UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

June 27, 2018
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The Gift of Time

Spending much of his own career committed to all things writing — doing it, studying it, teaching it — it's only fitting that Charles Bazerman wants to support that passion in others. That he's doing so at his longtime academic home makes it all the more, well, poetic.

A distinguished professor of education at UC Santa Barbara, Bazerman has committed $300,000 to the university to endow a faculty fellowship for continuing lecturers in the UCSB Writing Program. The new gift, made with his wife and UCSB colleague Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, a professor of English, makes permanent the support Bazerman has provided to continuing lecturers since 2015.

"So much of the teaching of writing is about helping others and responsiveness and communicating and creating immediacy — generosity comes with the field," Bazerman said. "It may not always be rewarded institutionally, but it is rewarded daily in their teaching experience. I want the people of our UCSB Writing Program to know that their work is appreciated and valued very highly. And this endowment creates a structure for the institution to do that."

The competitive Charles Bazerman Endowed Fellowship will annually allow one lecturer to undertake a professional development project related to their teaching, or to the field of writing studies more broadly, by funding course releases for the recipient.

“The Bazerman Fellowship provides the wonderful gift of time for teacher-scholars to step away from the classroom for a full quarter in order to pursue research that enriches their teaching and produce scholarship that advances knowledge in Writing Studies,” said Madeleine Sorapure, director of the UCSB Writing Program. “This fellowship is an important way of inspiring and supporting the ongoing professional activity of the Writing Program’s continuing lecturers, which ultimately benefits UCSB students who enroll in their courses.”

Students were a big motivating factor for Bazerman’s philanthropy to the writing program. It was 50-plus years ago, while teaching elementary school in Brooklyn, that he said he first saw the sweeping impact of literacy. Learning to read and write changed children’s dispositions and their outlook on school, afforded them better opportunities and improved their post-school outcomes. Later shifting into higher education at City University of New York, he found professional satisfaction in working with college students on writing and literacy. His research and pedagogic interest were born.

Since then and still today, Bazerman’s own work focuses on the ways reading is used in writing and the ways in which academic writing is organized throughout the literature, across the disciplines. He has published multiple books about academic writing, including “Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science,” as well as the matched volumes “A Rhetoric of Literate Action” and “A Theory of Literate Action.”

“Writing is a core skill for success in the university — it’s absolutely core,” said Bazerman, who joined the faculty at UCSB in 1994. “One thing about writing that is different from other subjects is that we’re talking about developing students’ articulateness. That is individual and there is tremendous differentiation among students. An important goal of the university is to produce intelligent, critical students with something to say, who are ready to make an individual contribution. In the writing program that is built into the core of the curriculum, so writing teachers have to be responsive and encourage this individuality of statement.”

Kathryn Baillargeon, a continuing lecturer in writing studies since…, was the Bazerman Fellow for the just-completed 2017-2018 academic year. Describing Bazerman’s support as “invaluable,” she said the fellowship provided her “the longest research-focused time period I’ve had since writing my dissertation.”

“Our lecturer positions revolve around teaching but we operate at an R1 university with a culture that values research, so we have active research profiles as well,” said Baillargeon, who teaches writing courses for both lower- and upper-division undergraduates and runs a summer workshop in dissertation writing for graduate students. “Our research informs our teaching and vice versa in a way that is very different from most other disciplines. Any research we have time for has a direct effect on our teaching.

“Charles Bazerman’s support of teachers of writing at UCSB is wonderful and important — students want to be effective writers and thinkers and we, the lecturers, facilitate that,” she added. “What’s also of note is the nature of his gift: instead of endowing one professorship, he’s chosen instead to support, essentially, a different lecturer’s research every year. That means even more students will see the benefits of our pedagogy-related research — a real boon for everyone.”

Bazerman served as a UCSB professor of English from 1994–2000. Since 1997 he also has been a professor of education; he chaired the Department of Education from 2000-2006. In 2016 Bazerman earned an honorary doctorate from University Nacional de Cordoba, Argentina. He holds both master’s and doctorate degrees from Brandeis University, in English and American literature, and a bachelor’s degree from Cornell.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.