

## **John Tate Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising**

During the time of Charles's tenure as a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, universities across the nation were finding it almost impossible to get faculty to spend time with students, including to advise them on major papers. Charles, however, took this component of his job very seriously. He would honor his office hours, make time for any student requesting assistance, and go the extra mile to help solve problems both academic and personal.

A student once stopped by Charles's office, interrupting a discussion Charles was having with his research colleague and co-author Leonard Robins. Charles stopped his meeting with Leonard, and sat with the student offering advice and assistance until the student was thoroughly satisfied. After the student had left, Leonard said to Charles: "Now THAT is what student advising is all about."

In the hopes of stimulating more of the dedication to student advising shown by Charles, the University of Minnesota established a new faculty award. The effort was pushed by an informal group of advisors from many of the major departments and headed by a professor in the University's English department. The effort was successful, and the John Tate Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising was established "to recognize and reward high-quality academic advising, and to call attention to the contributions of academic advising toward helping students formulate and achieve intellectual, career, and personal goals." The award was named in honor of John Tate, Professor of Physics and first dean of University College (1930-41).

In 1987, the first John Tate Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising was issued. Charles Backstrom was the recipient. "Receiving the Tate award validated everything I was doing on my own. I was proud, and happy that my colleagues recognized the value of what I did," Charles said.