



Star photo by Tom Holoubek

Robert M. Bushman, a Homewood resident, has received the prestigious 1992 McKinsey Award for excellence in teaching and for "outstanding student

development" at the University of Chicago's graduate school of business, where he is an assistant professor of accounting.

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By Curtis Swanson

The official announcement said that Homewood resident Robert M. Bushman, assistant professor of accounting at the University of Chicago's graduate school of business, has been granted the 1992 McKinsey Award for excellence in teaching.

In his own words, he sees the reason for the award like this:

"It's the magic of enthusiasm."

He gives the background for recognition of his teaching technique like this, again in his own words:

"If people think it's interesting, it's a great start."

Bushman said that strong teaching ability amounts to taking subject material and presenting it with clarity — and a sense of entertainment.

He believes that "it's a spirit — opening your mind, and letting it flow —" comparing the procedure to following the action of a pinball machine.

He said that in a classroom "a lot of things come out," in his lectures.

Bushman gave credit to the late comedian, Lenny Bruce, who used to start out with three or four notes, then improvised.

Although not exactly a role model, Bruce used that method effectively, according to Bushman. He cited, as being somewhat similar to Bruce in this approach, Jackie Mason and Henny Youngman.

A member of the graduate school of business since 1988, Bushman teaches courses in financial accounting and financial statement analysis.

"We are indeed fortunate to have someone with Robert's classroom skills on our faculty," said John P. Gould, dean of the graduate school of business.

"Strong teaching ability is an important part of our school's continued commitment to academic excellence and we are proud to honor our best instructors," Gould said.

Before joining the graduate school of business, Bushman taught accounting at the University of Minnesota. Previously, he served as a senior auditor at Arthur Andersen & Co., and as a senior internal auditor at Trans Union Corp.

Bushman earned a B.B.A. in accounting from Ohio University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. He earned the designation of Certified Public Accountant in 1975.

He was selected for the McKinsey Award by a committee of the council in the graduate school of business, an advisory group of business leaders. Ten current students provided input to the committee,

which based its decision on course evaluations from students, and the course load of each faculty member of the school.

The award, which lists outstanding performance in the classroom and for outstanding student development, includes a \$10,000 honorarium.

Reflecting on his career in business and in education, Bushman said that he loved working at Arthur Andersen, but did not like the time it took to make progress there.

He said, "As you move up, you have to be a salesman-type, but I wasn't — my expertise is this, that there is an instructional part of accounting."

And what of the students who sit in his classes at the graduate school of business. Are they already bright in technical subjects?

Not really — and not necessarily.

"People good at math and engineering often have a hard time in an accounting class, and people who haven't had any of this often walk in and do well," Bushman said.

From the days of founder William Rainey Harper, through the excitement of the Robert Maynard Hutchins era, to the current, about-to-end administration of President Hannah Gray, the University of Chicago has been considered a stimulating place to work.

It is that, and more, according to Bushman.

The university does not have "a calm, safe environment — it's a market place-mentality -type of place," he said.

"It's merciless. If you start rusting, you don't hang around long," Bushman added.

Describing his impressions when he arrived at the university, he said "it was intimidating at first."

With Nobel prize winners being so much in evidence, "being part of the place means producing," Bushman said.

"If you produce, it's a great place to be — if you don't, it's a bad place. They want excellence," he added.

The old motto, "publish or perish," is still observed, according to Bushman.

Along with strong scholarship, good teaching is still demanded.

"There are many at the University of Chicago who are good at both," he said.

The graduate school of business has maintained, for about two years, an in-house training system to encourage good teaching skills.

Its called, "The Teacher as Playwright, Director and Actor."