

# Excellence in teaching

## 'When students finish my course, nobody calls soil dirt'

By Paul Francuch

When you take a class with Krishna Reddy, be prepared to get your hands dirty.

An internationally recognized expert on soils, building foundations, landfill designs and remediation, Reddy teaches two upper-level required undergraduate courses, which he designed and developed, on soil mechanics and foundation design.

Students dig deep into the nitty-gritty of an interdisciplinary specialty field called geoenvironmental engineering.

"When students finish my course, nobody calls soil dirt," laughs Reddy, professor of civil and environmental engineering.

"I tell students they have to dirty their hands — literally. If their hands are not dirty, they'll lose points."

Besides supervising graduate students and teaching undergraduate courses, Reddy presides over honors seminars (including the Environmental Research seminar series). He is faculty adviser for undergraduates working on senior design projects.

A University Scholar, Reddy has won a Teaching Recognition Award, the College of Engineering's Harold Simon Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Best Geotechnical Educator Award from the Great Lakes Geotechnical/Geoenvironmental Conference Steering Committee, among other awards.

"I love teaching and research," he says. "I take my teaching very seriously and I really enjoy going into the classroom."

While he assigns students readings from his textbook *Geoenvironmental Engineering: Site Remediation,*

*Waste Containment, and Emerging Waste Management Technologies*, he also peppers his lectures with anecdotes and examples of situations from his pre-academic life in the business world.

"I use real world cases," he says. "I share with students my experiences and explain how I solved problems."

"When I give them design projects, I don't take them from the textbook. I make up new ones based on reports taken from real projects."

Students get site condition reports on soils they use to design suitable foundations, then come up with a final drawing that's suitable as a construction blueprint.

"They have to really look at the soil conditions and properties, along with alternative foundation systems."

Reddy instills a business-like regimen that includes required attendance for lectures, labs, exams and on-time homework. It helps prepare students for the world of work.

"At the level of my courses, I think all the students are capable. Some are more laid-back than others, but I expect everyone to be awake. I have strict ground rules," he says.

Students are required to keep class notes organized in three-ring binders — notes Reddy says often prove of great value to students when they go on to professional careers.

"Some students complain, but what's gratifying is after graduation, when they're on the job or are preparing to take their professional engineering exam, many tell me it was useful."

"They're glad I made them maintain that binder."

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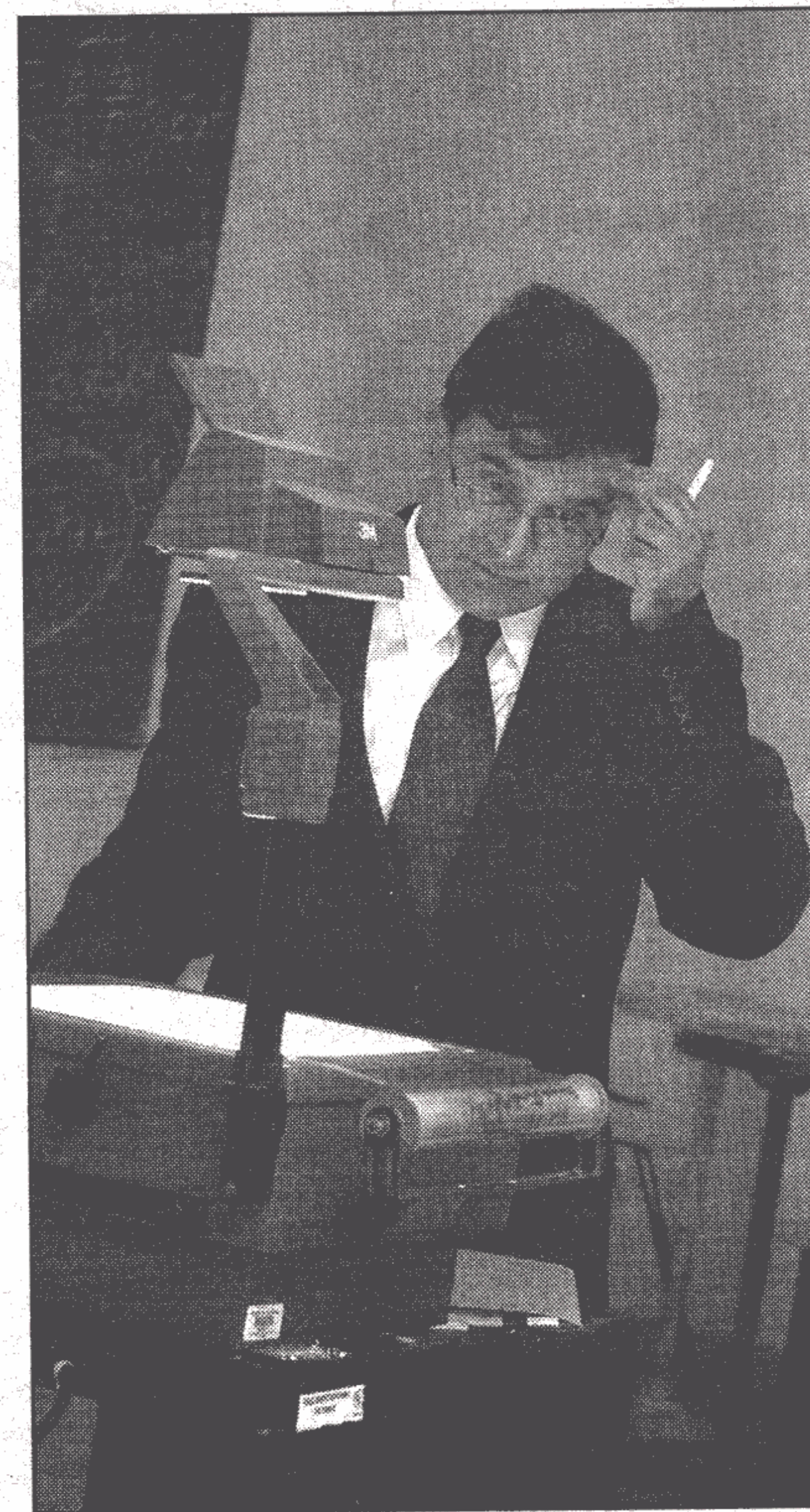


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Engineering's Krishna Reddy: "I take my teaching very seriously and I really enjoy going into the classroom."