

Holy Cross Physicians Association
Distinguished Service Award 2023
Kenneth Neal Prestwich, PhD
Compiled by Christopher Breuer, MD

Over his 40 years of service at Holy Cross, Dr. Ken Prestwich has profoundly touched the lives of many students and faculty throughout the college and especially within the Department of Biology. During his years at Holy Cross, he rose from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, to full Professor, and eventually department Chair; and since 2021, Professor Emeritus. During his time, he developed over 20 courses for Biology majors and non-majors, instructed over 2000 students, and wrote nearly 80 letters of recommendation per year. At the same time, he is an accomplished scientist with over 30 publications and over 1500 citations.

But his most profound impact at the College of the Holy Cross may be with a special group of 77 students who experienced Dr. Prestwich one-on-one, in either independent study through the honors program or as one of his research students. These were transformational experiences for every one of these individuals. Three were Watson scholars and two went on to be Rhodes Scholars. Virtually the entire lot went on to graduate school or medical school and many have gone on to be leaders in the fields of medicine, biomedical research, and biology in general.

In so many ways, he became the embodiment of what makes Holy Cross special. A true liberal arts renaissance gentleman, who had the academic chops to speak with faculty from the Humanities, like the departments of Philosophy or English, with a level of expertise that earned immediate and lasting respect. In addition, his multi-disciplinary approach to biology was truly outstanding and has been carried on by a number of his graduates.

In the true nature of an academic in education, what he really did for his students, especially those fortunate 77 who got to work with Ken over an extended period, one-on-one, he really taught us how to think; he taught us how to ask and answer questions; he taught us how to look at things critically; he taught us to express ourselves. These were lessons that not only brought us through our times at Holy Cross or through our graduate studies, but much further on, throughout our careers and lives.

In addition to being a wonderful teacher, he was an extraordinary mentor who taught us it wasn't only important to learn how to be a great scientist or doctor, but you need to apply it in a way that made the world a better place. It wasn't enough to be good at what you did, you need to have an impact and leave a legacy.

