

COLO. PROFESSOR

# Winner will give prize to college

*Alum donating rich  
reward to Davidson*

BY BRUCE HENDERSON  
Staff Writer

As a student at Davidson College 50 years ago, Holmes Rolston III discovered a world of wonder at the end of a microscope. As winner of the world's best-known religion prize, he's ready to repay the favor.

Rolston was named Wednesday as the winner of this year's Templeton Prize, which recognizes discoveries that "advance understanding of God and spiritual realities."

Worth more than \$1 million, it's the largest monetary award given to an individual, according to the prize announcement.



Rolston

Rolston doubly delighted his alma mater by announcing he would donate the money to create a new professorship in religion and science, the disciplines he has linked for decades.

"Well, that's like him, very much like him," said Frances Irwin of Charlotte, a friend since childhood. "He's real down-to-earth, a homefolks kind of man."

As a philosophy professor at Colorado State University, Rolston is known as the father of environmental ethics. That boils down to a view that nature has intrinsic worth, apart from its value to people, and deserves reverence.

It led Rolston to advocate for wilderness conservation and to probe what religion teaches about overpopulation, excessive consumption and equitably sharing the world's resources.

"I've been lucky that my own personal agenda, figuring nature out, has during my lifetime turned out to be the world agenda: figuring out the human place on the planet,"

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# Notable alum will donate rich prize to alma mater

**Davidson** *from 1B*

Rolston said this week.

Investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton created the Templeton Prize in 1973. The Duke of Edinburgh will present the award, valued at 725,000 pounds sterling, at Buckingham Palace on May 7.

Rolston's career traces to his boyhood in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, where the Scots-Presbyterian love of religion and nature molded him.

His father, a minister, moved the family to Charlotte during World War II. Young Rolston was a straight-A student at Harding High School, but graduated in Richmond, Va., when the family moved on after seven years.

Rolston reveled in the outdoors, camping in the N.C. mountains and on the Catawba River where Lake Norman now stands.

"He was always, of course, extremely bright," said Patsy Troutman, Rolston's girlfriend at Harding. "He and I competed a little bit, but it really wasn't much of a competition. He was good at everything."

Once he enrolled at Davidson, a faculty biologist put names to the plants and creatures that had long fascinated the boy.

"Even though I majored in physics and math, I had the idea somehow that you had to figure out how the universe was made," Rolston said. "But what this biologist showed me was that the most interesting stuff was on this planet. All that wakened up my eyes a lot to the natural world and began my spiritual journey."

Davidson with his surprise gift. The college has a \$250 million campaign under way to support student financial aid, academic resources and community life.

Rolston's gift will allow the college to create new links among religion, ethics and science, said Clark Ross, vice president for academic affairs.

At 70, Rolston is still healthy

and still outdoors, last summer backpacking in Wyoming's Bear-tooth Mountains, this summer looking for gorillas in Uganda.

He recently bought his own tombstone for the family church cemetery back in Virginia. Carved on the headstone: "A philosopher gone wild."

Bruce Henderson: (704) 358-5051

After Davidson, Rolston enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, later earning a doctorate in theology and religious studies at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He returned to minister for several years at a Presbyterian church in Bristol, Va., where he deepened his interest in nature.

Increasingly, he said, science and religion seemed to complement each other. In Rolston's view, religious values temper the risks when science tampers with nature, said Randall Styers, who uses Rolston's writings in the religion and culture classes he teaches at UNC Chapel Hill.

"Some scholars see religion and science as conflicting with one another or as dealing with thoroughly different types of issues," Styers said. "... He sees them both having central contributions."

His views on environmental ethics made Rolston an outsider among his peers. Mainstream journals rejected his work until a breakthrough article was published in 1975.

Since then, he's been published in books and periodicals ranging from *Natural History* to the *Journal of Forestry*, his essays reprinted in anthologies dozens of times. He has lectured on seven continents.

Last Friday, Rolston traveled to