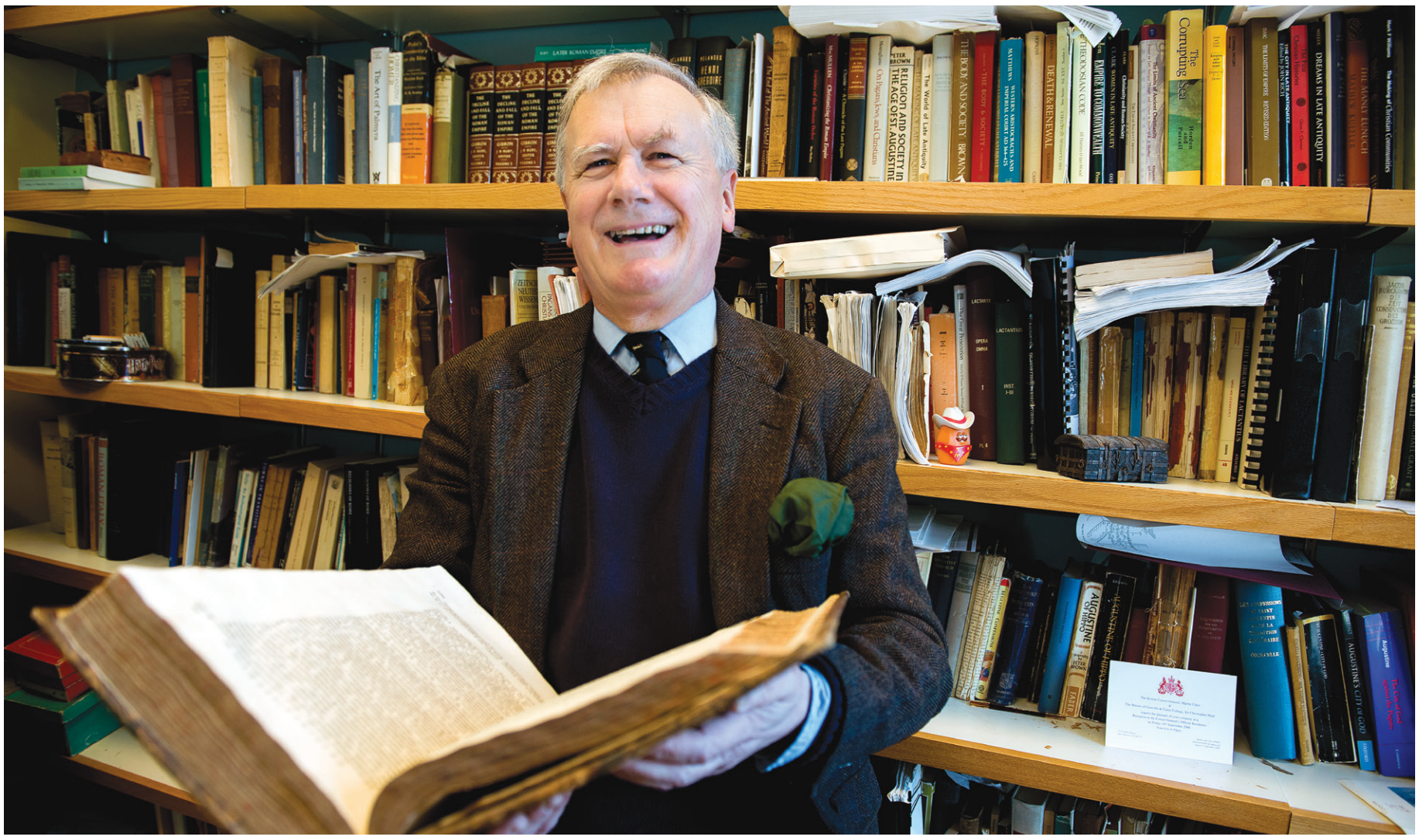

Oliver Nicholson, 2014–15 Distinguished Teacher
Morse-Alumni Undergraduate Teaching Award

It's not unusual for a student to enter Oliver Nicholson's office with thoughts of declaring a Biblical studies or classics minor and walk out a major—in just half an hour.

With a keen sense of humor, dramatic flair, and infectious enthusiasm, Nicholson brings Latin and the world of the Late Antique period alive.

"We were introduced to Late Antique figures as real people," says a former student. "By the end of each class, we found that not only had our ability to read Latin texts improved, but the centuries-wide gap between their authors and us seemed diminished."

As director of undergraduate studies, Nicholson wins rave reviews.

"He has overseen a complete overhaul and streamlining of the department's major and minor programs, which has resulted in a far more comprehensible, and cohesive, program for our students," notes a colleague.

Nicholson goes the extra mile for undergraduates, from helping them find excavations to join to enlisting them to help edit, research, and write entries in the forthcoming Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity, of which he is general editor. He also founded the College in the Schools Classics program, which brings university-level Latin and, recently, ancient Greek, to area high schools.

In personal interactions, he gives students healthy doses of attention and respect.

"Dr. Nicholson both encouraged and challenged me," says another former student. "He always gave me honest feedback, so I knew that when he said he liked something, he meant it."

Associate Professor

Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies

College of Liberal Arts

University of Minnesota
Twin Cities

"There are few greater joys than going through poetry at the painstaking pace at which third-year Latin students translate, both getting the details right and devouring the sound of the verse."

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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A metaphor for the source of knowledge, this tree has been the emblem of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers since 1993.