

Prizes and Gifts

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(Spring Awards Convocation, April 29, 2008)

I know you are all here for the awarding of these prizes on my right; don't worry, we'll get to them in a few minutes. As I was looking at them, I got to thinking, "Wouldn't it be fun to come up with some prizes that aren't listed in the program? Prizes that should be awarded but, for good reason, will never be handed out?"

One I came up with is *The Criminal Justice Prize*, for the POE student with the most experience in the field . . . and I don't mean internships! Or, *The Thickest File* in the Dean of Students Office. The judges are still working on that one because the contenders are still . . . "enhancing" their portfolios.

A second prize would honor a different kind of student behavior. After talking with my colleagues, I have found out that I'm not the only one with students who constantly stroll into class late. These students don't have valid excuses; they just can't seem to come to class on time. When thinking about the name to give to this prize, I remembered that about a month ago the college hosted the hip-hop performer Fabolous, who showed up way late for the concert. I missed that concert, so I looked up Fabolous on YouTube and saw him wearing gold chains. So here's the prize I made—my daughter's necklace and my wife's alarm clock.



From a large pool of nominees, *The Fabolous 2 ½ Hours Late for a Concert Prize* goes to Eric and Jason Hoover. And they run track and cross-country, so there's no reason why they should ever be late! Faculty colleagues told me several stories about Eric and Jason, including some that took place on the Remote Field Course, so the Hoovers' reputation spans not just this campus, but the continental U.S.

Having talked with you seniors for the past four years, it's clear that you would like to award some prizes to the members of the faculty. And so, I have *The Dick Cheney "It's Cruel and Inhumane, But It's Not Torture" Award*. This is my old G.I. Joe, and instead of being water-boarded, he's being mouse-boarded.



The award goes to Emil Nagengast, for his assignment in “Intro to International Politics” that requires students to write a four-page paper, and each sentence has to cite a different source. So that’s what Cheney means by “enhanced interrogation techniques!”

We could come up with other faculty awards, but the focus today, quite rightly, should be on you students. I spent some time talking and corresponding with my colleagues, and we thought these more-serious awards should also appear on the program.

- *The “I’m ready for Survivor” Prize* goes to Dominick Wytovich, who in his first year here had a broken leg but still went on a Geology field trip, got out of the van, and went into a cave.
- *The Huggies Pull-Ups Award* is connected to something the Concert Choir actually gives out—the Diaper Award—to the first-year student “most likely to mature over time.” Adam Stanley won it four years ago and current seniors in the Choir have said he now exemplifies maturity and sincere leadership. As Russ Shelley has told me, “Although Adam hasn’t yet given up the scooter, the qualities his life currently demonstrates points to a transformation Juniata could not have more effectively engineered.”
- Jim Tuten has often posed the question, “If you were going to colonize the moon, who would you want to send in the first ship?” Who is that capable, adaptable, and

independent? Several colleagues told me the *Moon Colonist Award* should go to Elicia Frye. Nothing holds her back, so she can probably even start on the dark side of the moon.

- A lot of you should win the *Unsung Hero Award*, for all that you do for your fellow Juniatians (let me tip my cap to the Writing Center tutors, who are there in the library the night before big papers are due, and to the TLT staff for saving all of our necks time after time) and for what you do for the larger community (way to go, Society of Physics Students, for winning the outstanding chapter award for the 9th year in a row—and that’s for colleges and universities in all of Pennsylvania and parts of New Jersey and Delaware). However, for a small but very important act, I’d like to give the award to Pat Haskins, who was an RA in East when a suite-mate had a family emergency. Pat dropped everything and drove the suite-mate home to Pittsburgh, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the week, and picked him up a week later.
- *The Big Heart Award* goes to Brian Sykes and Josh Beaver (class of 2009) for establishing an award, the Dr. Frederick Jay Fricker Honorary Scholarship, which really is listed in your program. Students usually are more interested in getting awards, not creating them, so Brian’s and Josh’s thoughtfulness and generosity just floored me.
- Lynn Cockett would like to award the *Big Sisters Prize* to her neighbors on Washington Street: Amanda Albanese, Michelle Campbell, Ashton Cutchall, Ashleigh Ehnts, Lindsay LaPrad, and Kim Wagner. She told me, “These women are amazing. They’re funny, sweet, smart, hard-working, and excellent babysitters to boot. During my sabbatical travels Kim and Michelle have saved my butt more than once by picking up my daughter Hannah at the Early Childhood Education Center. They throw ‘jumping on the bed’ parties, they come outside when we go out to play in the snow and help make snowmen, and they gave Hannah a kid-sized field hockey stick for her fourth birthday!”

All of these come from my colleagues on the faculty and staff. I joke that I’m offering “prizes,” but actually they really are gifts. These folks spent a lot of time sharing these stories with me. They didn’t have to do that, but they were helping me out and honoring you. I, and you, have received these gifts. Here at the Awards Convocation, a few of you will win prizes. Many of you are deserving—I know there are many unsung heroes out there—but only a few of you will cross this stage. That’s the nature of prizes and awards; sometimes you get what you deserve, and sometimes you don’t.

Gifts, however, are different. They're democratic, for one—anyone can give or receive them. And sometimes, gifts are better than prizes. I'm up here because last year I won an award for teaching. That's a wonderful thing but in many ways, I value much more a gift I received for my teaching and advising. This came from Ryan Mathur, a former student and now, happily, my colleague in the Geology Department.



It's called mylonite and the white band is quartz that's been changed by heat and pressure—sort of like what I did to Ryan in the classroom and on the basketball court. That Ryan appreciated my efforts enough to give me this particular rock means a great deal and makes my head swell up—so it's good that I'll read your course evaluations next week, which will cut me down to size. As one student has written on RateMyProfessor.com, "I don't get all the hype. He's not a bad prof or anything, but certainly not the best Juniata has to offer."

I couldn't agree more. You seniors have told me so yourselves. Just as there are many unsung heroes among you, there are many distinguished teachers right over here. I asked the Class of 2008 to tell me what, in their four years here, was their best class, and why. Thirty-eight of them wrote back, and some of the quickest responses came from Eric Hoover and Jason Hoover—so, they aren't always late! Please allow me to take a moment to list them, in

the order I received the messages. This is a big gift from the seniors to you, my colleagues, so let's take some time unwrapping it.

Environmentrics (Neil Pelkey)

Immunology (Mike Boyle)

Production and Operations Management (Randy Rosenberger)

Computer Art (Sandy McBride)

Intro. to the Aesthetic Experience (Russ Shelley)

God, Evolution, and Culture (mentioned twice) (Randy Bennett, Don Braxton, Xinli Wang)

Social History of Medicine (David Sowell)

Organic Chem Concepts I (Dave Reingold)

Professional Presentations (Donna Weimer)

Remote Field Course (Jim Borgardt, David Widman, John Matter, Larry Mutti, Ryan Mathur)

Sensory Biology (Jay Holser)

World Religions (Susan Prill)

Sustainability independent study (Rob Yelnosky)

Managerial Accounting (Pat Weaver)

Women's Lives in Medieval Europe (Belle Tuten)

Investing in Your Future (Pat Weaver)

The Historian's Craft (mentioned twice) (Belle Tuten)

Intermediate Accounting II (Dom Peruso)

Intro. to International Politics (Emil Nagengast)

The Lotus and the Cross (Don Braxton)

Shaping the American Mind (Jim Tuten and Janet Lewis)

Poetry Writing (mentioned three times) (Peter Goldstein)

Congress and the Presidency (Dennis Plane)

Western Political Thought (Jack Barlow)

Message Analysis (mentioned twice) (Grace Fala)

Crime and Punishment (Belle Tuten)

Art and Science of Brewing (Todd Gustafson)

Biochemistry and Molecular Bio III (Ruth Reed)

Ideas and Power in the Modern World (Jim Roney)

Civil Rights and Songs (Russ Shelley and Dave Hsiung)

International Law and Human Rights (Emil Nagengast)

Advanced Accounting (Dom Peruso)
Human Nature (Xinli Wang)
Field Exp: Outdoor Education (Michael Byron)
Musical Acoustics (Jim Latten and Jamie White)
Origins of Evil (mentioned twice) (Don Braxton)
Astronomy (Norm Siems)
Art of Environmentalism (Nancy Siegel)
Invertebrate Anatomy (Jay Hosler)
Sustainable Agriculture (Larry Mutti)

Seniors, you gave me the gift of your time and thoughtfulness when you responded to my message, and with your heartfelt responses you have given my colleagues a far greater gift. For those of you who did not wish to remain anonymous, I'll hand out your messages to my colleagues after finals. I don't know if you realize how marvelous these gifts are. Teaching is not like painting a house or mowing the lawn, where you can see your progress in very tangible ways, where you know you've completed the job and done good work. What you've told us is, "Yes, I do get it, I am thinking in new ways, and I had a lot of fun in the process." I—we—appreciate hearing that.

Let me give the last word to Jennifer Farber. She was writing to me at that moment, but she was really writing to all of the faculty when she concluded: "I hope that something I wrote . . . will let you know that what you do is important and really does impact your students, now as well as in the future. The things we experience daily in your classrooms, good or bad, will [stay] with us forever and we appreciate these moments more than most will ever know. Although I have never had you personally as a professor, thank you for all that you have done and sacrificed, and for every life that you have changed." Now that's a gift.

It's time for the prizes and awards, so let me just finish with this: Class of 2008, for all that you've given to us faculty, for all that you've given to Juniata College and the larger community, thank you for those wonderful gifts. We'll miss you.