



SIGCSE 2018 New Educators' Workshop
**Balancing Teaching, Scholarship,
and Service**

Brandeis Marshall, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Chair

Spelman College
Computer and Information Sciences

<http://brandeismarshall.com>
brandeis.marshall@spelman.edu

Jesse M. Heines, Ed.D.

Professor Emeritus

University of Massachusetts Lowell
Dept. of Computer Science

<https://jesseheines.com>
jesse_heines@uml.edu

February 21, 2018

Baltimore, Maryland



And I know a father
Who had a son.
He longed to tell him all the reasons
For the things he'd done.
He came a long way
Just to explain.
He kissed his boy as he lay sleeping
Then he turned around and headed home again.

— Paul Simon

Slip Slidin' Away (verse 3)

<https://youtu.be/5anMTZjVsL8>

Table of Contents

Who We Are	4
ON TEACHING	
Perspectives Worth Keeping In Mind	5
<i>You're just like a communist!</i>	7
ON SCHOLARSHIP	
First Thoughts	11
Recommended Books	11
On Proposal Writing	
Advice from Retired NSF Program Director Rajinder Khosla	13
Graphs from Report to the National Science Board on the NSF's Merit Review Process for Fiscal Year 2016	15
Jesse's NSF Submission and Decision Notifications	17
Brandi's NSF Submission and Decision Notifications	18
Jesse's Take-Aways from These Data	19
Links to Jesse's Recent Successful Proposals	19
Links to Grammar Sites	19
On Getting Tenure	
Allan Brinkley Tenure Denial — <i>The Boston Globe</i>	21
Jesse's Promotion Rejection Letters	23
Why You Can't Trust Letters of Recommendation — <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>	27
ON SERVICE AND ON LIVING	
Randy Pausch — <i>The Last Lecture</i>	37
Jack Manning — BC Strong Scholarship Honors Marathon Bombings Survivors — <i>The Boston Globe</i>	41
Links to Videos on Perseverance	45
Quotes, Quotes, and More Quotes	45

Who We Are

Brandeis Marshall

I received my undergraduate degree from University of Rochester. I furthered my education at Rensselaer, receiving my Ph.D. in 2007. I was a teaching assistant for 8 semesters and taught briefly at Bard College while a graduate student.

My faculty career began at Purdue, where I taught databases and research methodology courses for 6 years before earning promotion and tenure in 2014.

Teaching others inspires me. The small environment I found to be the most engaging. Throughout my entire education, I never had a teacher, instructor or professor who looked like me. So I changed course in the summer of 2014 by accepting a faculty position as a tenured Associate Professor at Spelman College.

I am now Chair of the Computer and Information Sciences Department, where I contribute to data analytics research community and teach at a women's HBCU.



Jesse Heines

My teaching career began in 1970 at the Anglo-American School in Moscow in the former Soviet Union, where I taught middle school math and science. After graduate school I developed computer-based training courses for Digital Equipment Corporation until 1984. I've been at the Dept. of Computer Science at UMass Lowell ever since, happily retiring as Professor Emeritus in 2016.

My classroom work focused on user interfaces, while my research combined my love of music with computing in a course called "Sound Thinking." That research was supported by three National Science Foundation grants and resulted in "Computational Thinking in Sound," a book coauthored with my Music Dept. colleague Gena Greher and published by Oxford University Press (comphinkinsound.org).

I now take courses rather than teach them, volunteer in a variety of situations, and sing my heart out with my barbershop quartet, *Fireside*, the 2017 Harmony Sweepstakes Boston Regional Champions (harmony-sweepstakes.com/boston)! Please visit firesidequartet.net and buy our new CD! ☺



ON TEACHING

Perspectives Worth Keeping In Mind

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”

— *Plutarch, 46–120*

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

— *Sir Isaac Newton, 1642–1727, in a letter to Robert Hooke dated February 5, 1675*

“The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.”

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882, in The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, edited by Edward Emerson (published posthumously in 1904)*

“Those things for which [a college demands] the most money [from a student] are never the things which the student most wants. Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries, no charge is made.”

— *Henry David Thoreau, 1817–1862, writing in Walden (published in 1854)*

“The best teacher uses books and appliances as well as his or her own insight, sympathy, and magnetism.”

— *Edward L. Thorndike, 1874–1949, writing in Education (published in 1912)*

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

— *Mahatma Gandhi, 1869–1948, preeminent leader of Indian independence movement from British rule*

“I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.”

— *Albert Einstein, 1879–1955, physicist*

“It's a very ancient saying, but a true and honest thought: If you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught.”

— *Oscar Hammerstein II, 1895–1960, musician and composer, particularly of scores for Broadway shows; this is a line in the song “Getting To Know You” from the musical “The King and I”*

“The trick to education is to teach people in such a way that they don't realize they're learning until it's too late.”

— *Harold Eugene “Doc” Edgerton (“Poppa Flash”), 1903–1990, fabled MIT professor and inventor of the stroboscopic flash*

[Learning should be treated] “as an active process of constructing ideas rather than a passive process of absorbing information.”

— *Daniel J. Boorstin, 1914–2004, Librarian of the United States Congress (1975–1987), in From Risk to Renewal: Charting a Course for Reform (p. 117, published in 1993)*

“Science is more than a study of molecules and calculations; it is the love of knowledge and the continued search for the truth. The study of the sciences promotes humility, leaving us with a clear sense that we will never understand all there is to know.”

— *Kenneth H. Olsen, 1926–2011, “The Ultimate Entrepreneur,” Founder and President of Digital Equipment Corporation, from his address at the dedication of the Olsen Science Building at Gordon College, September 27, 2008*

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.”

— *Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929–1968, Civil Rights Leader*

“I remember my mother telling me: ‘Keep stretching your arms for learning. Someday, somebody will ask you to show how long they are, and they won’t ask their color.’ ”

— *Samuel F. Yette, 1929–2011, journalist, author, and educator who became an influential and sometimes incendiary voice on civil rights*

“To learn, read. To know, write. To master, teach.”

— *Hindu proverb*

Additional quotes can be found at: <https://jesseheines.com/~heines/quotes.jsp>

You're just like a communist!

*Jesse M. Heines
UMass Lowell*

The roster scared me to death:
Rekha Anur. Arvind Balasubramaniam. Samip Banker. Gaurav Bhardwaj. Vibhuvadhan Bontala. Shefali Chandila. Pawankumar Deshpande. Svitlana Grankovska. Jian Gu. Swati Gupta. Parameshwar Hedge. Chetan Jain. Shashidhar Kadiri. Henry Kostowski. Vaishali Kulkarni. Guangyi Li. Yanhe Li. Rambabu Manchikalapudi. Padmanabhan Muthuvelraj. Ngoc Nguyen. Yutaka Onizuka. Ashish Patel. Bhuwan Patel. Daniel Shea (did he register for the wrong class!?). Wenhua Shi. Lan Shu. Ronald So. Hongwu Su. Samrajya Tatineni. Biao Yang. And Stanphenie Yao.



Whew! Now, I knew that a few of these students were just as American as I am, but the extreme diversity in the overwhelming majority really had me worried. Why? you may rightfully ask. Aren't international students usually smart and hard-working? Yes, they are, at least in my experience. Aren't international students usually refreshingly respectful of their professors? Yes, sometimes embarrassingly so. For example, I prefer my students to just call me by my first name, but I find that the small number of international students who accept this usually feel obliged to address me as "Dr. Prof. Mr. Jesse, sir."

So what's the problem? Well, the problem is that I love to teach, and I believe that the first step in teaching is engaging students' interest and attention on a personal level. I therefore constantly illustrate my lectures with real-life examples from my personal experience.

My students will tell you that I am always talking about my wife and kids. My favorite illustration of multitasking in computer operating systems is the way my boys and I would go through the supermarket when they were in high school, each of us a separate "process" heading in different directions to maximize our shopping efficiency and "joining" at the checkout to resynchronize our tasks. Explain interprocess communication? No problem: that's my wife Bonnie and me doing our shopping alone now that the kids are gone, still going our separate ways, but now with walkie-talkies!

To me, each class is a performance. Over the years some students have loved my classes and some have hated them, but I daresay very few have slept through them. How would these international students, whose life experiences were so different from my own, react to my approach? Would they "get" my jokes? Would they respond to my personal anecdotes? Would my style confuse rather than stimulate them?

I had had my share of interaction with international students before this class, most of it absolutely marvelous, enriching my life as much as it has hopefully enriched theirs. For example, as a teacher of programming, students often come to my office for one-on-one help when they are doing their assignments and come up against bugs or difficult algorithms they can't figure out for themselves. Nadeem Chaudry, from Pakistan, had a particularly tricky bug that we worked on together for about half an hour to no avail. At that point I said, "Nadeem, this is a two-cookie problem!"

Of course Nadeem had no idea what I was talking about, but I opened the drawer containing my chocolate chip cookie stash, took one for myself, and offered him one. "Thank you," he said, "but my religion probably doesn't allow me to eat those."

"What religion is that?" I asked.

"Muslim," he answered, but at the same time he looked at the cookie bag more closely. "Wait," he said, "these are kosher. See? They have a U in a circle, which means that they're OK for Jews to eat. Our dietary laws are very similar, so I think it's probably OK for me to have one after all."

"That's fascinating," I said. "I'm Jewish, but I never knew about that similarity in our religions."

Nadeem pushed back hard from the desk at which we were working.

"What?!" he gasped. "You're a Jew?!?"

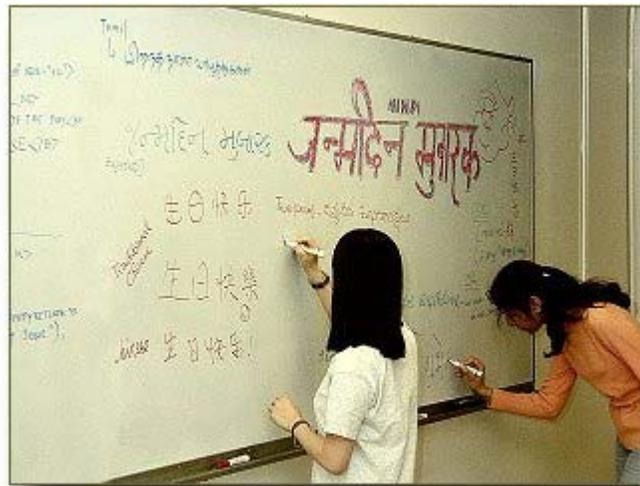
"Yes," I replied calmly.

"But then why are you helping me?"

Now it was my turn to be surprised. "Why am I helping you?" I repeated incredulously. "Because I'm the professor and you're the student." The poor man was speechless. I can't even remember if we solved his programming problem or not, but I do remember him leaving my office a short time later, shaking his head as he wrestled with the realization that a Jew had been willing to help him.

A few years later I had another Pakistani student in my class, Omar Hoda. We became friendly because he shot golf in the 70s and offered to give me a few pointers. Omar also housesat for me a couple of times when I was traveling. He had told me that he was a friend of Nadeem's, but somehow the incident described above never came up in our conversations.

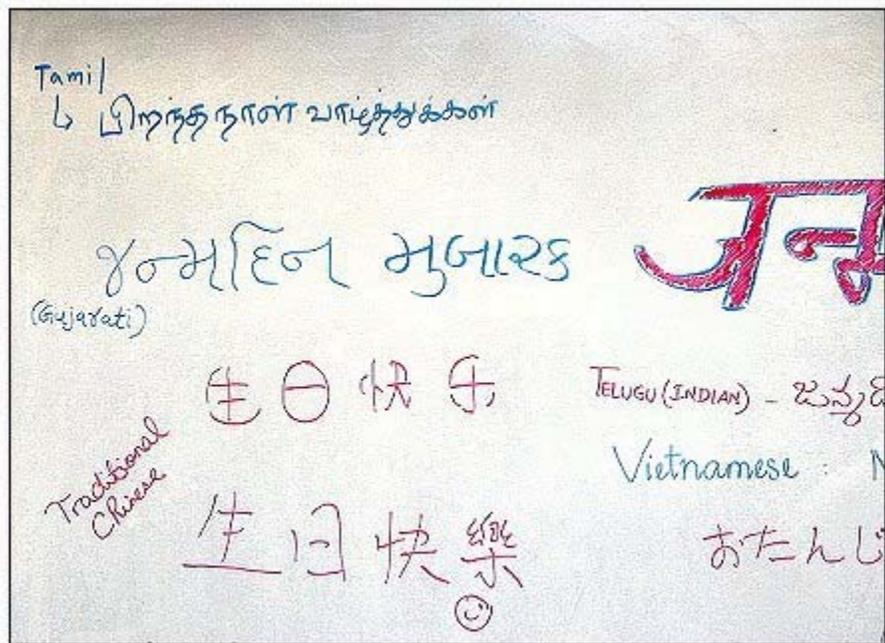
By this time, Nadeem had graduated. Then one day out of the blue I got an invitation to his wedding. I didn't know what to wear or how to behave at a



Muslim wedding, so I asked Omar for some advice. I also told Omar that while I was of course delighted to be invited to the wedding, I was also amazed that Nadeem would include me in such an important event in his life. “Why?” Omar questioned. “You changed his life.”

He then proceeded to tell me the profound effect the little episode in my office with the kosher chocolate chip cookies had had on his friend, changing not only his attitude toward Jews, of course, but also his attitude toward all people different from himself. It seems that by simply helping him tackle a computer problem and treating him with respect, I had unknowingly helped him see beyond the prejudices of his upbringing and inspired him to respect all his fellow men.

I wasn’t at all confident that I would have such luck with a class of 31 highly diverse students, and thus I faced my first class with trepidation. But with the very first assignment, I saw that something special was happening: 31 students, 31 programs handed in. The second assignment: again 31 programs handed in. As the semester went on some students faltered a bit and turned in assignments late, but as we near the end of the semester we have now had eight assignments due and all students but one have handed all eight in.



About half way through the semester, my wife Bonnie showed up in class on my birthday with a cake big enough for everyone. Not only did the students enjoy the cake, but they filled the board with “Happy Birthday” in all their native languages. (Some wise guys wrote HTML and Java code on the board to display “Happy Birthday” when run, saying we couldn’t ignore those languages, either!)

But the most amazing incident happened one day when I had set up for class a bit early and went up to two Chinese students chatting in Mandarin and asked them what they were talking about. “We were talking about you,” Guangyi Li said with a big smile.

“Oh?” I replied. “And just what were you saying?” I asked, smiling back and hoping for the best.

“That you’re just like a communist!” she exclaimed.

Yeow, that really set me back! I thought she was kidding. “What?” I asked, trying to maintain my smile. “How so?”

“Because of your ... enthusiasm,” she explained, looking to classmate Hongwu Su for assistance in finding just the right word. “In the old days, the communists were just like you. Always full of enthusiasm and excitement for what they were doing.”

Wenhua (Michelle) Shi, another student from the People’s Republic of China added, “Your definition of a communist is totally different from in my country. I am not a communist, but ‘communist’ is the best and the most beautiful word in my country. Its definition is a person who is in the Communist Party, believes that the world consists of material things and was not created by God, serves people without reservation, is hard working and enthusiastic, and is very, very selfless. I do not blame you for having a wrong image about communists, because your society is capitalist, and your country’s press always reports news about the bad parts of China.”

So there you have it. “Just like a communist.” A compliment, not an insult. Cultural diversity sure keeps things interesting!

A slightly modified version of this article was published as a Letter to the Editor in the Winter 2001-2002 issue of *Thought and Action*, the National Education Association Journal of Higher Education (p. 139). Their Web site is <http://www.nea.org/he/tanda.html>.

<https://jesseheines.com/~heines/academic/papers/2001communist/communist.htm>

ON SCHOLARSHIP

First Thoughts

You are the founder, president and CEO of your own research “startup.”

The balancing act includes the following tasks:

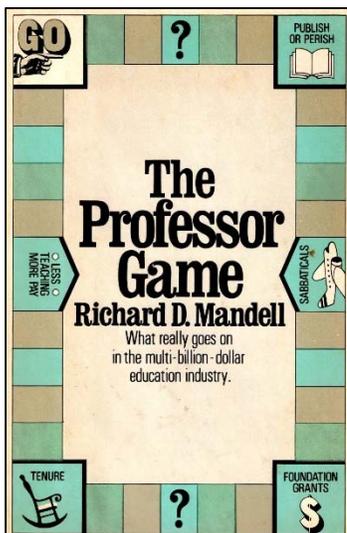
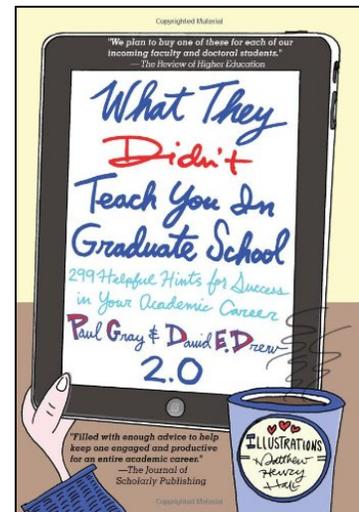
- grant writing
- funded grant management
- undergraduate/graduate student recruitment, management and retention
- research team building
- refereed publications
- technical conference presentation and participation
- course development
- course modification
- departmental/institution collegiality
- technical community collegiality

Recommended Books

What They Didn't Teach You in Graduate School: 299 Helpful Hints for Success in Your Academic Career

by Paul Gray & David E. Drew (2012)

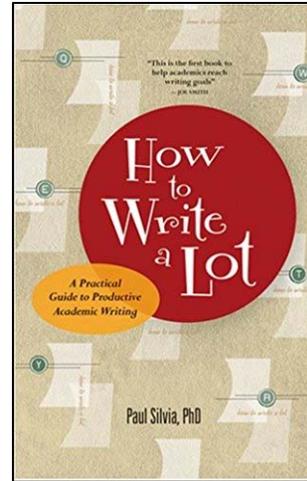
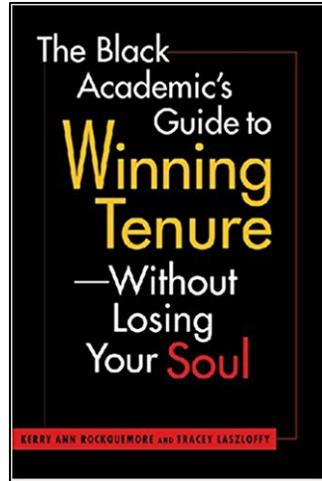
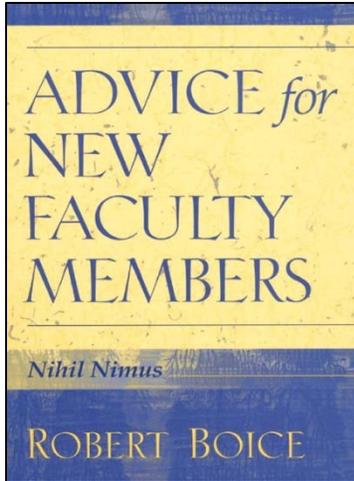
<https://www.amazon.com/What-Didnt-Teach-Graduate-School/dp/1579226442>



The Professor Game

by Richard Mandell (1977)

<https://www.amazon.com/professor-game-Richard-D-Mandell/dp/0385111568>



Advice for New Faculty Members

Robert Boice, Emeritus, SUNY Stony Brook (2000)

<https://www.pearson.com/us/higher-education/program/Boice-Advice-for-New-Faculty-Members/PGM226282.html>

The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure--Without Losing Your Soul

by Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy

<https://www.amazon.com/Black-Academics-Winning-Tenure-Without-Losing/dp/1588265889>

How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing

by Paul J. Silvia (2007)

<https://www.amazon.com/How-Write-Lot-Practical-Productive/dp/1591477433>

... and many, many others that are easily found under “Customers who bought this item also bought” on Amazon.com

The important thing is to do the teaching and research that you love and not let the other aspects of your job rob you of that joy.

On Proposal Writing

Dr. Rajinder P. Khosla, Program Director (*retired*)
Division of Electrical, Communications, and Cyber Systems
National Science Foundation

General Advice on Proposal Writing

Do not write to impress people with how much you know. Write to answer reviewers' questions.

Main questions for which you need to provide “crystal clear” answers

- What is it that you want to do?
- What is it that you want to accomplish?

Reviewers want to know four things

1. What is it about (the research objective)?
2. How will you do it (the technical approach)?
3. Can you do it (you and your facilities)?
4. Is it worth doing (intellectual merit and broader impact)?

This is all the proposal needs to convey, but it needs to do this “crystal clearly”

We are looking for proposals that

- are innovative and push the frontiers of knowledge
- contribute to national needs and priorities
- go beyond marginalia
- integrate research and educational goals well
- involve actual research

Know your field

- what is the current state-of-the-art?
- who are the top ten researchers?
- what are they doing right now?
- where are they getting their funding?

Proposal Structure

Project Summary – the most important part of the proposal

- Project Title
 - should be succinct (~10 words)
 - should come across as scientific
 - should be exciting in simple words, not complex ones
 - should be brief and self-explanatory
 - must indicate that the work will have a significant impact when done
 - remember that you will not be there to explain things

- Project Objective
 - ≤ 25 words
 - self-explanatory
 - high level, as opposed to discussing process details
- Project Narrative
 - How are you going to accomplish your objectives?

Intellectual Merit

- if you are successful, what will be its value?
- what value will it give to other people who want to get involved in this area?

Broader Impact

- social and economic implications
- integration of your research and education
- outreach
 - produce short videos that fit young peoples' attention spans
 - go to them, i.e., have workshops at schools

Narrative

- Section I: 2 to 2-1/2 pages of introduction and background
- Section II: Write objectives and goals
 - create subsections IIa, IIb, IIc, etc., each containing:
 - a very brief (one paragraph) introduction to each
 - what you're going to do
 - what you expect
 - what are the challenges and how you will handle them
 - each subsection should be 1 to 1-1/2 pages
- Section III: Research Plan
 - best written as a chart
 - x-axis = years
 - y-axis = goals, tying back to IIa, IIb, IIc, etc.
- Section IV: Expand intellectual merit and broader impact, providing details
 - ~1 page each
 - these are the final 1-2 pages

Specific Advice on CAREER Proposals

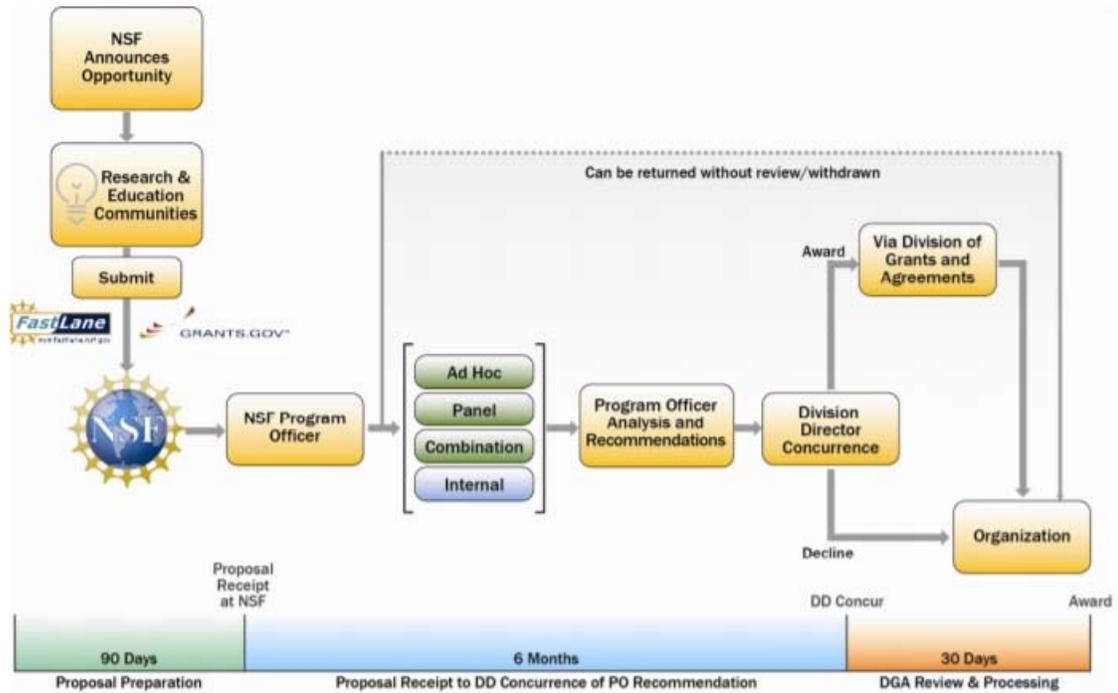
- list your skills (strengths)
- describe the infrastructure of your lab and/or on your campus
- extending your PhD work will most assuredly *not* get you funded
 - you're in a new environment in a new institution
- look at "new avenues," e.g., interdisciplinary approaches, keeping in mind that you are creating and developing a transformative difference in a new or emerging area
- you *must* move out of your comfort zone of your PhD
- "pushing decimals," i.e., making incremental steps is a definite no-no

Graphs from Report to the National Science Board on the National Science Foundation's Merit Review Process

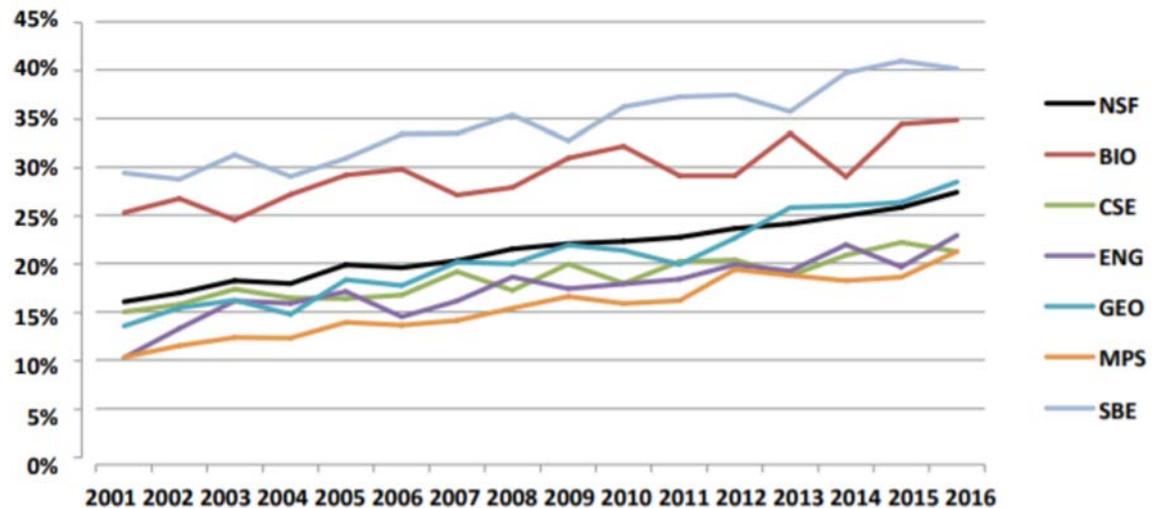
August 2017 (for (Fiscal Year 2016))

<https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/publications/2017/nsb201726.pdf>

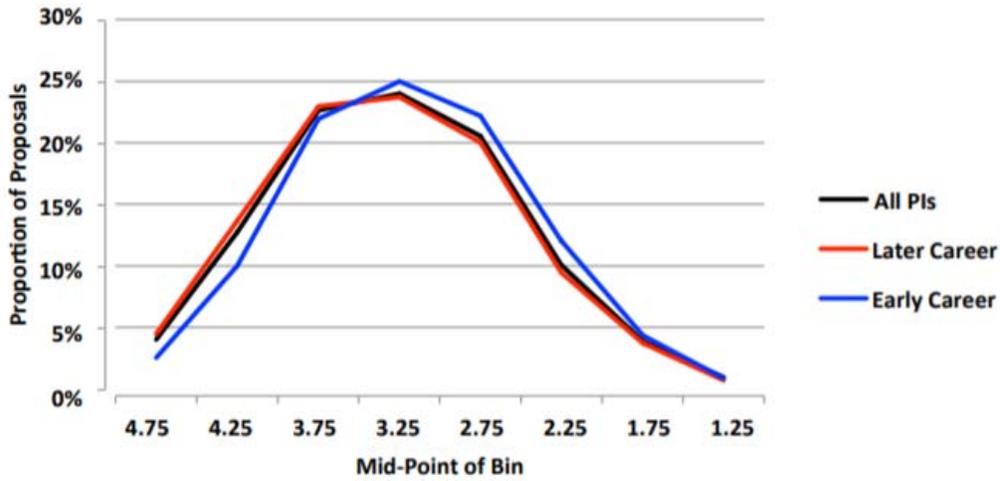
Diagram of the NSF Merit Review Process



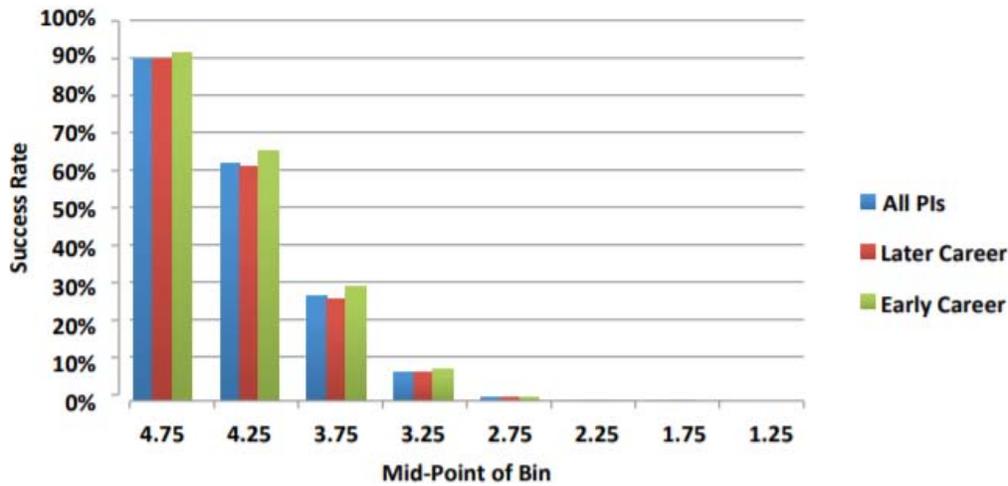
Proportion of Research Awards to Women



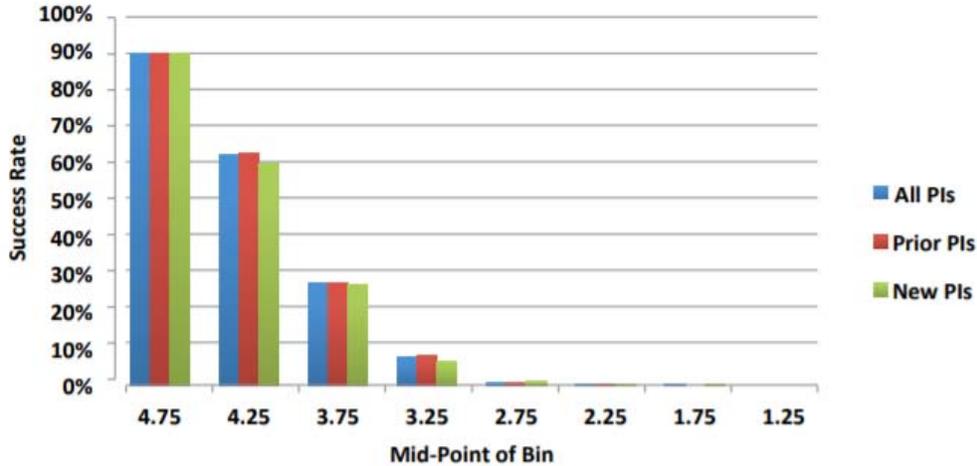
Distribution of Proposals by Average Review Rating for Early vs. Later-Career PIs



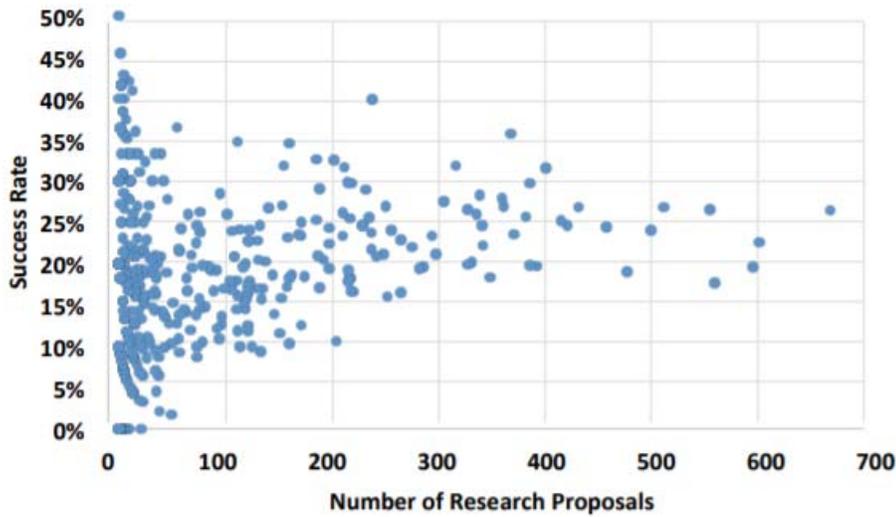
Success Rates for Early vs. Later-Career PIs, by Average Review Rating



Success Rates for New vs. Prior PIs, by Average Review



Success Rates of Organizations with more than 10 Research Proposals



Jesse's NSF Submission and Decision Notifications

Agency	Agency Tracking Number	Descriptive Title of Project	Status	Status Date	Requested Amount
NSF	1515767	A Middle School Pilot Program in...	Awarded	07/24/2015	\$299,999
NSF	1418061	Expanding Performamatics Research to Middle School...	Declined	05/05/2014	\$2,999,570
NSF	1256425	Computational Thinking through Computing and Music	Declined	11/14/2012	\$79,407
NSF	1118435	Computational Thinking through Computing and Music	Awarded	07/27/2011	\$598,411
NSF	1022847	Collaborative Research: Sound Thinking: Integrating the...	Declined	06/08/2010	\$509,970
NSF	0939885	CPATH CB: Performamatics: Connecting...	Awarded	05/26/2009	\$25,000
NSF	0939071	Sound Thinking: Musical Pathways to...	Declined	11/02/2009	\$299,821
NSF	0937753	CPATH CB: Performamatics: Connecting...	Awarded	04/28/2009	\$0
NSF	0829626	CPATH CB: Performamatics: Connecting...	Awarded	03/26/2008	\$12,000
NSF	0722161	CPATH CB: Performamatics: Connecting...	Awarded	07/12/2007	\$409,126

Brandi's NSF Submission and Decision Notifications

25 proposals found, displaying 1 to 10

Division	Proposal Number	Proposal Title	Status	Status Date
HRD	1740367	Targeted Infusion Project: Data Science eXtension (DSX): Incorporating data science fundamentals in computing curriculum at Spelman and Morehouse Colleges	Awarded	05/08/2017
DRL	1721834	Computer Science For All Workshop in Atlanta	Awarded	12/14/2016
HRD	1649335	NSF INCLUDES: Promoting Inclusion by Educating Collaboratively and Effectively in STEM (PIECES)	Declined	09/12/2016
HRD	1641667	Preliminary Proposal NSF INCLUDES: Promoting Inclusion by Educating Collaboratively and Effectively in STEM (PIECES)	Invited	05/10/2016
HRD	1623362	Targeted Infusion Project: Data Science eXtension (DSX): Incorporating data science fundamentals in computing curriculum at Spelman and Morehouse Colleges	Awarded	08/11/2016
MCB	1602594	Conference: A Strategic Planning Workshop to Explore Quantitative Biology as a Vehicle for Broadening Participation to be held at Spelman College on March 11 and 12, 2016	Awarded	11/15/2015
HRD	1547714	Planning a Dual Institution Research Center in Socially Relevant Computing	Awarded	02/25/2016
CNS	1460859	REU Site: Collaborative: Cybersecurity	Declined	01/09/2015
IIS	1350683	CAREER: Relevant Relationship Detection for Annotation	Declined	12/18/2013
HRD	1348803	BITE: Broadening Participation in Information Technology and Entrepreneurship	Declined	08/22/2013

25 proposals found, displaying 11 to 20

Division	Proposal Number	Proposal Title	Status	Status Date
DUE	1344369	INSuRE EAGER	Awarded	07/02/2013
OAC	1253055	CAREER: ST-ECO: Social Tag Ecosystem	Declined	11/08/2012
CNS	1240930	BP: C2C: Classroom to Careers - Applied Computational Thinking in Middle Schools	Declined	10/07/2012
CCF	1238790	Expeditions in Computing: A Data Repository and Scientific Work-Flow Framework for Data and Process Preservation in Computational Science	Not Invited	08/10/2012
IIS	1232397	Broadening Participation in Data Mining Workshop	Awarded	06/07/2012
IIS	1227692	DIP: Engaging Students through a Connected-learning Framework	Declined	07/16/2012
EEC	1125599	BRIGE: Deepening Data Relationships	Returned	09/01/2011
IIS	1123854	DIP: Engaging Students Through a Connected-Learning Framework	Declined	09/21/2011
CNS	1063047	REU Site: Research Experiences in the Purdue NEES Project	Declined	12/19/2010
CNS	1063028	REU Site: Machine-to-Machine (M2M) Research Experiences	Declined	12/19/2010

25 proposals found, displaying 21 to 25

Division	Proposal Number	Proposal Title	Status	Status Date
IIS	1053126	CAREER: A Social Networking Graph Model for Data Management	Declined	11/09/2010
DRL	1050622	Working in Natural Design of Power (WINDPower)	Declined	01/05/2011
CNS	1042498	CIC Graduate Network for Broadening Participation in Computing	Declined	09/29/2010
CCF	0965631	Enhancing Knowledge Extraction from Data through File Systems and Workflow Evolution	Not Invited	12/24/2009
CNS	0940631	BPC-LSA: CIC Graduate Network for Broadening Participation in Computing	Declined	11/11/2009

Jesse's Take-Aways from These Data

- you have just as much chance of getting an NSF award as anyone else, regardless of your institution or your experience
- what matters is the *quality* of your proposal
- find yourself someone who can act as your bull filter
 - this cannot be someone who's afraid of hurting your feelings
 - it has to be someone who's willing to rip your proposal to shreds
 - and once they give you feedback, heed that feedback
- if your spouse (or significant other) can't tell a third party the gist of your proposal simply from reading its abstract, your abstract needs to be rewritten
- if you don't answer the reviewers' questions, they'll never approve your proposal

Links to Jesse's Recent Successful Proposals

A Middle School After-School Pilot Program Integrating Computer Programming and Music Education

- National Science Foundation, Award #1515767. 2015-2017. \$288,945.
- http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1515767
- <https://jesseheines.com/~heines/academic/papers/NSFAward-1515767-AISL.pdf>

Computational Thinking through Computing and Music

- National Science Foundation, Award #1118435. 2011-2015. \$499,995.
- http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=111843
- <https://jesseheines.com/~heines/academic/papers/NSFAward-1118435-TUES.pdf>

Performamatics: Connecting Computer Science to the Performing, Fine, and Design Arts

- National Science Foundation, Award #0722161. 2007-2010. \$421,087.
- http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=0722161
- <https://jesseheines.com/~heines/academic/papers/NSFAward-0722161-CPATH.pdf>

Links to Grammar Sites

The Chicago Manual of Style

- <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

The Elements of Style

W. Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White

- http://wiki.lri.fr/insitu/_files/elements.pdf
 - 26 pages, *probably a rogue posting*
- <http://www.jlakes.org/ch/web/The-elements-of-style.pdf>
 - 109 pages, *also probably rogue*

John's guide to tricky English grammar rules

- <http://www.jpetrie.net/grammar/>

On Getting Tenure

Allan Brinkley Tenure Denial

THE BOSTON GLOBE TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1986 17

Professor denied Harvard tenure

By Richard Higgins
Globe Staff

Harvard University has again denied tenure to a popular and highly regarded junior professor, despite its announced intention to promote more of its younger professors.

Alan Brinkley, a modern American historian, said yesterday he has been told that he would not be offered a lifetime teaching post.

Brinkley is at least the third junior professor to be denied tenure since Harvard announced in April that it wanted to alter its practice of hiring professors after they have earned national reputations at other institutions.

"I don't think any junior faculty can expect that they will get tenure," said Brinkley, 37, who won an American Book Award for his 1983 work on Huey Long and the Depression. "Of course I'd hoped things would turn out differently, and I had reason to hope that they might."

Brinkley, the son of the veteran television commentator, David Brinkley, was backed by his department, although not unanimously, according to sources close to the process.

Asked if he was disappointed, Brinkley replied: "This is what happens at Harvard. It's clear now from a number of cases, including my own, that this new policy is going to be difficult to implement."

A prolific author who earned the highest ratings from the unofficial undergraduate guide to teachers, Brinkley said he felt "some anger." However, he said he was not angry with his dean, A. Michael Spence.

It was Spence, dean of arts and sciences, who issued a report in the spring urging Harvard to change its policy of granting tenure to only a fraction of its

BRINKLEY, Page 21

Another professor denied tenure at Harvard

■ BRINKLEY

Continued from Page 17

junior faculty in favor of scholars who have proven themselves elsewhere.

Spence's initiative came as Harvard found it increasingly difficult to attract whomever it wanted to its faculty because of competition from other universities and other factors, including two-career academic marriages.

According to several sources who asked to remain anonymous, it was Spence who "reluctantly" halted Brinkley's tenure process by deciding not to bring it to president Derek Bok,

Bok has final say over tenure appointments, which are made after a department conducts a nationwide search and then makes a recommendation to its dean. Spence declined to comment.

A senior administration source said the denial of tenure to Brinkley did not reflect a lack of commitment to hiring from within. However, he said that bringing about changes in the tenure system would take time.

Several of Brinkley's colleagues expressed frustration and anger over his rejection and said it shows the difficulty Spence will have in making Harvard's tenure system more encouraging to junior faculty.

"Alan Brinkley is an excellent young scholar and superb teacher," said David Donald, Charles Warren Professor of History. "He is so highly regarded . . . that a majority of the tenured members of the [history] department voted for his promotion to the rank of professor.

Donald called the university's decision to "disregard" that vote "a great mistake" and said, "I deplore it."

The rejection of Brinkley follows Harvard's decision in recent months to deny tenure to two other popular junior professors, Robert N. Watson, associate professor of English, and Bradford A. Lee, associate professor of history.

"It would be wise if Harvard took more chances with qualified younger people, but I think these cases show how difficult it is to restructure its tenure system," said a senior faculty member who asked not to be identified.

"The odds are stacked against the younger person because he or she simply can't have completed four or so books an older scholar can. What it comes down to is that our tenure system doesn't anticipate greatness."

A former Wilson Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution who came to Harvard five years ago, Brinkley is working on a book about New Deal liberalism and is teaching courses on the South since Reconstruction and the Progressive Era from 1890 to 1918.

A former part-time editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Brinkley also has published numerous magazine articles and book reviews.

Nathan I. Huggins, professor of history, said he believed that Spence was "genuinely concerned" about promoting junior faculty and about "the difficulty Harvard now has in luring top people from other institutions."

However, he said the autonomy of Harvard's departments and the weighing of tenure odds in favor of well-established scholars is evidence that Spence faces "structural problems" in carrying out his plan.

"One of the striking things about all this is that Alan is such a very successful teacher and member of the department and faculty, and that's not really in question."

Jesse's Promotion Rejection Letters

Rejection Letter #1 of 3

University of Massachusetts Lowell
Department of Computer Science

Memorandum

2/22/95

To: Jesse Heines, Associate Professor of Computer Science
From: Tenure and Promotion Committee *J.S.S. GOL*
Re: Application for promotion to full professor

The Tenure and Promotion Committee has decided not to recommend you for promotion to full professor at this time. This was a difficult decision because your record is exemplary in areas which now are receiving greater emphasis (teaching and service both within and outside UML). For this reason, our decision should not be interpreted as discouraging reapplication at a later date.

Our rationale for not supporting your candidacy rests primarily on one factor: this department is, and should be for the immediate future, a research department. As leaders in the relevant technology fields, full professors need to promote research goals. It is not sufficient to teach graduate courses; it is also important to inspire and recruit research-oriented students and to encourage their participation in research and publication. You are capable of sponsoring more such activity and you are strongly encouraged to do so. Your area of specialization is a significant and growing one which we expect to gain importance in the field of CS.

“Illegitimi non carborundum.”

And never, I mean *never ever*, and it's worth repeating: **NEVER EVER EVER!** ... forget that Decca Records turned down The Beatles! Their talent scout said:

“Guitar groups are on their way out, Mr. Epstein.”

See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/the-man-who-rejected-the-beatles-6782008.html>

Computer Science Department

Memo

To: Dr. Jesse Heines
From: Promotion & Tenure Committee
CC:
Date: 03/03/99
Re: Application to promotion to Professor

Jesse :

After a careful and thoughtful discussion of your application, we have decided not to recommend your promotion to professor at this time.

This was not an easy decision in view of the outstanding contributions you have made, and continue to make, to the life of our department. In our opinion, you more than meet the Teaching and Service requirements for promotion.

Our concerns are with the scholarly research component of your vita. At this point, we do not feel that your record of funded research and peer-reviewed publications is strong enough to justify a positive recommendation for promotion to Professor. We would like to see you become more active in the graduate program, the advising of doctoral students and the teaching of graduate courses. The Web-based course materials you described in your application appear to be a promising vehicle for addressing all of these concerns, and we encourage you to continuing developing this area.


Thomas Costello


Giampiero Pecelli


Stuart Smith

Rejection Letter #3 of 3



One University Avenue
Lowell, Massachusetts 01854
tel. 978.934.3620
fax: 978.934.3551

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

June 10, 2005

Comments on Jesse Heines' Candidacy for Professor

In evaluating Professor Jesse Heines as a candidate for Full Professor, the Promotion and Tenure Committee (T. Costello, G. Grinstein and J. Wang) carefully considered and discussed his record of teaching, service, scholarship, publication and funded research.

The committee praises Dr. Heines's teaching and service contributions to the department, to the university and to the profession. In the end, the committee felt that, at this time, his scholarly publications and refereed activities do not meet the standards for promotion to Professor.

The following are some comments and suggestions from the committee to guide his focus and efforts in the next few years:

- Dr. Heines is clearly dedicated in his service to the department and the University. His latest contribution of web-based student evaluations serves the university faculty and students well; it provides an opportunity for UMass Lowell to assume a leadership role in the area of electronic evaluation.
- Jesse is a dedicated, talented and very successful teacher. His courses are always well prepared and very well received; his advising is superb – both to his own advisees and to ad-hoc requests from students. He freely shares his prepared materials with other faculty who are scheduled to teach a class that Jesse offered in a prior term.
- The committee believes that his work in computer-assisted training / education and his current activity in the web services area may well serve as the basis for a number of publications and funded research. Further, his recent efforts in directing two doctoral candidates are likely to develop into jointly authored publications. Web-based delivery systems should continue to be an attractive subject area for doctoral students in Computer Science and, perhaps, in the Graduate School of Education.

The committee strongly encourages Dr. Heines to focus some of his efforts on publishing some of his past scholarly achievements in addition to those in his current interest areas. We suggest that the implementation focus of both the web-based evaluations and interactive classroom projects may be well suited to research projects. We also believe that these research projects will lead to successful collaborations and funding and encourage him in that direction

Handwritten signature of Thomas M. Costello in blue ink.

Thomas M. Costello

Handwritten signature of Georges Grinstein in blue ink.

Georges Grinstein

Handwritten signature of Jie Wang in blue ink.

Jie Wang

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

JUNE 30, 2000

Why You Can't Trust Letters of Recommendation Friends use puffery and foes carry out vendettas — while everyone fears lawsuits

By ALISON SCHNEIDER

<http://www.chronicle.com/article/why-you-cant-trust-letters-of/2132>

Need to write a recommendation for someone going on the academic job market? Trying to decipher an outside review in a tenure case? Here are a few helpful hints:

“Good” does not mean good. It means hopelessly mediocre. “Solid” is shorthand for plodding and unimaginative. And “flashes of brilliance” is a nice way of saying that the scholar in question suffers from long languors of incoherence punctuated by random insights.

As for letters that are full of heady praise, well, they're not exactly models of forthrightness, either.

Take this tale — and it's not apocryphal. A dean at a research university came across a recommendation for a job applicant that included this closing line: “In over 20 years of university teaching, Dr. X is clearly the best young scholar I have encountered.” There was just one hitch: That's exactly how the professor wrapped up his recommendation of another applicant for the same post.

In academe, some letters really are too good to be true. Puffery is rampant. Evasion abounds. Deliberate obfuscation is the rule of the day.

What do you expect, scholars ask, when a mild criticism or an off-the-cuff adjective can crush a career — the letter writer's included? Lawsuits, reprisals, frayed relations with colleagues: There are good reasons, professors insist, why grades are not the only things inflated in academe.

What can't be inflated is the critical role letters play in higher education. They can derail a tenure bid, clinch a job, tip the scales for that Guggenheim grant. Sure, they're padded with accolades and peppered with code. But there *is* a decipherable rhetoric to recommendations. Even the people who recognize the massive B.S. quotient — even Timothy Lomperis, chairman of the political-science department at Saint Louis University — won't deny that “letters are really important.”

They pretty much doomed his bid for tenure eight years ago at Duke University.

An endorsement by a traditionalist in political science was shot down by members of the rational-choice crowd at Duke, who don't much care for Mr. Lomperis's work, he says. And when a key player in the discipline declined to write at all, citing illness, "that was really held against me."

Members of the department don't deny that the letters played a crucial in the tenure decision, but insist that nothing nefarious was going on. Mr. Lomperis didn't get tenure because too many outside reviewers questioned his scholarly significance, department members said at the time.

But Mr. Lomperis thinks otherwise. "People try to get letters to stack up in one direction or another," he says, and those letters are not used to genuinely explore a candidate's merit. "They're used to solidify positions already held."

That's been a complaint for years, and grounds for more than one grievance. Last year, Cecelia Lynch filed a complaint against Northwestern University with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Northwestern's president personally solicited letters to torpedo her tenure bid, seeking comment from scholars he knew were hostile to the candidate's intellectual leanings, Ms. Lynch said. Northwestern has denied wrongdoing.

In 1997, the historian Karen Sawislak filed a sex-bias complaint against Stanford University. At issue: whether the dean had selectively read the letters in her tenure file, picking out the few mild criticisms as the basis for his negative decision while discounting the pages of glowing praise. Stanford has defended its actions.

Then there are the institutions that bury the name of a job candidate in a long list of professors and ask letter writers to name their top pick. That approach is loaded with problems, says Kay Lehman Schlozman, a political scientist at Boston College. An institution can sandwich a candidate's name amid a list of more junior colleagues (if they want to hire the person) or more senior colleagues (if they want to sabotage the person). "It's very easy to influence the outcome," she argues, depending on whose names go on the list and who is asked to comment on it.

But even the people who acknowledge the problems with recommendations have not stopped using them. "Letters are subject to abuse and manipulation," says Mr. Lomperis, the Saint Louis chairman. "But I don't know how else to do business."

Neither does anybody else. Peer review — one of academe's central enterprises and sacred cows — may be flawed, but few academics can imagine hiring or tenuring without it. Everybody is busy peer reviewing everybody else — for jobs, promotions, even measly summer stipends. And all those reviewers are engaged in a delicate dance — mincing their words, monitoring their tone, making sure to balance someone's career against their own credibility.

It's a fine line to walk, and a lot of people have crossed it. Like the philosopher who writes every year or two in his recommendations: "Now I know what it's like to have

Wittgenstein in my class.” Or the philosophy department that annually calls its latest Ph.D. one of the best three students it’s produced in the past five years.

Most academics take comfort in the notion that honesty comes on a sliding scale. “There’s a continuum here in terms of candor,” explains Richard R. Beeman, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. At one end of the spectrum, the more candid end, you find outside reviews for tenure, where the high stakes and external nature of the review process encourage at least a few hard calls. At the other lie the candy-coated letters for undergraduates. “When you’re writing one of 50,000 letters to Harvard Law School, there’s not too much conscience operating in terms of restraining hyperbole,” Mr. Beeman says.

And then there are the letters for academic job candidates — where beyond-the-pale praise meets between-the-lines truth.

“People want their students to succeed. They want their departments to succeed,” says Brian Leiter, a professor of law and philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. Reputations — of professors and programs — are riding on those placement numbers, not to mention the prospects of a newly minted Ph.D. “It becomes like a nuclear-arms race. If Michigan is using lots of adjectives, U.C.L.A. better, too. Someone who is candid risks damaging their students, because candor is uncommon.”

Indeed. When it comes to recommendations for jobs, academe seems to have taken up permanent residence along the shores of Lake Wobegon. All of the applicants are above average — way above.

“Over the last 20 years, inflation of recommendations has paralleled the inflation of grades,” says Stuart Rojstaczer, an associate professor of hydrology at Duke University. “Someone to whom you might have given a good recommendation 20 years ago, you now say is very good. Very good is excellent, and excellent is outstanding. And if someone truly is outstanding,” he says, his voice trailing off, “well, I don’t know what you say.”

He once made the mistake of pumping up the volume in a letter sent to a university in Britain, where hyperbole is not the norm. The student was excellent; he called her “outstanding.” The next thing he knew, he was the one getting called — by the search committee. They wanted to know if the letter had been forged. “It was so hyperbolic in their eyes that they couldn’t believe it,” Mr. Rojstaczer says.

Mr. Leiter, the Texas philosopher, explains: “An English philosopher might write, ‘So-and-so has done very fine work.’ If that were coming out of Harvard, it would mean this person barely has a three-digit I.Q. Coming out of Oxford, it could well mean this person is one of the top three people coming out of the U.K.”

So what do American professors do when someone really is middle-of-the-road? Suggest that the person seek out a reference from someone else, of course. And when faculty members can’t get a so-so student off their hands, well, there are polite ways of couching unpleasant truths.

“Writing a letter of recommendation for someone you want to promote is like putting makeup on,” says Lennard J. Davis, head of the English department at Illinois-Chicago. “You have to accentuate what looks good and cover up the blemishes.” It’s an art form both in the writing and the reading. “You are entering the world of hermeneutics and interpretation.”

Got a student who lacks focus and keeps overreaching? Call him “ambitious.” Looking for a nice way to describe an antisocial colleague? “Keeps her own counsel” ought to do the trick.

Context, of course, is everything. A good letter says something about a candidate’s research, teaching, personality, leadership potential, and impact on the field. If you really want to sell somebody, compare the person to other big names in the discipline. If not, keep mum. There’s no need to slam someone’s scholarship. Just focus the entire recommendation on their teaching. The review committee can do the math for themselves.

“I never speak ill of anybody,” says Nell Irvin Painter, a historian at Princeton University. “There’s a pretty clear list of things you need to cover. When you don’t talk about something, that speaks volumes. This sounds terrible, but you can be unhelpful without badmouthing people.”

It’s called damning with faint praise. But the question remains: Why are tenured professors so reluctant to tell it like it is?

A story from Ms. Painter might shed some light. Back in the 1980’s, a fellow historian meekly approached her at a conference, apology in hand. For five years, the woman had been calling Ms. Painter, one of the most prominent black female historians in the country, “antiblack and antifemale” because of a negative tenure letter that she’d heard Ms. Painter had written about a black woman. Years later, after dragging Ms. Painter’s name through the mud, the other historian found out that the poison letter wasn’t penned by Ms. Painter after all. Oops.

But Ms. Painter had learned a valuable lesson: “One reason for not speaking ill of people is because it says something ill about you.”

Maybe candor wouldn’t be such a problem if confidentiality weren’t such a question mark. Yes, academics pay lip service to the secrecy of the hiring-and-promotion process, but let’s face it, professors say, a lot of those lips are loose.

“I’ve seen cases where people are candid, and they’re harassed for it,” says Marjorie Perloff, an English professor at Stanford University.

She is a case in point. Ms. Perloff once wrote a negative tenure evaluation for a professor at a large state university. As it turns out, the tenure candidate’s husband worked in the same department as she did. “Before long, the husband called me up. He said, ‘I don’t think you really understood her book. You didn’t realize X, Y, and Z. Are you sure you don’t want to reconsider?’ I was appalled.”

Other people are, too. Philip Gossett, a professor of music and former dean of humanities at the University of Chicago, had his own bad experience with letters of recommendation. His beef: Systems that operate under open-records laws, like the University of California. Professors writing letters for colleagues in the California system are warned in advance that tenure candidates can read redacted copies of their evaluations. All that's left out is the letterhead, the signature, and any identifying information below the signature block. If the writer is careless enough to sprinkle identifying information in the body of the text, it's there for the candidate to read.

But even without telltale comments in an evaluation, a candidate can often figure out who wrote it. Academics work in finite communities. Everybody knows everybody else, not to mention everybody else's writing style and intellectual leanings.

One day, Mr. Gossett was writing a tenure endorsement for a California professor, ticking off the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Not long after, the candidate buttonholed Mr. Gossett at a meeting "and proceeded to rake me over the coals for having said anything that wasn't 100-percent positive," the music professor recounts. "I was aghast that in what was not a contentious situation — the tenure went through without difficulty — my letter would become public knowledge. It seemed utterly gratuitous and ultimately dangerous to the system of peer review to put people in that kind of situation."

His response: to never write for the University of California system again.

Other people have found less radical solutions. "We had one person who put the entire letter under the signature block," says Kevin Hoover, chairman of the economics department on California's Davis campus. Mr. Hoover mailed it back.

Then there was the time a reviewer wrote a positive endorsement of a job candidate, only to scrawl beneath the signature block, "Not for U.C. Davis."

"He wanted the candidate to get a job," Mr. Hoover says, "but he didn't want to do us any damage." Or himself. The writer knew people in the economics department. "People do have reputations to protect."

That's not all they're protecting. Reputations are one thing; lawsuits are another. Suits against letter writers are almost unheard of, but fear of them is rampant.

To add fuel to those fears, there is a case pending at Radford University. L. Keith Larimore, a management professor, is suing four Radford colleagues for libel and defamation. He says they falsely accused him, in their written evaluations of his tenure bid, of inflating his publication record by fobbing off previously published findings on unsuspecting journals.

The defendants argued that their comments — made in the course of their professional duties — had absolute immunity. The Virginia Supreme Court disagreed. The defendants have only a qualified privilege, the court ruled in April. If Mr. Larimore proves that the comments are false and were made with malice, he'll win his suit. He is seeking \$900,000 in damages.

Prior to the Virginia ruling, “it was unclear what protections participants in tenure cases had,” says G. David Nixon, Mr. Larimore’s lawyer. Many thought they could hide behind the notion of absolute immunity for employees performing their professional duties, he says. “This ruling almost wipes out that doctrine in the workplace. This opens the door tremendously in defamation cases. Now all you have to do to get into the courthouse is prove malice, and there are a million ways to do that.”

Bruce Blaylock, a management professor at Radford and one of the defendants in the case, hopes not. He wouldn’t comment on the specifics of the case, only on its implications, which he thinks are dark indeed: “If we lose, there will be substantial repercussions. Every university in the country had better be on their toes. They’re saying you can’t be forthright. You can’t challenge a publication record.”

A lot of people are hardly rushing to challenge publication records anyway. It’s not just the specter of lawsuits that holds them back, or worries about reprisals. Something more complicated is at work — sympathy, perhaps, or circumspection.

A tenured political scientist who asked not to be identified said he’s read only one truly negative tenure letter during his career. “I believe that a lot of people who would write negative letters, just say no,” he says.

“I’m not saying every letter I write is a cheerleading case,” he adds. “But a denial of tenure is dramatically consequential. It may end someone’s career. I would have to think long and hard before I would sit down and say, ‘This person deserves to be fired.’ I get lots of these requests. What’s the best use of my time — doing someone in, or writing a careful evaluation of someone’s work that I respect?”

That depends on whom you ask. Ken Coates, dean of arts at the University of New Brunswick at Saint John, in Canada, wouldn’t mind reading a few more letters that called a spade a spade.

He knows that people have good reason to fret about confidentiality. He has heard the horror stories, too, like the one about a historian who applied for a job at an institution with an open-records policy, even though he didn’t want the job, just so he could see what his referees said about him.

And Mr. Coates knows the price people can pay for telling it like it is. Five years ago, he wrote a negative evaluation of someone up for promotion at another university. After reading the letter, the department head called Mr. Coates to tell him that the university had an open-records policy. He offered the dean a chance to rewrite the letter. Mr. Coates declined.

Several days later, Mr. Coates got a call from an ally of the candidate, questioning the dean’s judgment, reminding him that the caller had written favorable reviews about Mr. Coates in the past, and baldly hinting that there would be payback.

Despite the ugliness, things would be a lot worse, Mr. Coates adds, if he opted out of difficult cases instead of stepping forward. “We have an obligation to the profession and

to the institution. Not everyone is meant to have a tenure-track job or to be promoted.” And someone has to have the guts to say so, with clarity and conviction, he declares. “The standard letter of reference essentially says, ‘This person taught Jesus to walk on water.’”

Mr. Coates has had a few supernatural adjectives attached to him, too. He still recalls the letter one of his references wrote when he was applying to Ph.D. programs. He quotes: “‘The work is of seminal importance. He’s about to establish a new standard for historical research. He has enormous teaching potential.’” Then Mr. Coates does the exegesis: “I’d been in one seminar with this person. He’d never seen me teach. It was way over the top.”

Letters like that can undermine academe, Mr. Coates says. “Finding the right match between a candidate and a university is a pivotal part of what we do. If we’re not straightforward about a candidate, we have the potential to create very bad matches, and then no one ends up happy.”

Professors have devised ways to put the paeans in perspective. They pick up the phone. The only way to get the full story is by calling up the person doing the recommending, they argue. Mr. Coates does it, and so do a lot of other deans. “People will be more frank in a telephone call,” he says. “We’ve begun to use the letters as an opening gambit, not as a final word.”

But phone calls cut both ways. Not long ago, Mr. Lomperis, the political-science chairman at Saint Louis University, had a dicey tenure case in his department. The candidate was an exceptional teacher, but the publication record wasn’t strong. When it came time to pick an external reviewer, he called a friend at a top university and wasn’t shy about letting the person know that he thought the candidate was outstanding. The professor won tenure.

“Chairs can and do — I’ll admit I have — signal what they want,” Mr. Lomperis says. “They’re not supposed to, but I’d be surprised if well over half the chairs didn’t tip their preferences to the reviewers.”

The fix, more than a few professors say, is often in from the beginning.

Given all the conniving and code words and hyperbolic praise, it’s no wonder that people like Victor Davis Hanson, a classics professor at California State University at Fresno, think “the whole genre has basically been discredited.” He’s so sick of the superlatives that he’s just about given up reading the letters. He’ll learn more watching a candidate teach a class or translate some Greek than by taking somebody else’s word about what “the latest genius” on the job market can do, he says.

Departments should have the wherewithal to make up their own minds about whom to hire and tenure, based on a careful review of each candidate’s record rather than a reliance on a flawed public-opinion poll, Mr. Hanson says.

But that strikes a lot of academics as a very bad idea — even the ones who’ve been burned. “If we’re not asked to make evaluations, then everything will happen behind closed doors,” says Chicago’s Mr. Gossett. “That’s a much worse system.”

Ms. Schlozman of Boston College agrees. Two years ago, she published an article in *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* documenting all kinds of problems with tenure recommendations in her field. Not only was the language over the top, she wrote, but so was the number of letters being requested. Nevertheless, she says, “I want to emphasize how seriously this responsibility is taken.” Letters prevent inbreeding, she argues. They provide a counterweight to the old-boy network, help administrators unfamiliar with a specific field understand a candidate’s place within it, and give credibility to a department’s recommendation.

And for candidates, they ensure “that a secret group can’t stab you in the back without you figuring out what’s going on,” says David F. Bell, a French professor at Duke. That’s important, particularly for women and minority scholars, who want assurances that negative reviews are due to their work, not their sex or skin color.

Even hyperbole has its place, says Duke’s Mr. Rojstaczer. You know there’s something wrong with candidates if they can’t dig up at least three people to wax eloquent about their achievements. “It’s a checkoff on the list — were they able to find three people willing to write hyperbolic letters? If not, they must be deficient.”

Despite all the difficulties, more people are writing more letters for more kinds of positions than ever before. Robin D.G. Kelley, a historian at New York University, has a list of recommendees that’s 500 names deep. Between August and February, he wrote 1,300 pages of letters, single-spaced. “It’s killing a lot of us,” he says.

For time-strapped reference writers, help is on the way. Robert J. Thornton, an economist at Lehigh University, came out with the second edition of *L.I.A.R.: Lexicon of Intentionally Ambiguous Recommendations* (Almus Publications, 1998). The book contains hundreds of double-edged tributes to sidestep just about any sticky situation. The disagreeable-student situation: “I would put this student in a class by himself.” The incompetent-candidate situation: “I recommend this man with no qualifications whatsoever.” The substance-abuse situation: “He works with as much speed as he can.”

Mr. Thornton says the lexicon has made him a much more efficient recommendation writer. Since it came out, hardly anyone has asked him to write any.

WHAT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION SAY ...

... AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Hard-working, workmanlike, industrious, diligent, persistent.

This person is not very original, but he sure tries hard.

Shy, low-key, keeps his own counsel.

This person is socially dysfunctional.

**WHAT LETTERS OF
RECOMMENDATION SAY ...**

... AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

I recommend this person ... without reservation, with enthusiasm, with my highest endorsement.

Hire this person.

I recommend this person ... warmly, strongly, to any department with a job in her area.

Do not hire this person.

Well-grounded.

This scholar is hopelessly mired in bourgeois notions of proof.

This student is always willing to engage in vigorous debate.

This student is really obnoxious.

Solid, competent, scoured the archives, good study habits.

This student is a plodding dullard who will never produce anything of interest.

This person is an outstanding scholar (without any mention of teaching).

This person is lousy in the classroom.

This person is an outstanding teacher (without any mention of research).

This person is a lousy scholar.

Path-breaking, brilliant, first-rate, making fundamental contributions to the field.

This scholar is at the top of her discipline.

This is a person of great promise, who is working on important issues.

As a scholar, this person has not yet arrived.

Eclectic or synthetic scholarship.

This academic is a flake.

At first, this student wasn't sure she wanted to be an English major, but in the last couple of months, her work has really flowered.

This student has a lot of bad grades.

Independent thinker.

This student is arrogant and wouldn't follow his adviser's recommendations. (Depending on the context, however, it can also mean imaginative.)

The acorn hasn't fallen far from the tree.

This student's work is dreadfully derivative and adds nothing to what her dissertation adviser has already written.

Articulate.

This person is a safe minority scholar who will not give you any trouble.

He will blossom with further mentoring.

I have serious doubts that I will ever see this person publish an article, much less a book.

**WHAT LETTERS OF
RECOMMENDATION SAY ...**

... AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Smart.

This person is clever but superficial.
(Although, if said about someone in the
humanities, it might mean that the person is
well-dressed.)

When this student walks into class, the
room lights up. We had long discussions
after class.

I am hopelessly in love with this student.

A note of caution: Interpreting letters of recommendation is a tricky business. A term like “hard-working” can be the kiss of death for a job candidate if the only other adjectives in the letter focus on effort. But if “hard-working” is sandwiched between long, gushing passages about keen intellect and boundless imagination, it can clinch the deal. Context is crucial.

SOURCE: *Chronicle* reporting

<http://chronicle.com>
Section: The Faculty
Page: A14

ON SERVICE and ON LIVING

Randy Pausch *The Last Lecture*



Randy Pausch Last Lecture: Achieving Your Childhood Dreams (1:16:27)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji5_MqicxSo

Randy Pausch last lecture – edited to 45 for showing in class (44:20)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Arrrxle4Gw>

Dr. Randy Pausch – The Last Lecture – From Oprah (10:11)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn9L4CxAaQY>

The “Last Lecture” by Randy Pausch (1:44:09)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7zzQpvoYcQ&t=77s>

Randy Pausch ABC Special about the “Last Lecture,” April 2008 (41:23)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-a7LRwqwNw>

I HAVE AN engineering problem.

While for the most part I'm in terrific physical shape, I have ten tumors in my liver and I have only a few months left to live.

I am a father of three young children, and married to the woman of my dreams. While I could easily feel sorry for myself, that wouldn't do them, or me, any good.

So, how to spend my very limited time?

The obvious part is being with, and taking care of, my family. While I still can, I embrace every moment with them, and do the logistical things necessary to ease their path into a life without me.

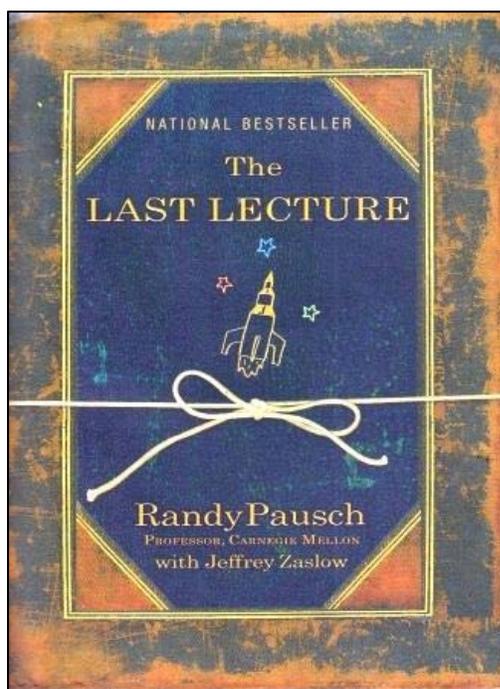
The less obvious part is how to teach my children what I would have taught them over the next twenty years. They are too young now to have those conversations. All parents want to teach their children right from wrong, what we think is important, and how to deal with the challenges life will bring. We also want them to know some stories from our own lives, often as a way to teach them how to lead theirs. My desire to do that led me to give a "last lecture" at Carnegie Mellon University.

These lectures are routinely videotaped. I knew what I was doing that day. Under the ruse of giving an academic lecture, I was trying to put myself in a bottle that would one day wash up on the beach for my children. If I were a painter, I would have painted for them. If I were a musician, I would have composed music. But I am a lecturer. So I lectured.

I lectured about the joy of life, about how much I appreciated life, even with so little of my own left. I talked about honesty, integrity, gratitude, and other things I hold dear. And I tried very hard not to be boring.

This book is a way for me to continue what I began on stage. Because time is precious, and I want to spend all that I can with my kids, I asked Jeffrey Zaslow for help. Each day, I ride my bike around my neighborhood, getting exercise crucial for my health. On fifty-three long bike rides, I spoke to Jeff on my cell-phone headset. He then spent countless hours helping to turn my stories—I suppose we could call them fifty-three "lectures"—into the book that follows.

We knew right from the start: None of this is a replacement for a living parent. But engineering isn't about perfect solutions; it's about doing the best you can with limited resources. Both the lecture and this book are my attempts to do exactly that.



life lessons from
THE LAST LECTURE

1. People are more important than things.
2. Decide if you're Tigger or Eeyore.
3. Never underestimate the importance of having fun.
4. Work and play well with others.
5. Live with integrity.
6. Tell the truth.
7. Apologize properly.
8. If you wait long enough, anyone will show you their good side.
9. Show gratitude.
10. Don't complain, just work harder.

-Randy Pausch

<https://www.amazon.com/Last-Lecture-Randy-Pausch/dp/1401323251>

BC Strong Scholarship honors Marathon bombings survivors



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

A battle with cancer led to Jack Manning's losing half his leg to the disease. Today he helps others overcome physical limitations.

By [Jeremy C. Fox](#)

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT OCTOBER 23, 2017

NEWTON — When Jack Manning was just 8, his parents received devastating news: Their son had cancer and would require rounds of chemotherapy. Ultimately he would lose half his left leg to the disease.

They learned of the illness after he broke his femur at a soccer tryout, while he wasn't even involved in a strenuous activity, according to Manning, who grew up in Norfolk.

“The bone was just so weak from the tumor,” he recalled in an interview Saturday. “I think I was just kicking a ball, and it snapped.”

Manning missed a year of school and had to learn to walk with a prosthetic leg. But the setback ultimately slowed him down very little.

An athlete since his earliest days, he continued to play sports, competing in both baseball and football as a student at Roxbury Latin School, in West Roxbury where he was a solid student in a rigorous academic environment.

Manning, 19, also has worked to support cancer treatment, while showing others that they can overcome physical limitations. He is preparing for [his third ride](#) in the Pan-Mass Challenge to support the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and he counsels young patients and their parents at Boston Children’s Hospital.

Talking to children facing the kind of amputation that he experienced as a child, Manning tells them “you can still be active . . . and not let it limit you,” he said.

His efforts have earned public recognition. In a ceremony Monday at BC, Manning will become the first recipient of the Boston College Strong Scholarship, presented by Jessica Kensky and her husband, 2005 BC graduate Patrick Downes, who were newlyweds when both lost legs in the Marathon bombings.

Manning is a sophomore studying business at BC, where he maintains a 3.75 grade point average while working about 12 hours a week on campus, according to the college.

text continues on next page...

Manning “couldn’t have been a more perfect fit [for the scholarship] in his character and his drive and what he’s accomplished in life,” said Kensky, 36, in a phone interview.

She and Downes said the scholarship is part of an effort to show others who have overcome a disability the kind of support they received from Boston and around the world after the 2013 terror attack.

“It’s not lost on us that Jess and I, and all the survivors from the bombings, have been celebrated in this very special way, and we’ve had the opportunity to tell our stories many times over,” said Downes, 34, of Cambridge. “That’s not true for most people with disabilities.”

The scholarship is also part of an effort to make the college more inclusive and more navigable for people with physical limitations, he said, and to build a community of support and mentorship.

“We want to send a message that not only does BC welcome people of all ability levels, but we also want to support them in their academic endeavors,” Downes said.

The idea for the scholarship, which honors Downes and Kensky, came from a tight-knit group of college friends who had rallied to support the couple after their devastating injuries.

“We were trying to think about how we could pay forward all the love and generosity that Patrick and Jess got in the wake of the bombings,” said Michael Hundgen, Downes’s best friend from BC and senior-year roommate.

Initially, the friends envisioned a one-time scholarship, but as they considered their plan, they decided they could do more lasting good by building an endowment that would keep granting scholarships to students well into the future, according to Hundgen, 34, of Glendale, Calif.

They began fund-raising shortly before their 10-year class reunion, with the goal of collecting \$250,000. The effort then grew after Downes announced his plan to run in the 2016 Marathon on a prosthetic leg, Hundgen said.

“So many of the people we were close with at BC were part of the core first round of people who gave, and that sort of became more and more and more,” said Hundgen.

After collecting contributions from almost 1,000 donors, they have garnered about \$400,000 to date, he said.

“It’s amazing how generous people were,” Hundgen said. “I think it speaks to people really wanting to make something good out of something really bad that happened. I think it also speaks to what inspirational people Patrick and Jess are.”

The largesse of the fund’s supporters will allow many students to benefit from the program, eventually building a network of donors and recipients — a support system that will ease some of the burden of living with a disability, a challenge that Kensky and Downes know all too well.

“The city wrapped its arms around us, and it’s still been really hard. It’s still been exhausting,” Downes said. “I don’t know how you do it with anything less, but we are very conscious of the fact that most people do.”

For Manning, as the first recipient, it is an opportunity to show other young people that physical limitations don’t determine the course of a life. He expects to see the program expand to reach more students.

“They raised a lot more money than they even hoped that they could, so I think it will continue to grow bigger than their original expectations and become better than they could have hoped,” he said. “Hopefully this helps a lot of people.”

Jeremy C. Fox can be reached at jeremy.fox@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@jeremyfox](https://twitter.com/jeremyfox).

© 2018 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/10/22/boston-college-strong-scholarship-honors-marathon-bombings-survivors/IkaW6vyvqzuys5mdzZMgkM/story.html?event=event12>

Links to Videos on Perseverance

Angela Lee Duckworth: *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*
https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

Sharon Fries-Britt: *Cultivating the imprint in your soul*
TEDxUMaryland
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCs0jbIA3o8>

Quotes, Quotes, and More Quotes

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”
— *Sir Isaac Newton, 1642–1727, in a letter to Robert Hooke dated February 5, 1675*

“Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.”
— *Albert Einstein, 1879–1955, theoretical physicist who developed the general theory of relativity*

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.”
— *Abraham Lincoln, 1809–1865, 16th President of United States*

“Don’t tell me the sky’s the limit when there are footprints on the moon.”
— *Paul Brandt, Donald Ewing, & Kent Blazy, in the song There’s a World Out There*

“Money can’t buy happiness, but it can buy marshmallows, which are kinda the same thing.”
— *author unknown*

“So be wise, because the world needs more wisdom, and if you cannot be wise, pretend to be someone who is wise, and then just behave like they would.”
— *Neil Gaiman, 1960–, English author, in his address at the 134th commencement of The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, May 17, 2012*

“I want to put a ding in the universe.”
— *Steve Jobs, 1955–2011, Apple co-founder, chairman, and CEO*

“He who rests, rots.”
— *Arthur Fiedler, 1894–1979, longtime conductor of the Boston Pops*

“To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.”
— *Oscar Wilde, 1854–1900, Irish author, playwright and poet*

“The work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die.”
— *Edward (“Ted”) Kennedy, 1932–2009, after losing the 1980 Democratic nomination for President to Jimmy Carter*

“Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; thou shalt not be a victim; and thou shalt never, but never, be a bystander.”

— *Yehuda Bauer, 1926-*, Professor of Holocaust Studies, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem
Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education
From Remembrance and Beyond, the keynote address delivered at the United Nations on Holocaust Memorial Day, January 27, 2006

“Dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep.”

— *A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, 1931-*, Indian Scientist, in *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (added to this list by alumnus Pawan Gupta)

“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.”

— *John Lennon, 1940-1980 (December 8th)*, from the song Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy) on the Double Fantasy album

“We can’t control the wind, but we can choose how to adjust our sails.”

— *Yiddish proverb*

“We can’t change the cards we’re dealt, just how we play the hand.”

— *Prof. Randy Pausch, 1961-2008*, in his Last Lecture

“The key to life, whether it’s the partner you pick or the business you run, is that you try to see things that other people can’t see.”

— *Robert Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots, 1941-*

“You miss 100% of the shots you never take.”

— *Wayne Gretzky (“The Great One”), National Hockey League Hall of Famer, 1961-*

“I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like, but I know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us, He will not ask, ‘How many good things have you done in your life?’ Rather, He will ask, ‘How much love did you put into what you did?’”

— *Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, 1910-1997*, Albanian-born Indian Roman Catholic nun

“But the lies we tell ourselves are the ghosts that haunt the empty house at midnight. And although I pushed [the thought] from my mind, I felt the breath of that ghosted lie on my face...”

— *Gregory David Roberts, 1952-*, writing in *Shantaram* (published in 2003)

“Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while and embrace our silent dreams. [But] some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.”

— *Flavia Weedn, writer and illustrator*

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882*

“You think the only people who are people
Are the people who look and think like you,
But if you walk the footsteps of a stranger
You’ll learn things you never knew you never knew.”
— *from Colors of the Wind by Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz (1995)*

“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”
— *Henry Ford, 1863–1947*

“To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a little better; whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is the meaning of success.”
— *Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882*

“Work like you don’t need the money,
Dance like no one is watching,
Sing like no one is listening,
Love like you’ve never been hurt, and
Live every day as if it will be your last.”
— *many claimed authors, but none of them confirmed*

“Days are scrolls: Write on them only what you want remembered.”
— *Bachya ibn Paquda, 11th century*

“Who is rich? One who is content with his or her portion.”
— *Mishnah Tractate Avot, Chapter 4, 1st century (one of various interpretations)*

“Wheresoever she was, THERE was Eden.”
— *inscription supposedly placed by Adam on Eve’s gravestone, according to Mark Twain, 1835-1910, in the The 30,000 Dollar Bequest and Other Stories (published in 1906)*

Additional quotes can be found at: <https://jesseheines.com/~heines/quotes.jsp>