoc Prof Tan enjoys teaching and interacting with students and he will continue to find ways to motivate students to learn and to maintain their enthusiasm on the subject.

His advice to students is that they should be able to link/or organize the various concepts/ideas learnt in different subjects together and use them to solve practical problems.

Assoc Prof Tan’s students feel that his teaching efforts are commendable and the teaching award is well deserved. With a good understanding in the concepts which that he taught them, the students will be able to apply them in future in related fields when they go out to work in industry. Assoc Prof Tan’s students are happy that he has won the teaching award and they will end with this note:

"Congratulations, Sir!!!"

Super Teacher Lalit (continued from page 25)

and in personal face-to-face sessions with the lecturers, never leave the preparation of the subject to the last minute (exams), and not focus too much on past ten-year-series! Learning and understanding the concepts are far more important than trying to solve past year papers. So my advice to them – keep abreast of the subjects by actively participating in lessons and regularly discussing/clarifying doubts with lecturers and/or tutors." Good advice for students to heed.

Lalit thinks that good teaching is the hallmark of a great institution. He says: "A student who learns from a good teacher will always carry a positive image of teaching and his alma mater, and this in turn will reflect in his work attitude and advice to his juniors and peers. No student will ever call you a lousy lecturer on your face, so it is difficult to say whether all feedback from ex-students is really what it "appears to be". Having said that, it is probably fair to say that my ex-students look up to me and generally have good things to say about my teaching."

There are many people to thank for his achievements. His students have motivated him greatly in his teaching. One student commented: "You just have unlimited amount of energy when you are lecturing - no wonder you are from the Power Division! Even when you are at the Canteen, you look very sincere. How I wish there are a few more Professor Gods around - NTU would then be a more vibrant place. Stay rocking!" All the compliments that he has received over the years have empowered him on to keep doing better. "The awards are just the perfect icing on the cake!!" he said. Therefore, credit goes to his students, colleagues, the EEE School Management and to NTU for their support and faith in him. Last but not least, he would like to thank his wife and two sons for the support and strength they have given him all these years!

The EEE Year 2 and Year 3 winners are featured in this issue. Look out for the EEE Year 4 winner in the next issue.