

Professor Michael Schechter

An Exemplary Career at James Madison College at MSU

Hard as it was to accept for Madisonians, Professor Michael Schechter taught his last class on April 28, 2011 and officially retired from Madison in the spring of 2012.

Schechter joined the faculty of James Madison College in 1975. His passion for helping students and for serving as their “teacher” in the broadest possible way was a nearly 40-year hallmark at James Madison College. That passion, reflected in his classroom instruction, course advising, personal and professional counsel and exemplary scholarship, was second to none.

Serving on a faculty known for setting the bar for teaching excellence, Schechter was a leader and mentor among his colleagues. While awards and professional accolades can never be the measure of the person, his special bond with and regard for the students he engaged was reflected in a host of university awards, all of which involved selection criteria requiring notable service to students. He received a 1978 MSU Teacher-Scholar Award, the 1986 Outstanding Faculty Award from MSU's Senior Class Council, a 1990 State of Michigan Teaching Excellence Award, the 1997 MSU Alumni Club of Michigan Quality in Undergraduate Teaching Award, and a 2001 MSU Distinguished Faculty Award.

Schechter summed up his profound commitment to teaching and advising in a 2002 MSU Honors College article after receiving the 2001 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Honors Students. He stated, “Whether in the classroom, in Honors Option sessions, in one-on-one tutorials, or in advising sessions, my goal is always the same: to help students get as much out of their years at MSU as they can and to move on to their professional lives as eager lifelong learners, building on the foundational knowledge and skills they acquired as undergraduates. I measure a large part of my own professional success and happiness when students and alums say that my little nudge helped them get along the path to success just a little bit quicker than might otherwise have happened. “

These awards were well deserved but they only evidence, rather than tell the story of, Schechter’s decades-long dedication, commitment and service. He shared his time, talents and wisdom openly and generously with generations of Madisonians, both inside and outside the classroom and often well-beyond many students’ MSU years, by writing letters of recommendation for current students, recent graduates, and for those long gone from Case Hall and keeping regular and continuing correspondence with his former students. Alumni seek him out for advice and often send him updates on their life and career to say thank you and share their accomplishments. Notably, Professor Schechter filled this role for students without regard to Madison major or academic acumen.

Schechter received his bachelor’s (with honors) in political science from the University of Wisconsin in 1968, his master of philosophy in political science from Columbia University in 1974, and his doctorate in political science from Columbia University in 1976. His dissertation was titled, "Processes of Transnational Policy-Making: A Comparison of Economic and Environmental Issue-Areas." His teaching and research interests have included international

law, human rights, natural resource sustainability, global governance, U.S. foreign policy and globalization. His book publications include the *Historical Dictionary of International Organizations* (1998), *Innovation in Multilateralism* (1999); *Future Multilateralism: The Political and Social Framework* (1999); *The Revival of Civil Society: Global and Comparative Perspectives* (1999); *Rethinking Globalization(s): From Corporate Transnationalism to Local Interventions* (2000), *United Nations-sponsored World Conferences: Focus on Implementation and Follow-up* (2001), *The Political Economy of a Plural World: Power, Morals and Civilizations* (2002), *United Nations Global Conferences* (2005), *Globalization: Effects on Fisheries* (2007), *International Governance of Fisheries Ecosystems: Learning from the Past, Finding Solutions for the Future* (2008), *Historical Dictionary of International Organizations* (2nd edition, 2010), and *Sustainable Fisheries: Multi-Level Approaches to a Global Problem* (2011). He is also the author of numerous professional journal articles, book chapters and papers.

Among his many JMC and MSU service undertakings, Schechter initiated Madison's study abroad programs with the first program being in Cambridge, England. He served as a consultant in internationalizing the curricula in colleges and universities across the United States and is a past president of the International Studies Association, Midwest Region. He chaired the Spartan Athletic Review Committee (SpARC), a search committee for MSU's Athletic Director, was twice chair of the MSU University Committee on Curriculum, was on the MSU Executive Committee of Academic Council, was the first coordinator of the Science, Technology, Environment and Public Policy Specialization (STEPPS), and on the Curriculum Team for the new Residential College in Arts and Humanities.

An endowment, the Michael G. Schechter Endowed Scholarship Fund for James Madison College, has been established and he has asked that any funds being donated be used to support undergraduate scholarships for students at James Madison College. For further information please contact Rocky Beckett at the JMC Development Office, 329 S Case Hall, (517) 432-2117.

Alumni Reflections:

Schechter has had a profound impact as a teacher and mentor, as expressed by several of his former students at Madison. **Paul D'Anieri (IR '86)**, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida, said "Mike started out as my professor and quickly became my mentor and friend. I used to go to his office hours and go back and forth with him, often for an hour, on whatever topics we wandered into. He showed me how the life of the mind could be both productive and fun. He's the reason I pursued an academic career and my approach to teaching and mentoring is still based on the example he set."

"He made a huge difference in my life," said **Elizabeth Marazita (IR '84)**, owner of Wanderer's Tea House in East Lansing and former assistant vice president for the Swiss Bank Corp – "He was my IR Advisor and he encouraged me to develop a specialization in Latin America as well as to study Spanish and Portuguese. I have had the honor to hear and to meet many famous people in my career after Madison from Presidents and Ambassadors to Princes and Economists, but no one has ever struck me with the fire within to seek, to learn more and to understand the complex issues which surround each international event in our world in which we live than Dr. Schechter."

"As a teacher and academic adviser, Professor Schechter always goes far beyond any call of duty," said **Rujuta Bhatt Srivastava, M.D. (IR '93)**, senior director / project leader of Drug Development Management, Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company., "He has a gift for explaining complex theoretical material in accessible and interesting terms. While more than meeting students' academic needs, Professor Schechter cares deeply about their personal well-being. He also brings community service and leadership opportunities to students' attention, encouraging them to share his life-long commitment to public service. Through his words and his example, Professor Schechter makes students and faculty alike expect and demand more of themselves."

Matthew Fleszar (IR/PE '09) and law student at U of M, added "I've had many teachers interested in my academic development, but only one with a passion for his students healthful growth outside the classroom. Madisonians will remember Dr. Schechter as a legendary educator and continue to know him as a mentor and friend."

"Mike Schechter was a wonderful teacher, mentor, and friend," said **Claudena Skran, (IR '83)**, associate professor and department chair of Education at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI. "With his help and guidance, I was able to be successful both in the classroom and in competitive scholarship competitions. He really shaped my view of how international politics works and his abiding belief that international organizations could make a positive difference for the good has stayed with me. After my graduation from JMC, Mike and I stayed in touch and I always appreciated his advice. There really is no other professor like Mike Schechter."