

Celebration of the Spirit of Generosity Annual Scholarship Dinner
Tuesday, March 15, 2011
Tuscarora Room • Reisner Dining Hall

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for joining us tonight. As always, I'm happy that you are here to share this opportunity to highlight our outstanding students and, equally important, to also thank the many, many people whose generosity has helped these students to have the resources they need to reach their educational goal.

To the people in this room, this statement is self-evident: Shippensburg University is a wonderful university. It combines a proud heritage with vision toward the future. It combines knowledgeable faculty with inquisitive students. And it combines a culture of service with concern for others. It is, indeed, a shining example of the best this nation has to offer.

Tonight we get to celebrate the best among us — the student scholarship recipients and the generous benefactors who enable the university to provide an outstanding education and provide the students with the support they need. According to noted author Mitch Albom: "The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to the community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning."

Everyone here tonight, and the others who could not, are epitomized by that quote for each, in their own way, are devoted to their community and to others, and have gained a true purpose for their lives.

I have many people to thank for making this celebration possible and the many successes we have achieved throughout this year. Leading the university is our Council of Trustees. With their guidance and advice and foresight, the university is positioned well for the future. The same is true of the Shippensburg University Foundation Board of Directors whose leadership enables the Foundation staff to raise the funds crucial to the funding scholarships and other valuable projects. I ask members of both groups to stand.

For any university to succeed, it must have outstanding faculty. Shippensburg is truly blessed to have such faculty. It is through their efforts that our students remain highly prepared for whatever the future may bring. I particularly want to commend the members of the scholarship committee, led by chair Dr. Marcie Lehman, who work to attract, select and support our scholarship recipients. Will the committee members please stand?

Seated here tonight are individuals who, thanks to their generosity and vision, understand well the important role higher education plays in our future — and the need for more educational opportunities for talented students. These individuals are the benefactors who have shared their valuable resources in such a way as to establish a legacy of giving and support that is the envy of the other member universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

I am not a psychic, so I can't predict what each of these scholarship recipients will eventually achieve, but I do know that they will use their Shippensburg education — the one they were able to earn thanks to their scholarship — to be successful. Every achievement by one of these students is an achievement by the benefactor and is a legacy of which they should be proud. Your legacy of commitment and compassion for others will live long through the scholarship recipients.

Looking around the room I'm happy to see so many of our scholarship recipients. Thank you for coming and I hope you have had the opportunity to thank your benefactors for their support. I am also very happy that you have chosen Shippensburg. It is not only good for you, but it is good the university.

Research shows that students who receive scholarship raise the level of discourse on campus. You are among the campus leaders because of your love of learning and your unique talents and skills. One area in which you excel is your willingness to participate in various co-curricular learning projects. We find that students who receive scholarships are a high percentage of the students who participate in the joint undergraduate student/faculty research program, the Honors Program and service learning projects.

You also participate in and represent the university in a number of programs off campus such as the Students in Free Enterprise and Mid Atlantic Region Computer Programming Contest as well as national conferences to present papers, research and posters. You are also actively involved in community services with such groups or projects as Circle K, Special Olympics and Kings Kettle food pantry.

When I look at you, I also see an investment, one that will pay dividends long into the future. The education you will earn here is key to your future — and to ours. It is an investment that will only increase in value. While you are here, use your time wisely, study hard, challenge yourself and remember that your benefactor has made a wise investment in you. Once you graduate remember you were given a great gift, and it's your responsibility to pay it forward.

As we look toward the future, I promise that the university will continue to adapt, to change and to meet any challenge. We will look to expand our joint undergraduate student faculty research opportunities, to strengthen and enhance the STEM disciplines to prepare students for the needs and jobs of the future, to increase funding for study abroad opportunities, and to establish centers of excellence university-wide where students prepare for citizenship and work through engaged and guided learning on real-world issues.

I want to again thank the benefactors for their generosity. As you all know, it has been proposed that the university's funding from the state be cut by 50 percent. If it comes to fruition, it would reduce our funding to a level below what the State System received when it first began in 1983. More so than ever, the support you give us is crucial to this university. Your gifts are the catalyst to turn a good education into an exceptional one. The scholarships you support are a wise investment that keeps paying great dividends. For that, I thank you.

According to poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson: "To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children...to leave the world a better place...to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

Here tonight is a showcase of success because we are all a little better because of each of you. Thank you all for being here and thank you for all that you do for the flagship of education for Pennsylvania.