

The Upper Tier

by M. Amine Hajji

I chose UB for several reasons, but one of the most important was that its undergraduate program was considered top in mechanical engineering. It was recognized as a good program that had professors actively involved in teaching undergraduate curricula, as opposed to many places that relied heavily on graduate students.

One of the professors who I remember admiring was Professor Irving Shames. He wrote a widely used textbook on statics and dynamics, a standard in the subject. He was very popular because of his teaching style--he engaged people in his process of teaching. He made what looked like complicated dynamics equations seem easy to understand and to follow.

I remember one particular time I was in his class. It was a very large classroom, one of those half-circle amphitheaters on the old Main Street campus. I was way up in the upper tier of this huge classroom and he singled me out as the person most likely to be able to answer the question he was asking. I knew that he had noticed me and the work I had done. It was a real compliment to me and it showed that he was focusing on his students. He was able to connect with someone he barely knew: I'm not sure he even knew my name, but he knew my abilities.

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