

Hiatt / continued

company's computer facilities are destroyed by a major catastrophe, how easy is it going to be for them to retrieve their files? In other words, is their information saved off-site? Many people don't address these issues, but disasters occur every day."

In her systems analysis class, students learn how to bring computer systems into the workplace. Hiatt teaches them the necessary skills to go into a business and to analyze its needs. The next step for the students is to design a computer system that will address those needs. This course is very stimulating from a professor's point of view because each semester different groups of students work on new projects.

Hiatt's students have also learned that they shouldn't take the associate professor's "softness" for granted. When she's teaching, she's "tough." She's demanding and expects her students to give their very best.

"I took a teaching techniques course in college," Hiatt says, "and what I remember is that research shows that good teachers are firm, fair and friendly. I demand a lot, but I also find in my systems analysis class that students usually rise to my expectations. Although they complain about the amount of work they've had to put into their projects, some of my students have come back in later semesters to tell me that it was the hardest class they ever took, but it was also the best class. So that gives me all the more reason to keep up what I'm doing."

"Good teaching is a talent, like fine painting and beautiful music," she philosophizes. "Some people can learn to do it well and some can't. Maybe it comes from within. Maybe it's because I care about my students. No matter how hard or how demanding I am, they know that I'm here to help if they need the help. But I won't back off. I will demand the best that I can get out of my students. I'm hard on them only because I want them to turn out to be good people."

Discovery . . .

In addition to earning her doctorate at Brigham Young University, Charlotte Hiatt also learned there that she has the ability to do anything she puts her mind to . . . and that includes rappelling. If you don't know what rappelling is, the associate professor will tell you.

"Have you ever seen movies of guys on these long ropes who bounce off the cliff and go all the way down like Green Berets. Well, we did that off a hundred-foot cliff. I've never been very athletic; I don't know why I ever did it, but I loved it. One of the things I learned about myself from that experience is that I have the ability to do anything. That was a real discovery for me because I'd always been kind of shy and didn't have a lot of confidence. I can't explain the high. To this day it still gives me goose bumps just thinking about it."

For Hiatt, the rewards of teaching come from her students. Oftentimes it's a verbal compliment that "makes my life worth living," she says. Other times, it's a gift, like a beautiful woven cloth given to her by a young man from Pakistan. The cloth's pattern is an ancient design unique to the student's province, says Hiatt, who proudly displays it on her office wall.

Of her professorial role, she says, "It's a role I've seen for myself ever since I became a female instructor teaching mathematics in high school. Very few women are in this specific role, and although I'm not perfect, at least I'm a female role model who can relate a little bit more to the female students."

"That's one thing I lacked when I was in school. I didn't have any female mentors or role models. We are very fortunate in the Information Systems Department. We have a number of females — perhaps because of their propensity for being good analytical thinkers and detail people. We

also have several female teaching assistants, and I've seen an increasing number of females in my information sciences classes, so that's very encouraging."

Hiatt is also pleased by the school's recent move to the new business building and says, "It gives me an extra sense of professionalism and a focus of pride. It helps me stand with my back straighter and my head a bit higher. It's something very special."

Admittedly, the Peters Business Building is a beautiful addition to the campus, but Hiatt's favorite campus feature is still the ginkgo trees, with their fan-shaped leaves. In the fall, almost overnight, their leaves turn bright gold in color. They stay that way for a while and then, almost overnight again, the trees drop all of their leaves.

As sure as the seasons will change, Charlotte Hiatt will find something positive about fall, winter, spring and summer. For example, if it's raining, she'll think of the future and how green the grass will be because of the water. She applies this same philosophy to other areas of her life as well.

"I always try to turn things around so they're positive," she says. "It's usually not as simplistic as talking about the weather. Sometimes I have to really work on it, but I'm glad I do, because life is too short. If you can't appreciate life while you're here, then what's the use of being here?"