On January 21, 2017, Semra Sevi, André Blais’ PhD student organized an event to celebrate the many accomplishments of our colleague and friend. The event highlighted how André Blais is one of the most prolific, insightful, kind and generous scholars in the field of political science. His CV is extensive and notable for two things – the breadth of topics that he has written about, and the number of co-authors. André’s expertise extends far beyond just voting behaviour, encompassing multiple literatures and country-specific understandings including citizens’ assemblies and deliberative democracy, and his personal network is world-wide. He thrives upon collaboration with people who bring new understandings, perspectives and skills. Semra presented his career in a time series graph which showed how productive he has been over the years: 19 books and 8 edited volumes, as well as 178 articles in peer-reviewed journals, and 103 book chapters. Followed by the number of unique coauthors he has collaborated with over the years: 136 different coauthors from around the world, of which 3 are sociologists and 12 are economists, and 51 are students and postdoctoral researchers. It is no wonder he keeps attracting students to work with him!

The following are some testimonies from colleagues, former PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

Personne ne m’a enseigné davantage sur le monde académique qu’André Blais. Ceci peut sembler un peu paradoxal, puisque je n’ai jamais été son étudiant, je n’ai jamais suivi un de ses cours, et il n’a pas supervisé mon mémoire de maîtrise ou ma thèse de doctorat. Mais André m’a énormément appris comme collègue.

Il m’a aidé à mieux comprendre plusieurs choses, dont comment rédiger un questionnaire de sondage, comment analyser des données, comment écrire des textes, comment choisir un titre, comment sélectionner une revue, comment construire une demande de subvention, comment diriger une équipe de recherche, comment encadrer des étudiants, quoi dire et quoi ne pas dire pendant une assemblée départementale, et finalement quand dire oui et quand dire non.

Dès que j’avais un dilemme existentiel, je savais qu’une simple conversation avec André allait m’orienter vers la sage décision. Je me sens privilégié d’avoir pu le côtoyer pendant de nombreuses années. J’ai eu le meilleur mentor imaginable.

Mais toutes ces années ne m’ont pas permis de reproduire la formule magique d’André. Je suis parvenu à la conclusion que c’est impossible d’être aussi productif, aussi disponible et aussi sympathique qu’André simultanément!

Patrick Fournier
Professeur titulaire
Département de science politique
Université de Montréal

André Blais’ many academic achievements only tell part of his story and the influence he has on political science. The largest part of André’s story is inextricably linked to an international network of researchers, students and teachers who have had the chance to work, study and sometimes simply talk for a few minutes with him. This ability to constantly inspire others and further the understanding of political behaviour is epitomized by his maxim: “Not convinced”. This persistence and commitment to making sense of the world is contagious for any researcher gravitating around him. I have never met someone more generous of his time than André. This generosity applies to long time research colleagues as much as to first year students. No one has had a more profound and lasting influence on my teaching and work
ethic than André. I try on a daily basis to be as inspiring and inspired as him, but I realize that he sets the pace and most of us are merely trying to keep up.

Christophe Chowanietz  
Professor of Political Science  
John Abbott College

André Blais, a veritable publishing machine, is the most welcoming and generous academic I know. I experienced this first when I was a visiting PhD student at his Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies. I visited his Chair hoping to work with an absolute expert in the field. But my research visit largely exceeded my expectations; being able to discuss my research with André on a daily basis and to have lunch with him and his team every day was unique and highly stimulating! André’s hospitality is unmatched and it makes Université de Montréal one of the most popular places for research stays for junior and senior political scientists from across the world.

When I joined the department of political science at Université de Montréal, I witnessed first-hand that André’s hospitality and generosity is not reserved for his students and visitors at the Chair. He is welcoming to new colleagues, and preciously generous with his time to mentor and give guidance. Scientific papers, drafts for research proposals, and course syllabi; André makes time to read and comment on all of them – usually indicating he is not convinced, but with constructive feedback. When asking André for feedback, I have been impressed most by the fact that he is always and genuinely interested in the papers and research projects I send him. It must be his intellectual curiosity that makes André Blais simultaneously one of the most prolific scholars in the field and the most generous academic I know.

Ruth Dassonneville  
Professeure Adjointe  
Titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada en démocratie électorale  
Département de science politique  
Université de Montréal

I have had the privilege to know and work with André for many years, first as a graduate student and later as a colleague, and throughout this time I have benefitted greatly from his deep knowledge, intellectual curiosity and clarity of thought, as well as his kindness, generosity and respect. As my dissertation advisor, André asked challenging questions, introduced me to new ideas and colleagues, and provided opportunities for me to develop the experience, skills and knowledge base I needed to succeed. He was also generous with his time and encouragement.

In my professional life, both in academia and subsequently in the public service, André has been a trusted source of new ideas, interesting questions and valuable advice. André’s contributions to the political science discipline in general, and to the study of elections and political behaviour in particular are outstanding and well-documented, both in Canada and internationally. They can be seen not only in his prodigious publication record, but also, and perhaps most importantly, in the quality of the scholars he has mentored and who have gone on to make outstanding contributions in their own right. André’s impact on public policy debates – particularly in the fields of democratic citizenship and election administration – has been no less important, and his former students can be found making a difference at all levels of government.
In short, André has had an impact on both the study and the practice of electoral democracy in Canada and around the world that will be felt for years to come.

Miriam Lapp  
Acting Director, Public Education and Information Program Performance  
Elections Canada

Le professeur André Blais est l’enseignant le plus inspirant que j’ai eu l’occasion de rencontrer.

André Blais inspire d’abord par la passion qui l’anime au travail. Sa soif de mieux comprendre les élections et les électeurs est inassouvisseable et contagieuse. Qui conque discute avec lui de ces sujets comprend immédiatement l’intérêt de ses travaux de recherche.

Ensuite, André Blais inspire car il réussit comme peu de professeurs à marier recherche et formation des étudiants. Loin de le détourner de ses recherches, la formation des étudiants est pour lui l’aboutissement logique de celles-ci. André Blais ne se contente pas de produire des connaissances, ni de les partager avec ses étudiants, il veut aussi aider ces derniers à acquérir des compétences en recherche pour qu’à leur tour ils puissent réaliser des travaux originaux. À en juger par le nombre de ses étudiants qui se sont démarqués en tant que chercheurs (et dans bien d’autres domaines professionnels), il ne fait aucun doute qu’André Blais offre à ses étudiants une formation exceptionnelle.

Enfin, André Blais inspire à titre de citoyen départemental exemplaire. À titre d’ancien directeur du département, j’ai pu apprécier son irréprochable éthique de travail, sa grande disponibilité pour aider au succès du département et sa grande générosité auprès des collègues qui sollicitent régulièrement ses conseils et son aide.

Bref, André Blais est doté d’une capacité de travail qui le rend incroyablement productif, il est doté d’une intégrité intellectuelle exceptionnelle, et il est accessible à ses étudiants et collègues. Il est aussi une personne fort agréable à côtoyer.

Éric Montpetit,  
Vice-doyen aux affaires professorales,  
Faculté des arts et des sciences  
Université de Montréal

I became familiar with André’s work on Canadian voting behaviour in graduate school, when it quickly became clear that I needed to read his work if I wanted to understand anything about Canadian elections. I was thrilled when he invited me to be part of his Making Electoral Democracy Work research team, despite very minimal contact. I expressed such enthusiasm in my response that he quickly reminded me that we might not get the grant! He was (thankfully) wrong and that project has dramatically shaped my career. André not only made me a part of the project, but he entrusted me with key components of the research and created a network of smart, creative scholars who met at least once a year to discuss our shared research interests.

André is the consummate mentor – he is welcoming, challenging and supportive. His “army” of students at UdeM can count on his willingness to provide insight into their projects, whether one on one, during seminars, or over lunch, and this benefit extends to colleagues outside of Montreal as well. There is an incredible network of scholars, around the world, who have benefited from André’s wisdom, often co-
authoring with him, and who have populated the literature on topics for which André is a (if not the) recognized expert.

Laura Stephenson  
Associate Professor & Chair, Undergraduate Program  
University of Western Ontario